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Original Poems And Translations, By John Dryden, Esq; Now First Collected and Publish'd together, In Two Volumes

Containing Translations, Epistles, Prologues, Epilogues, Elegies, Epitaphs, And Songs

Dryden, John

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Preface.

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PREFACE

Concerning Mr. *Dryden*'s Tranſlations.*

FOR this laſt half Year I have been troubled with the Diſeaſe (as I may call it) of Tranſlation: The cold Proſe-fits of it, which are always the moſt tedious with me, were ſpent in the *Hiſtory of the League*; the hot, which ſucceeded them, in Verſe Miſcellanies. The Truth is, I fancied to my ſelf a kind of eaſe in the change of the Paroxyſm; never ſuſpecting but that the Humour wou'd have waſted it ſelf in two or three Paſtorals of *Theocritus*, and as many Odes of *Horace*. But finding, or at leaſt thinking I found, ſomething that was more pleaſing in them, than my ordinary Productions, I encouraged my

* Prefix'd to the *First Part* of *Miſcellany Poems*, &c. Publiſh'd by Mr. *Dryden*.

ſelf to renew my old acquaintance with *Lucretius* and *Virgil*; and immediately fix'd upon ſome Parts of them, which had moſt affected me in the reading. Theſe were my natural Impulſes for the Undertaking. But there was an accidental Motive, which was full as forcible. It was my Lord *Roſcommon*'s *Eſſay on Tranſlated Verſe*; which made me uneaſy 'till I try'd whether or no I was capable of following his Rules, and of reducing the Speculation into Practice. For many a fair Precept in Poetry is, like a ſeeming Demonſtration in the Mathematicks, very ſpecious in the Diagram, but failing in the Mechanick Operation. I think I have generally obſerv'd his Inſtructions; I am ſure my Reaſon is ſufficiently convinced both of their Truth and Uſefulneſs; which, in other words, is to confeſs no leſs a Vanity, than to pretend that I have at leaſt in ſome Places made Examples to his Rules. Yet, withal, I muſt acknowledge, that I have many times exceeded my Commiſſion: for I have both added and omitted, and even ſometimes very boldly made ſuch Expoſitions of my Authors, as no *Dutch* Commentator will forgive me. Perhaps, in ſuch particular Paſſages, I have thought that I diſcover'd ſome Beauty yet undiſcover'd by thoſe Pedants, which none but a Poet cou'd have found. Where I have taken away ſome of their Expreſſions, and cut them ſhorter, it may poſſibly be on this Conſideration, that what was beautiful in the *Greek* or *Latin*, wou'd not appear ſo ſhining in the *Engliſh*. And where I have enlarged them, I deſire the falſe Criticks wou'd not always think, that thoſe Thoughts are wholly mine, but that either they are ſecretly in the Poet, or may be fairly deduced from him; or, at leaſt, if both thoſe Conſiderations ſhould fail, that my own is of a Piece

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with his, and that if he were living, and an *Engliſhman*, they are ſuch as he would probably have written.

For, after all, a Tranſlator is to make his Author appear as charming as poſſibly he can, provided he maintains his Character, and makes him not unlike himſelf. Tranſlation is a kind of Drawing after the Life; where every one will acknowledge there is a double ſort of Likeneſs, a good one and a bad. 'Tis one thing to draw the Out-lines true, the Features like, the Proportions exact, the Colouring it ſelf perhaps tolerable; and another thing to make all theſe graceful, by the Poſture, the Shadowings, and chiefly by the Spirit, which animates the whole. I cannot, without ſome Indignation, look on an ill Copy of an excellent Original: Much leſs can I behold with patience *Virgil*, *Homer*, and ſome others, whoſe Beauties I have been endeavouring all my Life to imitate, ſo abus'd, as I may ſay, to their Faces, by a botching Interpreter. What *Engliſh* Readers, unacquainted with *Greek* or *Latin*, will believe me, or any other Man, when we commend thoſe Authors, and confeſs we derive all that is pardonable in us from their Fountains, if they take thoſe to be the ſame Poets, whom our *Ogilby*'s have tranſlated? But I dare aſſure them, that a good Poet is no more like himſelf, in a dull Tranſlation, than his Carcaſe would be to his living Body. There are many, who underſtand *Greek* and *Latin*, and yet are ignorant of their Mother Tongue. The Proprieties and Delicacies of the *Engliſh* are known to few: 'tis impoſſible even for a good Wit to underſtand and practiſe them, without the help of a liberal Education, long Reading, and digeſting of thoſe few good Authors we have amongſt us, the knowledge of Men and Manners,

the freedom of Habitudes and Converſation with the beſt Company of both Sexes; and, in ſhort, without wearing off the ruſt, which he contracted, while he was laying in a Stock of Learning. Thus difficult it is to underſtand the Purity of *Engliſh*; and critically to diſcern not only good Writers from bad, and a proper Style from a corrupt, but alſo to diſtinguiſh that, which is pure in a good Author, from that which is vicious and corrupt in him. And for want of all theſe requiſites, or the greateſt part of them, moſt of our ingenious young Men take up ſome cry'd-up *Engliſh* Poet for their Model, adore him, and imitate him, as they think, without knowing wherein he is defective, where he is boyiſh and trifling, wherein either his Thoughts are improper to his Subject, or his Expreſſions unworthy of his Thoughts, or the turn of both is unharmonious. Thus it appears neceſſary, that a Man ſhou'd be a nice Critick in his Mother Tongue, before he attempts to tranſlate a foreign Language. Neither is it ſufficient, that he be able to judge of Words and Style; but he muſt be a Maſter of them too: He muſt perfectly underſtand his Author's Tongue, and abſolutely command his own. So that to be a thorough Tranſlator, he muſt be a thorough Poet. Neither is it enough to give his Author's Senſe, in good *Engliſh*, in poetical Expreſſions, and in muſical Numbers: For, though all theſe are exceeding difficult to perform, there yet remains an harder Task; and 'tis a Secret of which few Tranſlators have ſufficiently thought. I have already hinted a word or two concerning it; that is, the maintaining the Character of an Author, which diſtinguiſhes him from all others, and makes him appear that individual Poet, whom you wou'd interpret. For Example, not only the Thoughts, but

but the Style and Verſification, of *Virgil* and *Ovid* are very different. Yet I ſee, even in our beſt Poets, who have tranſlated ſome parts of them, that they have confounded their ſeveral Talents; and, by endeavouring only at the ſweetneſs and harmony of Numbers, have made them both ſo much alike, that, if I did not know the Originals, I ſhou'd never be able to judge, by the Copies, which was *Virgil*, and which was *Ovid*. It was objected againſt * a late noble Painter, that he drew many graceful Pictures, but few of them were like. And this happen'd to him, becauſe he always ſtudied himſelf more than thoſe who ſate to him. In ſuch Tranſlators I can eaſily diſtinguiſh the Hand which perform'd the Work, but I cannot diſtinguiſh their Poet from another. Suppoſe two Authors are equally ſweet, yet there is a great diſtinction to be made in Sweetneſs; as in that of Sugar, and that of Honey. I can make the difference more plain, by giving you (if it be worth knowing) my own Method of proceeding, in my Tranſlations out of four ſeveral Poets; *Virgil*, *Theocritus*, *Lucretius*, and *Horace*. In each of theſe, before I undertook them, I conſider'd the Genius and diſtinguiſhing Character of my Author. I look'd on *Virgil* as a ſuccinct, grave and majeſtick Writer; one who weigh'd, not only every Thought, but every Word and Syllable: Who was ſtill aiming to crowd his Senſe into as narrow a Compaſs as poſſibly he cou'd; for which reaſon he is ſo very figurative, that he requires (I may almoſt ſay) a Grammar apart to conſtrue him. His Verſe is every where ſounding the very Thing in your Ears, whoſe Senſe it bears: Yet the Num-

* *Sir* P. Lely.

bers are perpetually varied, to increaſe the delight of the Reader; ſo that the ſame Sounds are never repeated twice together. On the contrary, *Ovid* and *Claudian*, though they write in Styles differing from each other, yet have each of them but one ſort of Muſick in their Verſes. All the Verſification and little variety of *Claudian* is included within the Compaſs of four or five Lines, and then he begins again in the ſame tenour; perpetually cloſing his Senſe at the end of a Verſe, and that Verſe commonly which they call *Golden*, or two Subſtantives and two Adjectives, with a Verb betwixt them to keep the peace. *Ovid*, with all his ſweetneſs, has as little variety of Numbers and Sound as he: He is always, as it were, upon the hand-gallop, and his Verſe runs upon Carpet Ground. He avoids, like the other, all *Synalæpha*'s, or cutting off one Vowel when it comes before another, in the following Word. But to return to *Virgil*, tho' he is ſmooth where Smoothneſs is requir'd, yet he is ſo far from affecting it, that he ſeems rather to diſdain it; frequently makes uſe of *Synalæpha's*, and concludes his Senſe in the middle of his Verſe. He is every where above Conceits of Epigrammatick Wit, and groſs Hyperboles: He maintains Majeſty in the midſt of Plainneſs; he ſhines, but glares not; and is ſtately without Ambition, which is the Vice of *Lucan*. I drew my Definition of Poetical Wit from my particular Conſideration of him: For Propriety of Thoughts and Words are only to be found in him; and, where they are proper, they will be delightful. Pleaſure follows of Neceſſity, as the Effect does the Cauſe; and therefore is not to be put into the Definition. This exact Propriety of *Virgil* I particularly regarded, as a great part of his Character; but muſt confeſs, to my Shame, that I have

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not been able to tranſlate any part of him ſo well, as to make him appear wholly like himſelf. For where the Original is cloſe, no Verſion can reach it in the ſame Compaſs. *Hannibal Caro*'s, in the *Italian*, is the neareſt, the moſt Poetical, and the moſt Sonorous of any Tranſlation of the *Æneid*: yet, though he takes the advantage of blank Verſe, he commonly allows two Lines for one of *Virgil*, and does not always hit his Senſe. *Taſſo* tells us, in his Letters, that *Sperone Speroni*, a great *Italian* Wit, who was his Contemporary, obſerv'd of *Virgil* and *Tully*; that the *Latin* Orator endeavour'd to imitate the Copiouſneſs of *Homer*, the *Greek* Poet; and that the *Latin* Poet made it his Buſineſs to reach the Conciſeneſs of *Demoſthenes*, the *Greek* Orator. *Virgil* therefore, being ſo very ſparing of his Words, and leaving ſo much to be imagin'd by the Reader, can never be tranſlated, as he ought, in any modern Tongue. To make him Copious is to alter his Character; and to tranſlate him Line for Line is impoſſible, becauſe the *Latin* is naturally a more ſuccinct Language, than either the *Italian*, *Spaniſh*, *French*, or even than the *Engliſh*, which, by reaſon of its Monoſyllables, is far the moſt compendious of them. *Virgil* is much the cloſeſt of any *Roman* Poet, and the *Latin* Hexameter has more Feet than the *Engliſh* Heroick.

Beſides all this, an Author has the choice of his own Thoughts and Words, which a Tranſlator has not; he is confin'd by the Senſe of the Inventor to thoſe Expreſſions, which are the neareſt to it: So that *Virgil*, ſtudying Brevity, and having the command of his own Language, could bring thoſe Words into a narrow compaſs, which a Tranſlator cannot render without Circumlocutions. In ſhort, they, who have call'd him the Torture

of Grammarians, might alſo have call'd him the Plague of Tranſlators; for he ſeems to have ſtudy'd not to be tranſlated. I own, that, endeavouring to turn his *Niſus* and *Euryalus* as cloſe as I was able, I have perform'd that *Epiſode* too literally; that, giving more ſcope to *Mezentius* and *Lauſus*, that Verſion, which has more of the Majeſty of *Virgil*, has leſs of his Conciſeneſs; and all that I can promiſe for my ſelf, is only that I have done both better than *Ogilby*, and perhaps as well as *Caro*. By conſidering him ſo carefully as I did before my attempt, I have made ſome faint reſemblance of him; and, had I taken more time, might poſſibly have ſucceeded better; but never ſo well as to have ſatisfy'd my ſelf.

He, who excels all other Poets in his own Language, were it poſſible to do him right, muſt appear above them in our Tongue, which, as my Lord *Roſcommon* juſtly obſerves, approaches neareſt to the *Roman* in its Majeſty: Neareſt indeed, but with a vaſt Interval betwixt them. There is an inimitable Grace in *Virgil*'s Words, and in them principally conſiſts that Beauty, which gives ſo inexpreſſible a Pleaſure to him, who beſt underſtands their Force. This Diction of his (I muſt once again ſay) is never to be copied; and, ſince it cannot, he will appear but lame in the beſt Tranſlation. The turns of his Verſe, his Breakings, his Propriety, his Numbers, and his Gravity, I have as far imitated, as the Poverty of our Language, and the haſtineſs of my Performance, wou'd allow. I may ſeem ſometimes to have varied from his Senſe; but I think the greateſt Variations may be fairly deduced from him; and where I leave his Commentators, it may be I underſtand him better: At leaſt I writ without conſulting them in many

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places. But two particular Lines in *Mezentius* and *Lausus* I cannot so easily excuse: they are indeed remotely ally'd to *Virgil*'s Sense; but they are too like the Tenderness of *Ovid*, and were printed before I had consider'd them enough to alter them. The first of them I have forgotten, and cannot easily retrieve, because the Copy is at the Press: The second is this;

When Lausus *died, I was already slain.*

This appears pretty enough at first sight; but I am convinc'd for many reasons, that the Expression is too bold; that *Virgil* wou'd not have said it, though *Ovid* wou'd. The Reader may pardon it, if he please, for the freeness of the confession; and instead of that, and the former, admit these two Lines, which are more according to the Author:

Nor ask I Life, nor fought with that design;
As I had us'd my Fortune, use thou thine.

Having with much ado got clear of *Virgil*, I have in the next place to consider the Genius of *Lucretius*, whom I have translated more happily in those parts of him which I undertook. If he was not of the best Age of *Roman* Poetry, he was at least of that which preceded it; and he himself refin'd it to that degree of Perfection, both in the Language and the Thoughts, that he left an easy Task to *Virgil*; who as he succeeded him in time, so he copy'd his Excellencies: For the Method of the *Georgicks* is plainly derived from him. *Lucretius* had chosen a Subject naturally crabbed; he therefore adorn'd it with Poetical Descriptions, and Precepts of Morality, in the beginning and ending of

of his Books. Which you ſee *Virgil* has imitated with great Succeſs, in thoſe four Books, which in my Opinion are more perfect in their kind, than even his Divine *Æneid*. The turn of his Verſes he has likewiſe followed, in thoſe places which *Lucretius* has moſt labour'd, and ſome of his very Lines he has tranſplanted into his own Works, without much Variation. If I am not miſtaken, the diſtinguiſhing Character of *Lucretius* (I mean of his Soul and Genius) is a certain kind of noble Pride, and Poſitive Aſſertion of his Opinions. He is every where confident of his own Reaſon, and aſſuming an abſolute Command, not only over his vulgar Readers, but even his Patron *Memmius*. For he is always bidding him attend, as if he had the Rod over him; and uſing a Magiſterial Authority, while he inſtructs him. From his Time to ours, I know none ſo like him, as our Poet and Philoſopher of *Malmsbury*. This is that perpetual Dictatorſhip, which is exercis'd by *Lucretius*; who, though often in the wrong, yet ſeems to deal *bonâ fide* with his Reader, and tells him nothing but what he thinks: in which plain Sincerity, I believe, he differs from our *Hobbs*, who could not but be convinced, or at leaſt doubt, of ſome Eternal Truths, which he has oppos'd. But for *Lucretius*, he ſeems to diſdain all manner of Replies, and is ſo confident of his Cauſe, that he is before-hand with his Antagoniſts; urging for them whatever he imagin'd they could ſay, and leaving them, as he ſuppoſes, without an Objection for the future: All this too with ſo much Scorn and Indignation, as if he were aſſur'd of the Triumph, before he enter'd into the Liſts. From this ſublime and daring Genius of his, it muſt of neceſſity come to paſs, that his Thoughts muſt be Maſculine, full of Argu-

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mentation, and that ſufficiently warm. From the ſame fiery Temper proceeds the Loftineſs of his Expreſſions, and the perpetual Torrent of his Verſe, where the barrenneſs of his Subject does not too much conſtrain the quickneſs of his Fancy. For there is no doubt to be made, but that he could have been every where as Poetical, as he is in his Deſcriptions, and in the Moral Part of his Philoſophy, if he had not aim'd more to inſtruct, in his Syſtem of Nature, than to delight. But he was bent upon making *Memmius* a Materialiſt, and teaching him to defy an inviſible Power. In ſhort, he was ſo much an Atheiſt, that he forgot ſometimes to be a Poet. Theſe are the Conſiderations, which I had of that Author, before I attempted to tranſlate ſome parts of him. And accordingly I laid by my natural Diffidence and Scepticiſm for a while, to take up that Dogmatical way of his, which, as I ſaid, is ſo much his Character, as to make him that individual Poet. As for his Opinions concerning the Mortality of the Soul, they are ſo abſurd, that I cannot, if I would, believe them. I think a future State demonſtrable even by natural Arguments; at leaſt, to take away Rewards and Puniſhments is only a pleaſing proſpect to a Man, who reſolves before-hand not to live morally. But on the other ſide, the thought of being Nothing after Death is a burthen unſupportable to a virtuous Man, even though a Heathen. We naturally aim at Happineſs, and cannot bear to have it confin'd to the ſhortneſs of our preſent Being, eſpecially when we conſider, that Virtue is generally unhappy in this World, and Vice fortunate. So that 'tis Hope of Futurity alone, that makes this Life tolerable, in expectation of a better. Who wou'd not commit all the

Exceſſes,

Excesses, to which he is prompted by his natural Inclinations, if he may do them with Security while he is alive, and be uncapable of Punishment after he is dead? If he be cunning and secret enough to avoid the Laws, there is no band of Morality to restrain him: For Fame and Reputation are weak Ties: Many men have not the least Sense of them: Powerful men are only aw'd by them, as they conduce to their Interest, and that not always, when a Passion is predominant: And no Man will be contain'd within the bounds of duty, when he may safely transgress them. These are my Thoughts abstractedly, and without entring into the Notions of our Christian Faith, which is the proper business of Divines.

But there are other Arguments in this Poem (which I have turn'd into *English*) not belonging to the Mortality of the Soul, which are strong enough to a reasonable Man, to make him less in Love with Life, and consequently in less apprehensions of Death. Such as are the natural Satiety, proceeding from a perpetual enjoyment of the same things; the inconveniencies of old age, which make him incapable of corporeal pleasures; the decay of understanding and memory, which render him contemptible and useless to others. These, and many other Reasons, so pathetically urg'd, so beautifully express'd, so adorn'd with Examples, and so admirably rais'd by the *Prosopopeia* of Nature, who is brought in speaking to her Children, with so much authority and vigour, deserve the pains I have taken with them, which I hope have not been unsuccessful, or unworthy of my Author. At least I must take the liberty to own, that I was pleas'd with my own Endeavours, which but rarely happens to me; and that I am not dissatisfied

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upon the review of any thing I have done in this Author.

'Tis true, there is something, and that of some moment, to be objected against my *Englishing* the *Nature of Love*, from the fourth Book of *Lucretius*: And I can less easily answer why I translated it, than why I thus translated it. The Objection arises from the Obscenity of the Subject; which is aggravated by the too lively and alluring delicacy of the Verses. In the first Place, without the least Formality of an Excuse, I own it pleas'd me: and let my Enemies make the worst they can of this Confession; I am not yet so secure from that Passion, but that I want my Author's Antidotes against it. He has given the truest and most Philosophical account both of the Disease and Remedy, which I ever found in any Author: For which Reasons I translated him. But it will be ask'd why I turn'd him into this luscious *English?* (for I will not give it a worse Word.) Instead of an Answer, I would ask again of my Supercilious Adversaries, whether I am not bound, when I translate an Author, to do him all the right I can, and to translate him to the best advantage? If to mince his meaning, which I am satisfy'd was honest and instructive, I had either omitted some part of what he said, or taken from the strength of his Expression, I certainly had wrong'd him; and that freeness of Thought and Words being thus cashier'd in my Hands, he had no longer been *Lucretius*. If nothing of this kind be to be read, Physicians must not study Nature, Anatomies must not be seen, and somewhat I could say of particular Passages in Books, which, to avoid Prophaneness, I do not name. But the Intention qualifies the Act; and both mine and my Author's were to instruct as well

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as please. 'Tis most certain that barefaced Bawdery is the poorest pretence to Wit imaginable. If I should say otherwise, I should have two great Authorities against me. The one is the *Essay on Poetry*, which I publickly valued before I knew the Author of it, and with the Commendation of which my Lord *Roscommon* so happily begins his *Essay on Translated Verse*: The other is no less than our admir'd *Cowley*, who says the same thing in other Words: For in his Ode concerning Wit, he writes thus of it;

Much less can that have any place,
At which a Virgin hides her Face:
Such Dross the Fire must purge away; 'tis just
The Author blush, there where the Reader must.

Here indeed Mr. *Cowley* goes farther than the *Essay*; for he asserts plainly, that Obscenity has no place in Wit: The other only says, 'tis a poor pretence to it, or an ill sort of Wit, which has nothing more to support it than bare-faced Ribaldry; which is both unmannerly in it self, and fulsom to the Reader. But neither of these will reach my case: For in the first place, I am only the Translator, not the Inventor; so that the heaviest part of the Censure falls upon *Lucretius*, before it reaches me: In the next place, neither he nor I have used the grossest Words, but the cleanest Metaphors we could find, to palliate the broadness of the Meaning; and, to conclude, have carried the Poetical part no farther, than the Philosophical exacted.

This puts me in mind of what I owe to the Ingenious and Learned Translator of *Lucretius*. I have not here design'd to rob him of any part of

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that Commendation, which he has ſo juſtly acquir'd by the whole Author, whoſe Fragments only fall to my Portion. What I have now perform'd is no more than I intended above twenty Years ago. The ways of our Tranſlations are very different. He follows him more cloſely than I have done, which became an Interpreter of the whole Poem: I take more liberty, becauſe it beſt ſuited with my Deſign, which was to make him as pleaſing as I could. He had been too voluminous, had he us'd my Method in ſo long a Work; and I had certainly taken his, had I made it my buſineſs to tranſlate the whole. The Preference then is juſtly his; and I join with Mr. *Evelyn* in the confeſſion of it, with this additional Advantage to him; that his Reputation is already eſtabliſh'd in this Poet, mine is to make its Fortune in the World. If I have been any where obſcure, in following our common Author, or if *Lucretius* himſelf is to be condemn'd, I refer my ſelf to his excellent Annotations, which I have often read, and always with ſome new Pleaſure.

My Preface begins already to ſwell upon me, and looks as if I were afraid of my Reader, by ſo tedious a beſpeaking of him: And yet I have *Horace* and *Theocritus* upon my Hands; but the *Greek* Gentleman ſhall quickly be diſpatch'd, becauſe I have more buſineſs with the *Roman*.

That, which diſtinguiſhes *Theocritus* from all other Poets, both *Greek* and *Latin*, and which raiſes him even above *Virgil* in his *Eclogues*, is the inimitable Tenderneſs of his Paſſions, and the natural Expreſſion of them in Words ſo becoming of a Paſtoral. A Simplicity ſhines thro' all he writes. He ſhews his Art and Learning by diſguiſing both. His Shepherds never riſe above their Country Education

cation in their complaints of Love. There is the ſame difference betwixt him and *Virgil*, as there is betwixt *Taſſo*'s *Aminta* and the *Paſtor Fido* of *Guarini*. *Virgil*'s Shepherds are too well read in the Philoſophy of *Epicurus* and of *Plato*; and *Guarini*'s ſeem to have been bred in Courts. But *Theocritus* and *Taſſo* have taken theirs from Cottages and Plains. It was ſaid of *Taſſo*, in relation to his Similitudes, that *he never departed from the Woods*, that is, all his Compariſons were taken from the Country. The ſame may be ſaid of our *Theocritus*. He is ſofter than *Ovid*; he touches the Paſſions more delicately, and performs all this out of his own Fund, without diving into the Arts and Sciences for a Supply. Even his *Dorick* Dialect has an incomparable Sweetneſs in its Clownishneſs, like a fair Shepherdeſs in her Country Ruſſet, talking in a *Yorkſhire* Tone. This was impoſſible for *Virgil* to imitate; becauſe the ſeverity of the *Roman* Language deny'd him that Advantage. *Spencer* has endeavour'd it in his *Shepherd's Kalendar*: but neither will it ſucceed in *Engliſh*; for which reaſon I have forbore to attempt it. For *Theocritus* writ to *Sicilians*, who ſpoke that Dialect; and I direct this part of my Tranſlations to our Ladies, who neither underſtand, nor will take Pleaſure in ſuch homely Expreſſions. I proceed to *Horace*.

Take him in parts, and he is chiefly to be conſider'd in his three different Talents, as he was a Critick, a Satiriſt, and a Writer of Odes. His Morals are uniform, and run through all of them: For let his *Dutch* Commentators ſay what they will, his Philoſophy was *Epicurean*; and he made uſe of Gods and Providence, only to ſerve a turn in Poetry. But ſince neither his Criticiſms, which

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are the most instructive of any that are written in this Art, nor his Satires, which are incomparably beyond *Juvenal*'s, if to laugh and rally is to be preferr'd to railing and declaiming, are no part of my present Undertaking, I confine my self wholly to his *Odes*. These are also of several sorts: some of them are Panegyrical, others Moral, the rest Jovial, or (if I may so call them) *Bacchanalian*. As difficult as he makes it, and as indeed it is, to imitate *Pindar*, yet, in his most elevated Flights, and in the sudden Changes of his Subject with almost imperceptible Connexions, that *Theban* Poet is his Master. But *Horace* is of the more bounded Fancy, and confines himself strictly to one sort of Verse, or Stanza, in every Ode. That, which will distinguish his Style from all other Poets, is the Elegance of his Words, and the Numerousness of his Verse. There is nothing so delicately turn'd in all the *Roman* Language. There appears in every part of his Diction, or (to speak *English*) in all his Expressions, a kind of noble and bold Purity. His Words are chosen with as much exactness as *Virgil*'s; but there seems to be a greater Spirit in them. There is a secret Happiness attends his Choice, which in *Petronius* is call'd *Curiosa Felicitas*, and which I suppose he had from the *Feliciter audere* of *Horace* himself. But the most distinguishing part of all his Character seems to me to be his Briskness, his Jollity, and his good Humour: And those I have chiefly endeavour'd to copy. His other Excellencies, I confess, are above my Imitation. One Ode, which infinitely pleas'd me in the reading, I have attempted to translate in Pindarick Verse: 'Tis that, which is inscrib'd to the present Earl of *Rochester*, to whom I have particular Obligations, which this small Testimony of my Gratitude can never pay.

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'Tis his Darling in the *Latin*, and I have taken ſome Pains to make it my Maſter-piece in *Engliſh*: For which reaſon I took this kind of Verſe, which allows more Latitude than any other. Every one knows it was introduced into our Language, in this Age, by the happy Genius of Mr. *Cowley*. The ſeeming eaſineſs of it has made it ſpread: but it has not been conſider'd enough, to be ſo well cultivated. It languiſhes in almoſt every hand but his, and ſome very few, whom (to keep the reſt in Countenance) I do not name. He, indeed, has brought it as near Perfection, as was poſſible in ſo ſhort a time. But if I may be allow'd to ſpeak my Mind modeſtly, and without Injury to his ſacred Aſhes, ſomewhat of the Purity of *Engliſh*, ſomewhat of more equal Thoughts, ſomewhat of Sweetneſs in the Numbers, in one word, ſomewhat of a finer Turn, and more Lyrical Verſe, is yet wanting. As for the Soul of it, which conſiſts in the Warmth and Vigour of Fancy, the maſterly Figures, and the Copiouſneſs of Imagination, he has excell'd all others in this kind. Yet if the Kind it ſelf be capable of more Perfection, though rather in the Ornamental Parts of it, than the Eſſential, what Rules of Morality or Reſpect have I broken, in naming the Defects, that they may hereafter be amended? Imitation is a nice Point, and there are few Poets, who deſerve to be Models in all they write. *Milton*'s *Paradiſe Loſt* is admirable; but am I therefore bound to maintain, that there are no Flats amongſt his Elevations, when 'tis evident he creeps along ſometimes for above an hundred Lines together? Cannot I admire the height of his Invention, and the ſtrength of his Expreſſion, without defending his antiquated Words, and the perpetual harſhneſs of their Sound? 'Tis as much Commendation as a Man can bear, to

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own him excellent; all beyond it is Idolatry. Since *Pindar* was the Prince of *Lyrick* Poets, let me have leave to ſay, that, in imitating him, our Numbers ſhould, for the moſt part, be Lyrical. For Variety, or rather where the Majeſty of Thought requires it, they may be ſtretch'd to the *Engliſh* Heroick of five Feet, and to the *French* Alexandrine of Six. But the Ear muſt preſide, and direct the Judgment to the choice of Numbers. Without the nicety of this, the Harmony of Pindarick Verſe can never be compleat: the Cadency of one Line muſt be a Rule to that of the next; and the Sound of the former muſt ſlide gently into that which follows; without leaping from one Extreme into another. It muſt be done like the Shadowings of a Picture, which fall by degrees into a darker Colour. I ſhall be glad, if I have ſo explain'd my ſelf as to be underſtood; but if I have not, *quod nequeo dicere & ſentio tantùm*, muſt be my Excuſe. There remains much more to be ſaid on this Subject; but, to avoid Envy, I will be ſilent. What I have ſaid is the general Opinion of the beſt Judges, and in a manner has been forced from me, by ſeeing a noble ſort of Poetry ſo happily reſtored by one Man, and ſo groſly copied by almoſt all the reſt. A muſical Ear, and a great Genius, if another Mr. *Cowley* cou'd ariſe, in another Age, may bring it to Perfection. In the mean time,

—— Fungar vice cotis, acutum
Reddere quæ ferrum valet, exſors ipſa ſecandi.

To conclude, I am ſenſible that I have written this too haſtily and too looſly: I fear I have been tedious, and, which is worſe, it comes out from the firſt Draught, and uncorrected. This I grant is no Excuſe;

Excuſe: for it may be reaſonably urg'd, why did he not write with more Leiſure, or, if he had it not (which was certainly my Caſe) why did he attempt to write on ſo nice a Subject? The Objection is unanſwerable; but, in part of Recompence, let me aſſure the Reader, that, in haſty Productions, he is ſure to meet with an Author's preſent Senſe, which cooler Thoughts wou'd poſſibly have diſguis'd. There is undoubtedly more of Spirit, though not of Judgment, in theſe uncorrect Eſſays, and conſequently, though my Hazard be the greater, yet the Reader's Pleaſure is not the leſs.

JOHN DRYDEN.

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