Elizabeth Carter, â??On the DEATH of Mrs. Roweâ?•

Description

ELIZABETH CARTER

â??On the DEATH of Mrs. Roweâ?•

Oftâ?? did Intrigue its guilty Arts unite,
To blacken the Records of female Wit:
The tuneful Song lost evâ??ry modest Grace,
And lawless Freedoms triumphâ??d in their Place:
The Muse, for Vices not her own accusâ??d,
With Blushes viewâ??d her sacred Gifts abusâ??d;
Those Gifts for nobler Purposes assignâ??d,
To raise the Thoughts, and moralize the Mind;
The chaste Delights of Virtue to inspire,
And warm the Bosom with seraphic Fire;
Sublime the Passions, lend Devotion Wings,
And celebrate the first great CAUSE of Things.

These glorious Tasks were *Philomelaâ??s* Part,
Who charms the Fancy, and who mends the Heart.
In her was evâ??ry bright Distinction joinâ??d,
Whateâ??er adorns, or dignifies the Mind:
Hers evâ??ry happy Elegance of Thought,
Refinâ??d by Virtue, as by Genius wrought.
Each low-born Care her powâ??rful Strains controul,
And wake the nobler Motions of the Soul.
When to the vocal Wood or winding Stream,
She hymnâ??d thâ?? Almighty AUTHOR of its Frame,
Transported Echoes bore the Sounds along,
And all Creation listenâ??d to the Song:
Full, as when rapturâ??d Seraphs strike the Lyre;
Chaste, as the Vestalâ??s consecrated Fire;
Soft as balmy Airs, that gently play
In the calm Sun-set of a vernal Day;
Sublime as Virtue; elegant as Wit;
As Fancy various; and as Beauty sweet.
Applauding Angels with Attention hung,
To learn the heavâ??nly Accents from her Tongue:
They, in the midnight Hour, beheld her rise
Beyond the Verge of sublunary Skies;
Where, rapt in Joys to mortal Sense unknown,

She felt a Flame as extatic as their own.

O while distinguishâ??d in the Realms above,
The blest Abode of Harmony and Love,
Thy happy Spirit joins the heavâ??nly Throng,
Glows with their Transports, and partakes their Song,
Fixt on my Soul shall thy Example grow,
And be my Genius and my Guide below;
To this Iâ??ll point my first, my noblest Views,
Thy spotless Verse shall regulate my Muse.
And O forgive, thoâ?? faint the Transcript be,
That copies an Original like thee:
My justest Pride, my best Attempt for Fame,
That joins my own to *Philomelaâ??s* Name.

NOTES:

Title *Mrs. Rowe* Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674-1737), respected poet, essayist, and fiction writer.

10 *seraphic Fire* â??Rapturous; ecstatically devoutâ?• (*OED*).

13 *Philomela* Roweâ??s pseudonym early in her career. In Greek mythology, Philomela became associated with the nightingaleâ??s song, symbolic of pure poetry.

14 *Fancy* Imagination.

25 *Seraphs* â??Supernatural beings associated with the presence of Godâ?• (*OCB*).

26 *Vestalâ??s* A reference to the vestal virgins â??who had charge of the sacred fire in the temple of Vesta at Romeâ?• (*OED*).

28 *vernal* Summer.

35 *rapt â??To carry away in spirit; to enrapture, transportâ?• (OED).* The copy text reads â??rapâ??d,â?• a printerâ??s error that was corrected to â??raptâ?• only in the fourth edition of 1789.

SOURCE: ***Poems on Several Occasions. The Second Edition*** **(London,1766), pp. 10-12. [Google Books]**

Edited by Sally Mejia