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## JOHN DRYDEN

Ode to Mrs. Anne Killigrew Like Milton's *Lycidas* Dryden's ode to Anne Killigrew is not so much the expression of private grief as it is a decorous ceremonial gesture dignifying a public occasion. In both poems the death of an individual becomes the point of departure for the treatment of larger topics. Killigrew's modest talent for poetry and painting prompted Dryden to consider the arts themselves, their present state in a corrupt age, their central role in civilization, and their service to virtue and religion. In the course of the poem, the dead woman is transformed into a symbol of the sister arts themselves, what they are and what, on earth, they might become. Although *Lycidas* is cast in the traditional mode of the pastoral lament, and *Anne Killigrew* in the form of a eulogistic memorial, both poems develop classical and Christian themes that had become conventions of the funeral poem: the death of the young and promising, the praise of their genius and virtues, a lament for the times that suffer such loss, and a consolation, offered by describing the reception of the soul of the dead into heaven.

Dryden's poem, in form, is an irregular ode, a lyric poem that develops a serious theme in a dignified or exalted manner. The "Great Ode," of which this is the finest example in seventeenth-century poetry, was associated with the odes of Pindar, the lyric poet of fifth-century Greece, whose intricate metrics, bold imagery, and intense and energetic power were aspired to (seldom with success) by English poets throughout our period.

In 1656 Abraham Cowley published loose paraphrases of two of Pindar's odes in which he abandoned the formal structure of the originals in favor of irregular meters and irregularly constructed stanzas, while trying to preserve Pindar's rapture, boldness, and sublimity. Thanks to Cowley's popularity, his irregular Pindarics became the standard of what the age considered the loftiest sort of lyric poetry. But Dryden declared that Cowley's odes lacked "somewhat of a finer turn and more lyrical verse," which should consist in "the warmth and vigor of fancy, the masterly figures, and the copiousness of imagination" (Ker, *Essays* 1.267–268). In this poem he tries to raise the greater ode to its proper heights.

"Mrs." is an abbreviation of "Mistress," used at this time for our "Miss."

To the Pious Memory of the Accomplished Young Lady  
Mrs. Anne Killigrew

EXCELLENT IN THE TWO SISTER ARTS OF POESY AND PAINTING.

AN ODE

1

Thou youngest virgin-daughter of the skies,  
 Made in the last promotion of the blest,  
 Whose palms,<sup>1</sup> new plucked from paradise,  
 In spreading branches more sublimely rise,  
 Rich with immortal green above the rest; 5  
 Whether, adopted to some neighboring star,  
 Thou roll'st above us in thy wandering race,  
     Or in procession fixed and regular,  
     Moved with the heavens' majestic pace,  
     Or called to more superior bliss, 10  
 Thou tread'st with seraphims the vast abyss:<sup>2</sup>  
 Whatever happy region is thy place,  
 Cease thy celestial song a little space;  
 Thou wilt have time enough for hymns divine,  
     Since heaven's eternal year is thine. 15  
 Hear then a mortal Muse thy praise rehearse,  
     In no ignoble verse;  
 But such as thy own voice did practice here,  
 When thy first fruits of poesy were given,  
 To make thyself a welcome inmate there, 20  
     While yet a young probationer,  
     And candidate of heaven.

1. The symbol of victory (cf. Revelation 7.9).

2. Dryden is speculating on where the soul of the dead poet has come to rest: is she the tutelary deity of a planet ("neighboring star")? or of one of the remote "fixed" stars? or does she enjoy the higher ("superior") bliss of having joined the "seraphim," the guardians of the throne of God? (cf. Isaiah 6). Like Milton, Dryden makes use of the Ptolemaic universe of concentric spheres moving around the earth "in procession fixed and regular."

## 2

If by traduction<sup>3</sup> came thy mind,  
 Our wonder is the less to find  
 A soul so charming from a stock so good; 25  
 Thy father was transfused into thy blood:  
 So wert thou born into the tuneful strain  
 (An early, rich, and inexhausted vein).  
 But if thy pre-existing soul  
 Was formed at first with myriads more, 30  
 It did through all the mighty poets roll  
 Who Greek or Latin laurels wore,  
 And was that Sappho last, which once it was before.<sup>4</sup>  
 If so, then cease thy flight, O heaven-born mind!  
 Thou hast no dross to purge from thy rich ore; 35  
 Nor can thy soul a fairer mansion find  
 Than was the beauteous frame she left behind:  
 Return, to fill or mend the choir of thy celestial kind.

## 3

May we presume to say that at thy birth  
 New joy was sprung in heaven, as well as here on earth? 40  
 For sure the milder planets did combine  
 On thy auspicious horoscope to shine,  
 And even the most malicious were in trine.<sup>5</sup> }  
 Thy brother-angels at thy birth  
 Strung each his lyre, and tuned it high, 45  
 That all the people of the sky  
 Might know a poetess was born on earth.  
 And then, if ever, mortal ears  
 Had heard the music of the spheres!

3. The idea that the soul is transmitted by the father at the moment of conception. Because Henry Killigrew had written a tragedy, his daughter is said to have inherited a poet's soul from him. Dryden goes on to propose the theory that the soul exists before birth, and less seriously, that through the ages it transmigrates from body to body.

4. Killigrew is said to have been Sappho (the Greek lyric poet of the 7th century B.C.E.) twice: "once before," when her soul transmigrated into Sappho's body, and most recently ("last"), when it inhabited the body of the modern Sappho, Anne Killigrew.

5. The familiar idea that character and destiny are determined by the position of the planets at the moment of birth ("horoscope"). Killigrew's horoscope was fortunate ("auspicious"): even those planets that are usually baleful ("malicious") were "in trine" — 120 degrees apart and hence favorable in their influence.

And if no clustering swarm of bees 50  
 On thy sweet mouth distilled their golden dew,<sup>6</sup>  
     'Twas that such vulgar miracles  
     Heaven had not leisure to renew:  
 For all the blest fraternity of love  
 Solemnized there thy birth, and kept thy holiday above. 55

4

O gracious God! how far have we  
 Profaned thy heavenly gift of poesy!  
 Made prostitute and profligate the Muse,  
 Debased to each obscene and impious use,  
 Whose harmony was first ordained above 60  
 For tongues of angels, and for hymns of love!  
 O wretched we! why were we hurried down  
     This lubric and adulterate<sup>7</sup> age  
 (Nay, added fat pollutions of our own)  
     To increase the steaming ordures of the stage? 65  
 What can we say to excuse our second fall?  
 Let this thy vestal, Heaven, atone for all:  
 Her Arethusan stream<sup>8</sup> remains unsoiled,  
 Unmixed with foreign filth, and undefiled;  
 Her wit was more than man, her innocence a child! 70

5

Art she had none, yet wanted none,  
 For nature did that want supply;  
 So rich in treasures of her own,  
 She might our boasted stores defy:  
 Such noble vigor did her verse adorn 75  
 That it seemed borrowed where 'twas only born.  
 Her morals too were in her bosom bred,  
     By great examples daily fed,  
 What in the best of books, her father's life, she read. }  
 And to be read herself she need not fear; 80  
 Each test and every light her Muse will bear,

6. It was said that bees clustered on the lips of the infant Pindar, thus foretelling his greatness as a lyric poet.

7. Lewd and corrupted.

8. Cf. Milton's *Lycidas*, line 85. "Thy vestal": i.e., thy virgin. The Roman vestal virgins guarded the fire in the Temple of Vesta, goddess of the hearth.

Though Epictetus with his lamp were there.<sup>9</sup>  
 Even love (for love sometimes her Muse expressed)  
 Was but a lambent flame<sup>1</sup> which played about her breast,  
 Light as the vapors of a morning dream; 85  
 So cold herself, whilst she such warmth expressed,  
 'Twas Cupid bathing in Diana's stream.

## 6

Born to the spacious empire of the Nine,<sup>2</sup>  
 One would have thought she should have been content  
 To manage well that mighty government; 90  
 But what can young ambitious souls confine?  
 To the next realm she stretched her sway, }  
 For Painture<sup>3</sup> near adjoining lay, }  
 A plenteous province, and alluring prey. }  
 A chamber of dependences was framed 95  
 (As conquerors will never want pretense,  
 When armed, to justify the offense)  
 And the whole fief in right of Poetry she claimed.<sup>4</sup>  
 The country open lay without defense;  
 For poets frequent inroads there had made, 100  
 And perfectly could represent  
 The shape, the face, with every lineament;  
 And all the large demains which the dumb Sister<sup>5</sup> swayed,  
 All bowed beneath her government,  
 Received in triumph wheresoe'er she went. 105  
 Her pencil<sup>6</sup> drew whate'er her soul designed,  
 And oft the happy draft surpassed the image in her mind.

9. A collector is said to have paid a large sum for the lamp of the philosopher Epictetus in the faith that owning it would make him wise. Dryden merely means that Killigrew's poems would appear pure even if judged in the light of the most severe Stoic ethical standards.

1. I.e., a flickering flame (cf. *Mac Flecknoe*, line 111).

2. The Nine Muses, who preside over the arts of literature, the dance, music, and astronomy.

3. The art of painting (a Gallicism).

4. In the elaborate figure that dominates these lines, Dryden alludes to recent peaceful annexations by Louis XIV of France, who in 1679 added most of Alsace, Lorraine, and Luxembourg to his realm through his policy of *réunions*, by setting up *Chambres de Réunions*. These chambers by quasi-legal means awarded to Louis, as overlord, towns, cities, and estates with all their "dependences" or fiefs, i.e., estates held under the feudal system from overlords, to whom the holders owed services and rents.

5. The muse of painting. "Large demains": i.e., an estate held in one's own right, as opposed to a fief.

6. Painter's brush.

The sylvan scenes<sup>7</sup> of herds and flocks  
 And fruitful plains and barren rocks;  
 Of shallow brooks that flowed so clear 110  
 The bottom did the top appear;  
 Of deeper too and ampler floods,  
 Which, as in mirrors, showed the woods;  
 Of lofty trees, with sacred shades  
 And perspectives<sup>8</sup> of pleasant glades, 115  
 Where nymphs of brightest form appear,  
 And shaggy satyrs standing near,  
 Which them at once admire and fear; }  
 The ruins, too, of some majestic piece,  
 Boasting the power of ancient Rome or Greece, 120  
 Whose statues, friezes, columns broken lie,  
 And, though defaced, the wonder of the eye:<sup>9</sup>  
 What nature, art, bold fiction e'er durst frame,  
 Her forming hand gave feature to the name.  
 So strange a concourse ne'er was seen before 125  
 But when the peopled ark the whole creation bore.<sup>1</sup>

## 7

The scene then changed: with bold erected look  
 Our martial king<sup>2</sup> the sight with reverence strook;  
 For, not content to express his outward part,  
 Her hand called out the image of his heart: 130  
 His warlike mind, his soul devoid of fear,  
 His high-designing thoughts were figured there, }  
 As when by magic, ghosts are made appear.  
 Our phoenix queen<sup>3</sup> was portrayed, too, so bright,  
 Beauty alone could beauty take<sup>4</sup> so right: 135

7. Cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost* 4.140.

8. Vistas.

9. Killigrew's landscapes are typical of the ideal classical landscape of 17th-century Italian painters: contrasts of fruitful plains and barren rocks, water that reflects trees, vistas, classical ruins, and mythological figures.

1. Noah's ark, which contained all that survived of created beings.

2. James II, who, as duke of York, had won a reputation for courage and skill while fighting as a soldier with the French armies in the 1650s and serving as an admiral during the English-Dutch wars of the 1660s.

3. Mary of Modena, wife of James II, whose unique beauty is expressed by the reference to the "phoenix," the fabulous bird, only one of which exists during each thousand years.

4. I.e., take the likeness of.

Her dress, her shape, her matchless grace  
 Were all observed, as well as heavenly face.  
 With such a peerless majesty she stands  
 As in that day she took the crown from sacred hands;<sup>5</sup>  
 Before a train of heroines was seen, 140  
 In beauty foremost, as in rank, the queen!  
 Thus nothing to her genius was denied,  
     But like a ball of fire, the further thrown,  
     Still with a greater blaze she shone,  
 And her bright soul broke out on every side. 145  
 What next she had designed, heaven only knows;<sup>6</sup> }  
 To such immoderate growth her conquest rose }  
 That fate alone its progress could oppose.

## 8

Now all those charms, that blooming grace,  
 The well-proportioned shape, and beauteous face, 150  
 Shall never more be seen by mortal eyes:  
 In earth the much-lamented virgin lies!  
     Not wit nor piety could fate prevent;  
     Nor was the cruel destiny content  
     To finish all the murder at a blow, 155  
     To sweep at once her life and beauty too;  
 But, like a hardened felon, took a pride  
     To work more mischievously slow,  
 And plundered first, and then destroyed.  
 O double sacrilege on things divine, 160  
 To rob the relic, and deface the shrine!  
     But thus Orinda died:<sup>7</sup>  
 Heaven, by the same disease, did both translate;  
 As equal were their souls, so equal was their fate.

## 9

Meantime her warlike brother on the seas 165  
 His waving streamers<sup>8</sup> to the winds displays,

5. The queen was crowned by the “sacred hands” of the archbishop of Canterbury.

6. God alone knows.

7. The poet Katharine Philips (1631–1664), fancifully referred to by her admirers as “Matchless Orinda,” who, like Killigrew, died of the disfiguring disease smallpox.

8. “Warlike brother”: Henry Killigrew, an officer in the Royal Navy. Pennons (“streamers”) fly from the mast of his ship.

And vows for his return with vain devotion pays.  
 Ah, generous youth, that wish forbear;  
 The winds too soon will waft thee here!  
 Slack all thy sails, and fear to come, 170  
 Alas, thou know'st not thou art wrecked at home!  
 No more shalt thou behold thy sister's face;  
 Thou hast already had her last embrace.  
 But look aloft, and if thou kenn'st<sup>9</sup> from far,  
 Among the Pleiads,<sup>1</sup> a new-kindled star, 175  
 If any sparkles than the rest more bright,  
 'Tis she that shines in that propitious light.

10

When in mid-air the golden trump shall sound,  
 To raise the nations under ground;  
 When in the Valley of Jehosaphat<sup>2</sup> 180  
 The judging God shall close the book of fate,  
 And there the last assizes keep  
 For those who wake and those who sleep;<sup>3</sup>  
 When rattling bones together fly  
 From the four corners of the sky; 185  
 When sinews o'er the skeletons are spread,  
 Those clothed with flesh, and life inspires the dead;  
 The sacred poets first shall hear the sound, }  
 And foremost from the tomb shall bound, }  
 For they are covered with the lightest ground, } 190  
 And straight, with inborn vigor, on the wing,  
 Like mounting larks, to the new morning sing.  
 There thou, sweet saint, before the choir shalt go, }  
 As harbinger<sup>4</sup> of heaven, the way to show, }  
 The way which thou so well hast learned below. } 195

1686

9. Perceivest.

1. The Pleiades, a cluster of stars (six are visible to the unaided eye) in the constellation Taurus.

2. Joel 3.12; Ezekiel 37.

3. "Assizes": periodical sessions of superior courts held in each county in England. Here, of course, the Last Judgment—at which some will be alive on earth ("wake") and many will have already died ("sleep").

4. One who goes ahead to provide a lodging.

The Secular Masque<sup>1</sup>[Enter JANUS.<sup>2</sup>]

JANUS. Chronos,<sup>3</sup> Chronos, mend thy pace;  
 An hundred times the rolling sun  
 Around the radiant belt<sup>4</sup> has run  
 In his revolving race.  
 Behold, behold, the goal in sight; 5  
 Spread thy fans,<sup>5</sup> and wing thy flight.

[Enter CHRONOS, with a scythe in his hand, and a great globe  
 on his back, which he sets down at his entrance.]

CHRONOS. Weary, weary of my weight,  
 Let me, let me drop my freight,  
 And leave the world behind.  
 I could not bear 10  
 Another year  
 The load of humankind.

[Enter MOMUS,<sup>6</sup> laughing.]

MOMUS. Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! well hast thou done  
 To lay down thy pack,  
 And lighten thy back; 15  
 The world was a fool, e'er since it begun,  
 And since neither Janus, nor Chronos, nor I  
 Can hinder the crimes,  
 Or mend the bad times,

1. A masque is a dramatic performance, usually mythological in character, that combines poetry, music, dance, and spectacle. Unlike the court masques of Ben Jonson, this masque was written for public performance as an afterpiece to the revival of Fletcher's *The Pilgrim*, revised by Sir John Vanbrugh and produced for the financial benefit of Dryden himself. It is a "secular" masque because it celebrates the end of the century, "secular" being derived from the Latin *saeculares*, applied to the games, plays, and shows celebrated in Rome once an "age," a period of 120 years. It is not certain that Dryden lived to see his masque performed.

2. The god of beginnings, who here presides over the opening of the new century.

3. God of time.

4. The Zodiac. The sun, in the course of a year, passes through all twelve signs.

5. Wings.

6. God of mockery and faultfinding.

- 'Tis better to laugh than to cry. 20
- CHORUS OF ALL THREE.  
*'Tis better to laugh than to cry.*
- JANUS. Since Momus comes to laugh below,  
Old Time, begin the show,  
That he may see, in every scene,  
What changes in this age have been. 25
- CHRONOS. Then, goddess of the silver bow,<sup>7</sup> begin.
- [Horns, or hunting music within.]  
[Enter DIANA.]
- DIANA. With horns and with hounds I waken the day,  
And hie to my woodland walks away;  
I tuck up my robe, and am buskined<sup>8</sup> soon,  
And tie to my forehead a waxing<sup>9</sup> moon. 30  
I course the fleet stag, unkennel the fox,  
And chase the wild goats o'er summits of rocks;  
With shouting and hooting we pierce through the sky,  
And Echo turns hunter, and doubles the cry.
- CHORUS OF ALL.  
*With shouting and hooting we pierce through the sky,  
And Echo turns hunter, and doubles the cry.* 35
- JANUS. Then our age was in its prime:  
CHRONOS. Free from rage:  
DIANA. And free from crime:  
MOMUS. A very merry, dancing, drinking,  
Laughing, quaffing, and unthinking time. 40
- CHORUS OF ALL.  
*Then our age was in its prime,  
Free from rage, and free from crime;  
A very merry, dancing, drinking,  
Laughing, quaffing, and unthinking time.*
- [Dance of DIANA's attendants.]

7. Diana, the virgin goddess of the moon, a huntress. She symbolizes England before the civil wars, an allusion to James I's passion for the chase.

8. Wearing hunting boots.

9. Waxing (i.e., increasing, because in the first quarter).

[*Enter* MARS.<sup>1</sup>]

- MARS. Inspire<sup>2</sup> the vocal brass, inspire; 45  
 The world is past its infant age:  
     Arms and honor,  
     Arms and honor,  
 Set the martial mind on fire,  
 And kindle manly rage. 50  
 Mars has looked the sky to red;  
 And Peace, the lazy good, is fled.  
 Plenty, Peace, and Pleasure fly;  
     The sprightly green  
     In woodland walks no more is seen; 55  
 The sprightly green has drunk the Tyrian dye.<sup>3</sup>
- CHORUS OF ALL.  
*Plenty, Peace, etc.*
- MARS. Sound the trumpet, beat the drum;  
     Through all the world around,  
     Sound a reveille, sound, sound, 60  
 The warrior god is come.
- CHORUS OF ALL.  
*Sound the trumpet, etc.*
- MOMUS. Thy sword within the scabbard keep,  
     And let mankind agree;  
 Better the world were fast asleep, 65  
     Than kept awake by thee.  
 The fools are only thinner,  
     With all our cost and care;  
 But neither side a winner,  
     For things are as they were. 70
- CHORUS OF ALL.  
*The fools are only, etc.*

[*Enter* VENUS.<sup>4</sup>]

1. God of war, who represents the period of the civil wars and the Commonwealth.

2. Breathe into.

3. I.e., the costume has changed from the green of the hunter to the crimson of the soldier (at once the color of blood and of "Tyrian dye," known to the ancients as "purple").

4. Goddess of love and beauty, representing the licentious reigns of Charles II and James II.

VENUS. Calms appear when storms are past,  
 Love will have his hour at last:  
 Nature is my kindly care;  
 Mars destroys, and I repair; 75  
 Take me, take me, while you may;  
 Venus comes not every day.

CHORUS OF ALL.

*Take her, take her, etc.*

CHRONOS. The world was then so light,  
 I scarcely felt the weight; 80  
 Joy ruled the day, and Love the night.  
 But since the Queen of Pleasure left the ground,<sup>5</sup>  
     I faint, I lag,  
     And feebly drag  
 The ponderous orb around. 85

MOMUS. All, all of a piece throughout:

[*Pointing to DIANA.*]

Thy chase had a beast in view;

[*To MARS.*]

Thy wars brought nothing about;

[*To VENUS.*]

JANUS. Thy lovers were all untrue.  
 'Tis well an old age is out; 90

CHRONOS. And time to begin a new.

CHORUS OF ALL.

*All, all of a piece throughout:*

*Thy chase had a beast in view;*

*Thy wars brought nothing about;*

*Thy lovers were all untrue. 95*

*'Tis well an old age is out,*

*And time to begin a new.*

[*Dance of huntsmen, nymphs, warriors, and lovers.*]

1700

5. Sir Walter Scott suggested that this line refers to the exiled Queen Mary of Modena, wife of James II.