A PINDARIQUE ODE,
Humbly Offer'd to the QUEEN,
ON THE Victorious Progress of Her MAJESTY's Arms, under the Conduct of the Duke of MARLBOROUGH.

To which is prefixed,
A DISCOURSE on the PINDARIQUE ODE.

By Mr. CONGREVE.

--- Operosa parvus
Tuoque dum procedis, Io triumpha
Non semel dicemus, Io triumpha
Civitas omnis; dabimvs, Divis
Thura benignis.               ibid.

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THE following Ode is an Attempt towards restoring the Regularity of the Ancient Lyric Poetry, which seems to be altogether forgotten or unknown by our English Writers.

There is nothing more frequent among us, than a sort of Poems intituled Pindarique Odes; pretending to be written in Imitation of the Manner and Stile of Pindar, and yet I do not know that there is to this Day extant in our Language, one Ode contriv’d after his Model. What Idea can an English Reader have of Pindar, (to whose Mouth, when a Child, the Bees brought their Honey, in Omen of the future Sweetness and Melody of his Songs,) when he shall see such rumbling and grating Papers of Verses, pretending to be Copies of his Works?

The Character of these late Pindariques, is a Bundle of rambling incoherent Thoughts, express’d in a like parcel of irregular Stanza’s, which also consist of such another Complication of disproportion’d, uncertain and perplex’d Verses and Rhimes. And I appeal to any Reader, if this is not the Condition in which these Titular Odes appear.

On the contrary, there is nothing more regular than the Odes of Pindar, both as to the exact Observation of the Measures and Numbers of his Stanza’s and Verses, and the perpetual Coherence of his Thoughts. For thò his Digressions are frequent, and his Transitions sudden, yet is there ever some secret Connexion, which thò not always appearing to the Eye, never fails to communicate it self to the Understanding of the Reader.

The Liberty which he took in his Numbers, and which has been so misundertoof and misapply’d by his pretended Imitators, was only in varying the Stanza’s in different Odes; but in each particular Ode they are ever Correspondent one to another in their Turns, and according to the Order of the Ode.

All the Odes of Pindar are Songs of Triumph, Victory or Success in the Grecian Games: They were sung by a Chorus, and adapted to the Lyre, and sometimes
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times to the Lyce and (b) Pipe; they consisted of three Stanzas, the first was called the Strophé, from the VERSION or circular Motion of the Singers in that Stanz from the Right Hand to the Left. (c) The second Stanz was called the Antistrophé, from the Contraversion of the Chorus; the Singers, in performing that, turning from the Left Hand to the Right, contrary always to their Motion in the Strophé. — The third Stanz was called the Epode, (it may be as being the After-song) which they sang in the middle, neither turning to one hand nor the other.

What the Origin was of these different Motions and Stations in singing their Odes, is not our present business to enquire. Some have thought that by the Contrariety of the Strophé and Antistrophé, they intended to represent the Contravolution of the Primus Mobile, in respect of the Secundus Mobile; and that by their standing still at the Epode, they meant to signify the Stability of the Earth. (d) Others ascribe the Institution to Theus, who thereby expressed the Windings and Turnings of the Labyrinth in celebrating his Return from thence.

The Method observ'd in the Composition of these Odes, was therefore as follows. The Poet having made choice of a certain Number of Verses to constitute his Strophé or first Stanza, was oblig'd to observe the same in his Antistrophé, or second Stanza; and which accordingly perpetually agreed whenever repeated, both in number of Verses and quantity of Feet. He was then again at liberty, to make a new choice for his third Stanza, or Epode; where, accordingly, he diversify'd his Numbers as his Ear or Fancy led him; composing that Stanz of more or fewer Verses than the former, and these Verses of different Measures and Quantities, for the greater Variety of Harmony, and Entertainment of the Ear.

But then this Epode being thus form'd, he was strictly oblig'd to the same (e) Measure, as often as he should repeat it in the order of his Ode, so that every Epode in the same Ode is eternally the same in Measure and Quantity, in respect to itself, as is also every Strophé and Antistrophé, in respect to each other.

The Lyric Poet Stesichorus (unm) Longinus reckons amongst the ablest Imitators of Homer, and of whom (f) Quintilian says, that if he could have kept within bounds, he would have been nearest of any Body, in Merit, to Homer was, if not the Inventor of this Order in the Ode, yet so strict an Observer of it in his Compositions, that the three Stanzas of Stesichorus became a common Proverb to express a thing universally known, (g) ne tria quidem Stesichori nostris, so that when any one had a mind to reproach another with excessive

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(b) Pind. Olym. 10. (c) Or from the Left to the Right, for the Sophists differ in that, as may be seen in Pind. Schol. Introd. ad Olym. And Alex. ab Alexander, L. 4. C. 17. speaking of the Ceremony of the Chorus, says: Carrum antistatum, a Leva Dexterum, que a Dextra Laevissima. But the Learned Schmidus takes part with the first Opinion, as more conformable with the Notions of the Ancients concerning the Motions of the Heavenly Spheres, and agreeable to Homer there cited by him. See Eras. Schmid. Proleg. in Olym. & de Carmin. Lyric. (d) Pind. Schol. & Schmid. ibid. (e) Vind. Ital. Scal. Poetic. ad Fin. Capt. 97. 1. 5. (f) Longin. de Sub. c. 13. (g) Quint. Inst. l. 10. c. 1. (h) Τι τα τη την Στασιντα γραφειν, de vetementor indeo & imperti dixit. Erasmi, Adag.
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excessive Ignorance, he could not do it more effectually than by telling him, he did not so much as know the Three Stanza's of Stesichorus; that is, did not know that an Ode ought to consist of a Strophe, an Antistrophe, and an Epode. If this was such a mark of Ignorance among them, I am sure we have been pretty long liable to the same Reproof; I mean, in respect of our Imitations of the Odes of Pindar.

My Intention is not to make a long Preface to a short Ode, nor to enter upon a Dissertation of Lyric Poetry in general: But thus much I thought proper to say, for the Information of those Readers whose Course of Study has not led 'em into such Enquiries.

I hope I shall not be so misunderstood, as to have it thought that I pretend to give an exact Copy of Pindar in this ensuing Ode; or that I look upon it as a Pattern for his Imitators for the future: Far from such Thoughts, I have only given an Instance of what is practicable, and am sensible that I am as distant from the Force and Elevation of Pindar, as others have hitherto been from the Harmony and Regularity of his Numbers.

Again, we having no Chorus to sing our Odes, the Titles, as well as Use of Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode, are Obsolete and Impertinent: And certainly there may be very good English Odes, without the Distinction of Greek Appellations to their Stanza's. That I have mention'd 'em here, and observ'd the Order of 'em in the ensuing Ode, is therefore only the more intelligibly to explain the extraordinary Regularity of the Composition of those Odes, which have been represented to us hitherto, as the most confused Structures in Nature.

However, tho' there be no necessity that our Triumphal Odes should consist of the Three afore-mention'd Stanza's; yet if the Reader can observe that the great Variation of the Numbers in the Third Stanza (call it Epode, or what you please) has a pleasing Effect in the Ode, and makes him return to the First and Second Stanza's, with more Appetite, than he could do if always employ'd with the same Quantities and Measures, I cannot see why some Use may not be made of Pindar's Example, to the great Improvement of the English Ode. There is certainly a Pleasure in beholding any Thing that has Art and Difficulty in the Composition; especially, if it appears so carefully executed, that the Difficulty does not show itself, 'till it is sought for; and that the seeming Easiness of the Work, first sets us upon the Enquiry. Nothing can be call'd Beautiful without Proportion. When Symmetry and Harmony are wanting, neither the Eye nor the Ear can be pleas'd. Therefore certainly Poetry, which includes Painting and Muskick, should not be destitute of 'em; and of all Poetry, especially the Ode, whose End and Essence is Harmony.

Mr. Cowley, in his Preface to his Pindarique Odes, speaking of the Muskick of Numbers, says, which sometimes (especially in Songs and Odes) almost without any thing else makes an Excellent Poet.

Having mention'd Mr. Cowley, it may very well be expected, that something should be said of him, at a time when the Imitation of Pindar is the
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Theme of our Discourse. But there is that great Deference due to the Memory, great Part, and Learning of that Gentleman, that I think nothing would be objected to the Latitude he has taken in his Pindarique Odes. The Beauty of his Verses, are an Attonement for the Irregularity of his Stanza's; and tho' he did not imitate Pindar in the Strictness of his Numbers, he has very often happily copy'd him in the Force of his Figures, and Sublimity of his Stile and Sentiments.

Yet I must beg leave to add, that I believe those irregular Odes of Mr. Cowley, may have been the principal, tho' innocent Occasion of so many deformed Poems since, which instead of being true Pictures of Pindar, have (to use the Italian Painters Term) been only Caricatura's of him, Resemblances that for the most part have been either Horrid or Ridiculous.

For my own part I frankly own my Error, in having heretofore mis-call'd a few irregular Stanza's a Pindarique Ode; and possibly, if others, who have been under the same Mislake, would ingenuously confess the Truth, they might own, that never having consulted Pindar himself, they took all his Irregularity upon trust; and finding their Account in the great Ease with which they could produce Odes, without being oblig'd either to Measure or Design, remained satisfied; and it may be were not altogether unwilling to neglect being underwrit'd.

Tho' there be little (if anything) left of Orpheus but his Name, yet if * Paulanier was well inform'd, we may be assur'd that Brevity was a Beauty which he most industriously labour'd to preserve in his Hymns, notwithstanding, as the same Author reports, that they were but few in Number.

The Shortness of the following Ode will, I hope, atone for the Length of the Preface, and in some measure for the Defects which may be found in it. It consists of the same Number of Stanza's with that beautiful Ode of Pindar, which is the first of his Pythicks; and tho' I was unable to imitate him in any other Beauty, I resolved to endeavour to Copy his Brevity, and take the Advantage of a Remark he has made in the last Strophe of the same Ode, which take in the Paraphrase of Sudorius.

Qui multa paucis stringere Commode
Novere, morus hu facile invidos
Spernum, & auris mens' pura
Omne supervacuum rejec'tat.

ODE.

* Beotic. pag. 588.