

Elizabeth Carter, "On the DEATH of Mrs. Rowe"

Description

ELIZABETH CARTER

On the DEATH of Mrs. Rowe

Oft did Intrigue its guilty Arts unite,  
To blacken the Records of female Wit:  
The tuneful Song lost ev'ry modest Grace,  
And lawless Freedoms triumph'd in their Place:  
The Muse, for Vices not her own accus'd, 5  
With Blushes view'd her sacred Gifts abus'd;  
Those Gifts for nobler Purposes assign'd,  
To raise the Thoughts, and moralize the Mind;  
The chaste Delights of Virtue to inspire,  
And warm the Bosom with seraphic Fire; 10  
Sublime the Passions, lend Devotion Wings,  
And celebrate the first great CAUSE of Things.

These glorious Tasks were *Philomela's* Part,  
Who charms the Fancy, and who mends the Heart.  
In her was ev'ry bright Distinction join'd, 15  
Whate'er adorns, or dignifies the Mind:  
Hers ev'ry happy Elegance of Thought,  
Refin'd by Virtue, as by Genius wrought.  
Each low-born Care her pow'rful Strains controul,  
And wake the nobler Motions of the Soul. 20  
When to the vocal Wood or winding Stream,  
She hymn'd th' Almighty AUTHOR of its Frame,  
Transported Echoes bore the Sounds along,  
And all Creation listen'd to the Song:  
Full, as when raptur'd Seraphs strike the Lyre; 25  
Chaste, as the Vestal'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. 30

Applauding Angels with Attention hung,  
To learn the heav'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, 35  
She felt a Flame as extatic as their own.

O while distinguish'd in the Realms above,  
The blest Abode of Harmony and Love,

Thy happy Spirit joins the heav'nly Throng,  
Glows with their Transports, and partakes their Song, 40

Fixt on my Soul shall thy Example grow,  
And be my Genius and my Guide below;  
To this I point my first, my noblest Views,

Thy spotless Verse shall regulate my Muse.  
And O forgive, tho' faint the Transcript be, 45  
That copies an Original like thee:

My justest Pride, my best Attempt for Fame,  
That joins my own to *Philomela's* Name.

**NOTES:**

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

**10** *seraphic Fire* = Rapturous; ecstatically devout (OED).

**13** *Philomela* Rowe's pseudonym early in her career. In Greek mythology, Philomela became associated with the nightingale's song, symbolic of pure poetry.

**14** *Fancy* Imagination.

**25** *Seraphs* = Supernatural beings associated with the presence of God (OED).

**26** *Vestal* A reference to the vestal virgins who had charge of the sacred fire in the temple of Vesta at Rome (OED).

**28** *vernal* Summer.

**35** *rapt* = To carry away in spirit; to enrapture, transport (OED). The copy text reads "rap'd," a printer's error that was corrected to "rapt" 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 Meja*