

The poems

of

Christopher Codrington

(1668-1710)

[Codrington on the birth of the Prince of Wales, 1688]

Goddess to urge Me on forbear,  
Or make my Song thy favourite Care,  
No languid Heats I'le now receive;  
Thou must the noblest inspiration give.  
With feeble Airs and with unequal lays 5  
I'le not the mighty Theam debase.  
Feeble Ayrs unheard will dye  
Drown'd and undistinguish'd in the general Harmony.  
First strike Our Souls and mark the Tone,  
Then all thy strongest Wires put on; 10  
Our Souls are tund to mighty Joy,  
Thy Sounds, thy Muse must rise as high,  
Thy sounds must bear a part in the great Symphony.

2.

Heard Ye the Melodious Shout,  
'Twas wondrous loud, yet pleasant too, 15  
(*James's* Coronation shouts were so)  
Some Ayry Nuncius sure has been sent out  
And solemnly proclaim'd the ravishing News  
In the lowd brass which Herald Angels use.  
*Britain* with one conspiring tongue 20  
(And why should many tongues convey  
The sense of Souls which every where agree?)  
Pows out one universal Song.  
The Vigorous Musick widely flows,  
The Vigorous Musick gathers as it goes, 25  
For Heaven it self does sympathize,  
And to the Gladsom Noise triumphantly reply's.  
The British Rocks next catch the sound  
Which to the Neighbouring Seas from thence does bound;  
The Seas inform'd crowd to the Shore, 30  
And fain they would some Tribute pay  
To the young God they one time must obey,  
But Rocks forbid, they murmuring retire and roar.

3.

I'm Heard, the Goddess owns my Choice,  
And with unwonted fury fills my Brest, 35  
The Goddess is her self possest;  
Lowdly she bids me lift my Voice,  
And to the listning Earth

Proclaim the Tidings of the Illustrious Birth.  
 Young Heroes are the Muses Care 40  
 (Heroes and Poets equally are dear)  
 Ev'n from the Womb the Heaven-born Boy they take  
 And early Covenants of Glory Make.  
 With Artful Hands they mould the yielding Clay,  
 And all the Dross of Nature purge away; 45  
 From Baseness and Dishonest Cares,  
 From sordid Hopes and foolish fears,  
 They guard the Promising Infant, and improve  
 The tender Seeds of Courage and of Love.

4.

The Goddess has assistant been 50  
 To many a Teeming Heroine,  
 She *Castors* Navel cut, and *Perseus* Head  
 With her own hands she fashioned.  
 From the Thunder blasted Dame  
 She tore the half burnt Son: 55  
 Fild him with early love of Fame,  
 And to the *Indian* Conquests urg'd Him on.  
 Those Heroes might the nine divide,  
 But the whole train with decent state  
 On Fair *Maria's* Throws did wait, 60  
 And stir'd not from the Royal Matron's labouring side,  
 By Gentle tales they did soft ease convey;  
 They told her what the Boy should be,  
 How lov'd on Land, how fam'd on Sea,  
 By lulling Airs, and Powerful strains 65  
 They Charm'd the Evil spirit of pains,  
 And wip'd the Big round drops of Balmy sweat away.

5.

With forward Zeal the Eldest Grace,  
 The Heaven-born Offspring first did bless,  
 And wish'd the Monarch and the Nation Joy; 70  
 The Muses next with Jealous Love  
 Snatch'd away the smiling Boy,  
 Resolv'd the Workmanship to prove  
 With Care impartial and with piercing Eyes,  
 With observation more than nice 75  
 They view his Body and his Face,  
 And every Line and every Feature trace.  
 The Sterling Meddal [sic] bore the Test

And its Divine Original confest.  
The God of Heat with Violent Rays, 80  
Deep, wondrous deep prepar'd the Mass,  
*James* did the Golden Mine explore  
And struck his Image on the shining Ore.

6.

Begin young *James*, begin thy Glorious Race,  
Great is the Prize, and long must be the Chace; 85  
Attend not Thou performing Manhoods state,  
Nor lagging days and hours inglorious wait.  
Fond Love! 'tis vain to urge him on  
Young *James* already has begun,  
Earlier than *Alcides* He and Nobler Acts has done. 90  
Ev'n in the Womb a dreadful War  
Our Heroe manag'd from afar;  
By unseen influence strong darts he threw,  
And Factions many Headed Hydra slew.  
When the Glad Tydings first went out 95  
And Pious Holocausts declar'd  
The mighty things that Heaven and *James* had wrought,  
Ere the warm God with amorous light  
The Infants lovely Eyes had Kist,  
The Serpents too the Tydings Heard, 100  
They Heard, and strait they were accurst.  
With all their venomous Tongues they hist,  
They flung, they grin'd, they rag'd for spight,  
In vain they rag'd, they spouted Fire in vain,  
The Poison they receive again, 105  
And with Black Blood and Envy sweld, in thousand pieces burst.

7.

Once more My Goddess hear thy Priest,  
Indulge Me, O Indulge this last Request,  
The mightiest Boon thou hast in store  
I ask, but grant, and I will ask no more. 110  
O let me enter to the inmost Room  
The Darkn'd Retirement of *Apollo's* Dome,  
The Sacred Mirror there expose,  
The wondrous Magick Glass;  
Which from its bright reflective face 115  
Fates inmost Secrets shows,  
And great futurities already come to pass:  
There I would view (when *James* shall late repair

8.

In the first Orbs to shine a Star,  
 And Guide with Guardian Rays his People from afar) 120  
     There I would view his Godlike Son  
     With shouts ascend his Fathers Throne,  
 And Chear with mighty hopes the drooping *Albion*;  
     Next Goddess, I would see him Reign,  
 Crown'd and uncontroul'd, the Monarch of the Main. 125  
     Whilst Humbled Belgians sue for Peace  
 And the far East and West the British Power confess;  
     Let him next on Land appear  
     Bold, and yet Cautious, open and yet Wise,  
 Generous, yet Frugal, Good without disguise; 130  
 With Justice mild, and Piously severe.  
     Shew Me Goddess, shew Me This,  
 And let thine Oracles to Morrow cease.

Alass [sic]! The Muse the well meant Prayer denys,  
     She struts, frowns, and thus reply's, 135  
 With Curious folly and with Zeal profane  
     The Uneasy *Britains* still would Pry  
 Into the depths of late futurity,  
 Whilst Heaven shows present Blessings down in Vain.  
 What Times shall come, and what the Fates will do 140  
     Concerns not thee O Man to know;  
 To Day is thine, O seize the Useful Now.  
     But nothing happy Men can Please  
 Wanton and Lawless grown with Luxury and Ease.  
 Whilst other Realms by Tyranny opprest 145  
 Have War or Famine for a constant Guest,  
 While Rage and Rapine mock the labourers Toil,  
 And wretched Exiles quit their Native Soil,  
     On this happy Favorite Isle,  
     Heaven seems with all its Eyes to smile; 150  
     Justice, here and Plenty flows,  
     And Peace the Halcyon Land has Chose,  
     What! *Britains*, what can more be sent?  
 What would your Boundless Avarice content?  
     Bounteous Heaven has done its best, 155  
     Sit down, and be by present Fortune blest,  
 And to the Gods and *Cæsar* leave the rest.

*Christ. Codrington.*

Christ-Church

Text from *Strenae Natalitiae Academiae Oxoniensis in Celsissimum Principem* (Oxford, 1688), unpaginated (italic and Roman text reversed).

[Codrington's praise of King William III, 1690]

Suscipe & hæc, *Gulielme*, suas habet *India* Lauros:  
Quæque velit sacris texere sarta comis.  
*Occiduas Genitor* dum fulminat acer ad *oras*,  
Et regit auspiciis aspera corda *Tuis*,  
Da Veniam si *Me*, placidam indignata quietem, 5  
Patria vis, & non degener ardor agit;  
Incaluit venturæ animus sub Imagine pugnæ,  
Hectoreasque affert in Tua bella faces.  
Interea tamen hos calamus Tibi ludat honores,  
Cætera mox, Stricto cum micet ense manus. 10

*Chris. Codrington, ex Æde Christi Sup. Ord. Comm.*

[Receive these also, William; the Indies have their laurels, and garlands which they would wish to weave into your sacred hair. While my bold father thunders on the western shores and rules rough hearts under your auspices, forgive me if I am stirred by an inherited nature which is indignant at slothful ease, and by a zeal which is not unworthy of him. My spirit grows warm at the thought of the battle to come, and brings the boldness of a Hector to your wars. For now, I praise you in song, but soon I will do so sword in hand.]

Latin text from *Academiae Oxoniensis Gratulatio Pro Exoptato Serenissimi Regis Gulielmi [sic] ex Hibernia Reditu* (Oxford, 1690; unpaginated); translation by John T. Gilmore.

“on Lady Elizabeth Cromwells Birth Day by Coll: Codrington”. Written between c. 1690 and 1700.

Blest be this day this Happy glorious day  
That Gave The Faire Eliza: to The Light  
Markt out by Fate with a distinctive Ray  
To wait upon A virgin yet more Bright  
Let The world Bless even I A wretch forlorne 5  
Slave to Her Eyes and victime to Her scorne

Will Bless this day the source of all my woe  
 Will Bless The day and Bless y<sup>c</sup> virgin too  
 This day In after calender<sup>s</sup> shall weare  
 The Brightest Red of all the Roling yeare 10  
 Through endless Ages kept alive by Fame  
 As consecrated to Eliz<sup>as</sup>. name  
 The formost day of twelve revolving Moons  
 Those of The saints and glorys darling son<sup>s</sup>.  
 That which draws on y<sup>c</sup> Beavtys of the yeare 15  
 When gaudy Flou'rs and chaster greens Appeare  
 & quitting these Ancient preveledg and state  
 Shall on Eliz<sup>as</sup>. day in Triumph wate  
 Butt oh what Blessings shall y<sup>c</sup> nymph Atend  
 What vows for her or whether shall I send } 20  
 For shou'd I pray my knee<sup>s</sup>. to her wou'd bend }  
 Forgetting what my piety had ment  
 She wou'd not be my subject but my Saint  
 But cou'd I my increasing pains beguile  
 And steal my prayers from my own wants a while 25  
 What cou'd I wish the noble virgin more  
 What new Inlargements cou'd Inrich her Store  
 Who has what Beavty Honner witt and wealth can give  
 Just as she is long may Eliz<sup>a</sup>.: Live  
 In every thing but own (I mean) the same 30  
 Still be her self but kinder to my flame  
 No Bounty can her mighty stock distroy  
 For she has endless Treasurys of joy  
 She'l nothing lose tho' she shou'd give me Ease  
 Since giveing provedence finds no decrease 35  
 And she (perhaps) like heaven In all the rest  
 Wou'd be In this wou'd she but beare the Test  
 Most In communicating < > blessing Blest  
 Accept Bright Maid these unfeign'd wishes drest  
 By Artless love in its own Garb In Hast 40  
 From The poor swain who doubly wounded lyes  
 By Fortuns spite and by Eliza<sup>s</sup> eyes  
 But oh what other pain can touch His Heart  
 Who Feels unpitty'd Loves eternall Smart

Text from J. A. V. Chapple, "Christopher Codrington's Verses to Elizabeth Cromwell,"  
*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 60 (1961), pp. 75-78; Chapple  
 transcribed the poem from a seventeenth-century manuscript collection in the Borough  
 Library at Derby.

[Commendatory poem in praise of Garth's *The Dispensary*, 1699]

*To my Friend the Author, desiring my Opinion of his Poem.*

Ask me not, Friend, what I Approve or Blame,	}	
Perhaps I know not why I like, or Damn;		
I can be Pleas'd; and I dare own I am.	}	
I read Thee over with a Lover's Eye,		
Thou hast no Faults, or I no Faults can spy;	}	5
Thou art all Beauty, or all Blindness I.		
Criticks, and aged Beaux of Fancy chast,	}	
Who ne'er had Fire, or else whose Fire is past,		
Must judge by Rules what they want Force to Taste.	}	
I wou'd a Poet, like a Mistress, try,		
Not by her Hair, her Hand, her Nose, her Eye;	}	10
But by some Nameless Pow'r, to give me Joy.		
The Nymph has <i>Grafton's</i> , <i>Cecil's</i> , <i>Churchil's</i> Charms,	}	
If with resistless Fires my Soul she warms		
With Balm upon her Lips, and Raptures in her Arms.	}	15
Such is thy Genius, and such Art is thine,		
Some secret Magick works in ev'ry Line;	}	
We judge not, but we feel the Pow'r Divine.		
Where all is Just, is Beauteous, and is Fair,	}	
Distinctions vanish of peculiar Air.		
Lost in our Pleasure, we Enjoy in you	}	20
<i>Lucretius</i> , <i>Horace</i> , <i>Sheffeld</i> [sic], <i>Mountague</i> [sic].		
And yet 'tis thought, some Criticks in this Town,	}	
By Rules to all, but to themselves, unknown		
Will Damn thy Verse and Justify their own.	}	25
Why, let them Damn: Were it not wondrous hard		
Facetious <i>Mirmil</i> , and the City-Bard,	}	
So near ally'd in Learning, Wit, and Skill,		
Shou'd not have leave to Judge, as well as Kill?	}	
Nay, let them write; Let them their Forces Join,		
And hope the Motly Piece may Rival thine.	}	30
Safely despise their Malice, and their Toil,		
Which Vulgar Ears alone will reach, and will defile.	}	
Be it thy Gen'rous Pride to please the Best,		
Whose Judgment, and whose Friendship is a Test.	}	35
With Learned <i>Hannes</i> thy healing Cares be join'd,		
Search thoughtful <i>Rotcliffe</i> to his inmost Mind:	}	
Unite, restore your Arts, and save Mankind.		
Whilst all the busie <i>Mirmils</i> of the Town	}	
Envy our Health, and pine away their own.		
When e'er thou wou'dst a Tempting Muse engage,	}	40
Judicious <i>Walsh</i> can best direct her Rage.		



To *Sommers*, and to *Dorset* too submit,  
 And let their Stamp immortalize thy Wit.  
 Consenting *Phæbus* bows, if they Approve, 45  
 And Ranks thee with the foremost Bards above:  
 Whilst these of Right the Deathless Laurel Send, }  
 Be it my Humble Bus'ness to Commend }  
 The faithful, honest Man, and the well-natur'd Friend.

Chr. Codrington.

Text from: [Samuel Garth], *The Dispensary: A Poem*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: John Nutt, 1699); italic and Roman type reversed. This was the first edition to include Codrington's poem and other additional material. The third edition (also 1699) changed "*Mirmil*, and the City-Bard," (l. 27) to "M----- and the City-B----", and "*Mirmils*" (l. 39) to "M----ls". The fourth edition (1700) kept these changes and also altered l. 13 to "The Nymph has G-----n's, C---l's, C-----l's Charms" and the names in ll. 36, 37, 42 and 43 were obscured in a similar manner.

Later editions kept these changes, but were often bound with the anonymous *A Compleat Key to the Dispensary written by Sir Samuel Garth, M.D.* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., London: Thomas Astley, 1746), or another edition of this work, which explained (or purported to explain) obscure references in Garth's own poem and the accompanying material. Those mentioned in l. 13 of Codrington's poem were: (1) Isabella Bennet (c. 1668-1723), Countess of Arlington in her own right, and wife to the first Duke of Grafton; (2) while the *Key* suggests that "Cecil" was "the late Countess of Salisbury", the reference is probably to Lady Margaret Cecil (1672/3-1728), Countess of Ranelagh, and daughter of the third Earl of Salisbury; (3) while the *Key* suggests that "Churchil" was "one of the Duke of *Marlborough*'s Daughters", it is more likely that the reference is to Sarah Churchill (1660-1744), Countess and later Duchess of Marlborough. All three were well known at the court of King William III at the time Codrington's poem was written, and all three were married. In l. 22, "Sheffeld" was John Sheffield (1647-1721), first Duke of Buckingham and Normanby, while "Mountague" was Charles Montagu, Earl of Halifax (1661-1715); both of them were major politicians who also enjoyed a significant reputation as writers. "Mirmil" (l. 27), referred to by Garth in his poem as Mirmillo (perhaps after a type of ancient Roman gladiator), was William Gibbons (1649-1728), a London physician, while "the City-Bard" was Sir Richard Blackmore (1654-1729), physician and writer. The "Learned *Hannes*" (l. 36) was Edward Hannes (1663/4-1710; knighted 1705), physician and poet, whom Codrington probably knew at Christ Church. "Rotcliffe" (l. 37) was John Radcliffe (baptised 1650, died 1714), a highly successful physician best remembered for his substantial donations to the University of Oxford. He was a rival of Hannes, opposed Garth over the *Dispensary*, and was to be attacked by Blackmore in his *Eliza: An Epic Poem* (1705) under the character of Roderigo Lopez, the physician who had been executed in 1594 for his alleged involvement in a plot to poison Queen Elizabeth I. "Walsh" (l. 42) is William Walsh (bap. 1662, d. 1708), a poet praised by Dryden as "the best Critick of our Nation", and an influence on the young Alexander Pope. Codrington had met Walsh in Paris in 1698 (Vincent Harlow, *Christopher Codrington*, p. 86) and Walsh was one of the contributors to the attacks on

Blackmore in *Commendatory Verses* (1700). "Sommers" (l. 43) was John Somers (1651-1716, first Baron Somers from 1697), a lawyer and politician who was an important patron of literature and a book collector on a grand scale, while Charles Sackville (1643-1706), sixth Earl of Dorset and first Earl of Middlesex, was prominent as a poet and patron.

[Codrington's attack on Sir Richard Blackmore, 1700]

*A short and True History of the Author of the Satyr against Wit.*

By Nature meant, by Want a Pedant made, Bl-----re at first profess'd the Whipping Trade; Grown fond of Buttocks, he wou'd Lash no more, But kindly Cur'd the A--- he Gall'd before. So Quack commenc'd; then, fierce with Pride, he swore,	5
That Tooth-ach, Gripes, and Corns shou'd be no more. In vain his Druggs as well as Birch he try'd, His Boys grew Blackheads, and his Patients dy'd. Next he turn'd Bard, and mounted on a Cart,	10
Whose hideous Rumbling made <i>Apollo</i> start, Burlesqu'd the Bravest, Wisest SON of <i>Mars</i> In Ballad-rhimes, and all the Pomp of Farce. Still he chang'd Callings, and at length has hit On Bus'ness for his matchless Talent fit, To give us Drenches for the Plague of Wit.	} 15

Text from *Commendatory Verses, on the Author of the Two Arthurs, and the Satyr against Wit; by some of his particular friends* (London, 1700), pp. 1-2. Attributed to Codrington in *The Fourth and Last Volume of the Works of Mr. Thomas Brown*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1713), p. 185. On the question of attribution, see W. J. Cameron, "The authorship of *Commendatory Verses*, 1700", *Notes and Queries* (1963) 10 (2): 62-66.

[Epilogue to *The Fate of Capua*, 1700]

Epilogue.

*Written by Coll. Codrington, and Spoken by Mrs. Barry.*

Poets fine Titles for themselves may find: I think 'em the Fool-mongers of Mankind. The charitable Quacks indeed pretend, They trade in Fools, only those Fools to mend. Yet they wou'd scarce the nauseous Task endure, But that, like <i>Bedlam</i> Doctors, they are sure To get, by showing Fools they cannot cure. Equal in this, all Plays must be confest;	} 5
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Fool is the fav'rite dish of the whole Feast.  
 In Farce, the Wit's a Fool, or Fool's a Wit. 10  
 In Comedy, the *Beau* pretends a right.  
 But Tragick Writers still agree to plot  
 The greatest Heroe, for the greatest Sot.  
 Our Bard t'indulge your Taste with vast delight,  
 Serv'd up a Senate full of Fools to Night: 15  
 Some bustled hard for *Hannibal*, and some  
 Wou'd venture all the Brains they had for *Rome*.  
 Thus fighting Fools support ambitious Knaves:  
 Whoe're prevail'd, the *Capuans* still were Slaves.  
 Our pair of Friends shine far above the rest, 20  
 With double share of Fool, and Heroe blest.  
 Our Lover wou'd not tempt the Lady's Honour;  
 Yet had he boldly pusht, and fairly won her, }  
 You'll all allow, he wou'd less harm have done her.  
 Joys well contriv'd are had at easier price. 25  
 Thank Heav'n our *British* Friends are not so nice.  
 Our most important Fool is still behind:  
 The Man was marry'd, Sirs, and sick in mind.  
 'Twas a meer whim of Honour cost his Life.  
 The squeamish *Capuan* wou'd not share his Wife. 30  
 Why Wives are Wives: And he that will be billing,  
 Must not think Cuckoldom deserves a killing.  
 What if the gentle Creature had been kissing,  
 Nothing the good Man marry'd for, was missing.  
 Besides the Rights of Ladies sacred are: 35  
 He shou'd have been content with Neighbours Fare.  
 But she, by her coy Gallant's Crime, was good,  
 And was not won, because she was not woo'd.  
 Had he the secret of his Birth-right known, }  
 'Tis odd the faithful Annals wou'd have shown, 40  
 The Wives of half this Race, more luckie than his own. }

Text from: Thomas Southerne, *The Fate of Capua: A Tragedy* (London: Benjamin Tooke, 1700), pp. [vii-viii]; italic and Roman type reversed.

[Epilogue to *Iphigenia*, 1700]

*Epilogue, by Coll. Codrington.*

Our Bard shall end to night, as He began,  
 Prologue, Play, Epilogue shall speak the Man, }  
 Shew a more Tragick Poet if you can.

With Pride he owns that he would gain your Hearts,	
But he will use no little Whorish Arts.	5
With Pride he owns, that 'tis his glorious Aim	
To court and to possess the Tragick Dame.	
How can he court, or how can he possess,	
Who shames the Goddess by a forein [sic] Dress?	
That decks her like a trivial merry Muse,	10
Or a rank Strumpet, strolling from the Stews.	
Yet thus disguis'd she oft has here been shown,	
To all her genuine Votaries unknown,	
Yet still you thought the motly Garb her own.	
Oft have you seen her with the Comick Muse,	15
Walk hand in hand, Grimace and Posture use,	
Debase her Majesty and Terror lose.	
What needs such Art your kind Applause to win	
What need such Farce to drive away your Spleen,	
Who thus are pleas'd have Farce enough within.	20
Our Bard resolves to steer a diff'rent course,	
And travels upwards to the <i>Grecian</i> source.	
Where he at first saw the chaste, awful Maid,	
And with observing Eyes her Charms survey'd.	
Those Charms he would with a bold hand express,	25
Nor make 'em fainter by an <i>English</i> Dress.	
To please the Great, the Gen'rous, and the Fair,	
Shall ever be his Pride, and be his Care.	
Next he would stand the knowing Criticks test,	
To Fortune unconcern'd he leaves the rest.	30
For well he knows the Ignorant and the Base	
Scatter in waste their Censure and their Praise.	

Text from: John Dennis, *Iphigenia: A Tragedy* (London: Richard Parker, 1700), p. 60; italic and Roman type reversed.

[Some poems doubtfully attributed to Codrington omitted.]