

## Poetry for Reading or Singing? — Purcell, Dryden, Dramatic Opera and the musicality of the Iambic Pentameter

### Ex. 1 — Davenant, *The Siege of Rhodes* (The Fourth Entry)

The Scene is vary'd to the Prospect of Mount *Philermus*: Artificers appearing at work about that Castle which was there, with wonderful expedition, erected by *Solyman*. His great Army is discovered in the Plain below, drawn up in *Battalia*, as if it were prepar'd for a general Assault.

*The Entry is again prepar'd by Instrumental Musick.*

The Fourth Entry.

Enter *Solyman*, *Pirrhus*, *Mustapha*.

*Solyman*.

Refuse my Pass-port, and resolve to dye;  
Only for fashions sake, for company?  
Oh costly scruples! But I'll try to be,  
Thou stubborn Honour, obstinate as thee.  
My Pow'r thou shalt not vanquish by thy will,  
I will enforce to live whom thou would'st kill.

*Pirrhus*.

They in to morrows storm will change their mind,  
Then, though too late instructed, they shall find,  
That those who your protection dare reject  
No humane Power dares venture to protect.  
They are not Foes, but Rebels, who withstand  
The pow'r that does their Fate command.

*Soly*

Oh *Mustapha*, our strength we measure ill,  
We want the half of what we think we have;  
For we enjoy the Beast-like pow'r to kill,  
But not the God-like pow'r to save.  
Who laughs at Death, laughs at our highest Pow'r;  
The valiant man is his own Emperour.

### Ex. 2 — Davenant, *The Siege of Rhodes* (The Second Entry)

*Admir*. France strives to have her Lillies grow as fair  
In others Realms as where they Native are.

*Viller*. The *English Lyon* ever loves to change  
His Walks, and in remoter Forrests range.

*Chorus*. All gaining vainly from each others loss;  
Whilst still the *Crescent* drives away the *Cross*.

Enter *Alphonso*.

*Alphon*.

1. How bravely fought the fiery *French*.  
Their Bulwark being storm'd?  
The colder *Almans* kept their Trench,  
By more than Valour warm'd.
2. The grave *Italians* paus'd and fought,  
The solemn *Spaniards* too;  
Study'ng more Deaths than could be wrought  
By what the rash could do.
3. Th' *Avergnian* Colours high were rais'd,  
Twice tane, and twice reliev'd.  
Our Foes, like Friends to Valour, prais'd  
The mischiefs they receiv'd.
4. The cheerfull *English* got renown;  
Fought merrily and fast:  
'Tis time, they cry'd, to mow them down,  
Wars Harvest cannot last.
5. If Death be Rest, here let us dye,  
Where weariness is all  
We dayly get by Victory,  
Who must by Famine fall.
6. Great *Solyman* is landed now;  
All Fate he seems to be;  
And brings those Tempests in his Brow  
Which he deserv'd at Sea.

Ex. 3a — from *Cleomenes: The Spartan Heroe* (Act II scene II)

*Cassand.* Our little Entertainment waits; not worth  
A longer Ceremony, please to Grace it.

*The SCENE opens and discovers Cassandra's Apartment.  
Musicians and Dancers — Ptolemy leads in Cassandra,  
Sofybius follows — they Sit. Towards the end of the Song and  
Dance; Enter Cleomenes and Cleanthes on one side of the  
Stage, where they stand.*

**SONG**

*No, no, poor suffer'ing Heart, no Change endeavour,  
Choose to sustain the smart, rather than leave her;  
My ravish'd Eyes behold such Charms about her,  
I can dye with her, but not live without her.  
One tender Sigh of hers to see me Languish,  
Will more than pay the price of my past Anguish:  
Beware O cruel Fair, how you smile on me,  
'Twas a kind Look of yours that has undone me.*

*Love has in store for me one happy Minute,  
And She will end my pain who did begin it;  
Then no day void of Bliss, or Pleasure leaving,  
Ages shall slide away without perceiving:  
Cupid shall guard the Door the more to please us,  
And keep out Time and Death when they would seize us:  
Time and Death shall depart, and fly in flying,  
Love has found out a way to Live by Dying.*

[ 1 ]

O, no poor suffering heart, no change en — deavour, chuse to suf —  
—tain the smart rather than leave her; My ravish'd Eyes behold such Charms about her,  
I can dye with her, but not live with-out her: One tender sigh of her's  
to see me Languish, will more than pay the price of my past Anguish, beware, oh  
Cruel, fair how you Smile on me, 'twas a kind look of yours that has undone me.

**R.**  
Love has in store for me one happy minute,  
And she will end my pain who did begin it;  
Then no day void of Bliss, and Pleasure leaving,  
Ages shall slide away without perceiving:  
Cupid shall guard the Door, the more to please us,  
And keep out Time, and Death, when they would seize us,  
Time and Death shall depart, and fly in flying,  
Love has found out a way to Live by dying.

**B**

The Words by Mr. Dryden. Set by Mr. Purcell