Christopher Smart, â??A Noon-Piece; or, The Mowers at Dinnerâ?•

Description

CHRISTOPHER SMART

â??A Noon-Piece; or, The Mowers at Dinnerâ?•

ODE II.

Jam pastor umbras cum grege languido,
Rivumque fessus quaerit, & horridi
Dumeta Silvani, caretque
Ripa vagis taciturna ventis. HOR[ACE].

The Sun is now too radiant to behold,
And vehement he sheds his liquid Rays of Gold;
No cloud appears throâ?? all the wide expanse;
And short, but yet distinct and clear,
To the wanton whistling air
The mimic shadows dance.

Fat Mirth, and Gallantry the gay,
And romping Extasy â??gin play.
Now Myriads of young Cupids rise,
And open all their joy-bright eyes,
Filling with infant prate the grove,
And lisp in sweetly-faultâ??ring love.
In the middle of the ring,
Mad with May, and wild of wing,
Fire-eyâ??d Wantonness shall sing.

By the rivulet on the rushes,
Beneath a canopy of bushes,
Where the ever-faithful Tray,
Guards the dumplings and the whey,
Colin Clout and Yorkshire Will
From the leathern bottle swill.

Their scythes upon the adverse bank
Glitter â??mongst thâ?? entangled trees,
Where the hazles form a rank,
And courtâ??sy to the courting breeze.

Ah! Harriot! sovereign mistress of my heart,
Could I thee to these meads decoy,

New grace to each fair object thouâ??dst impart,
And heighten evâ??ry scene to perfect joy.

On a bank of fragrant thyme,
Beneath yon stately, shadowy pine,
Weâ??ll with the well-disguised hook
Cheat the tenants of the brook;
Or where coy Daphneâ??s thickest shade
Drives amorous Phoebus from the glade,
There read Sydneyâ??s high-wrought stories
Of ladies charms and heroes glories;
Thence firâ??d, the sweet narration act,
And kiss the fiction into fact.

Or satiate with natureâ??s random scenes,
Letâ??s go to the gardens regulated greens,
Where taste and elegance command
Art to lend her daedal hand,
Where Floraâ??s flock, by nature wild,
To discipline are reconcilâ??d,
And laws and order cultivate,
Quite civilizâ??d into a state.

From the sun, and from the showâ??r,
Haste we to yon boxen bowâ??r,
Secluded from the teizing pry
Of Argusâ?? curiosity:
There, while Phoebusâ?? golden mean,
The gay meridian is seen,
Ere decays the lamp of light,
And lengthâ??ning shades stretch out to nightâ??-

Seize, seize the hintâ??each hour improve
(This is morality in love)
Lend, lend thine handâ??O let me view
Thy parting breasts, sweet avenue!
Thenâ??then thy lips, the coral cell
Where all thâ?? ambrosial kisses dwell!
Thus weâ??ll each sultry noon employ
In day-dreams of exstatic joy.

NOTES:

Epigraph Horace, *Odes*, Book III, no. XXIX, lines 21-24. â??Now the weary shepherd with his languid flock seeks the shade, and the river, and the thickets of rough Sylvanus; and the silent bank is free from the wandering winds.â?• Translation by Christopher Smart, *The Works of Horace Translated Literally into English Prose* (London, 1755).

2 *vehement* â??Of heatâ?¦intense, strongâ?• (*OED*).

5 *wanton* â??Free, unrestrainedâ?• (*OED*).

16 *rivulet* â??A small river; a streamâ?• (*OED*).

18 *Tray* â??A utensil of the form of a flat board with a raised rim, or of a shallow box without a lid, made of wood, metal, or other material, of various sizesâ?• (*OED*).

27 *meads* Meadows; *decoy* â??To entice or allureâ?• (*OED*).

34 *Daphne* â??In Greek mythology, the personification of the laurel;â?• here a reference to laurel bushes (*Britannica*).

35 *Phoebus* â??Apollo as the god of light or of the sun; the sun personifiedâ?• (*OED*).

36 *Sydney* Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), courtier, statesman, soldier, poet; his long pastoral romance, *Arcadia*, was published in 1593 (*Britannica*).

43 *daedal* â??Skilful, cunning to invent or fashionâ?• (*OED*).

44 *Flora* â??In Latin mythology, the goddess of flowers; hence, in modern poetical language, the personification of natureâ??s power in producing flowersâ?• (*OED*).

51 *Argus* â??A mythological person fabled to have had a hundred eyes,â?• hence an allusion to the prying eyes of the curious (*OED*).

60 *coral* Red.

61 *ambrosial* â??Exceptionally sweet or delightfulâ?• (*OED*).

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1752), pp. 9-12. [Google Books]

Edited by Ulises Canchola