

POEMS. VOL. II

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Poems. Vol. II by George Dyer

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GEORGE DYER

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P O E M S.

BY

G E O R G E D Y E R.

V O L. II.

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ERRATA, VOL. II.

Essay on Representative Poetry, p. 15. l. 13. for *Editor* read *Editors*.—p. 22. l. 3. for *Pratexta* read *Prætexta*; note † belongs to p. 23.

Poems, p. 35. l. 7. for *art* read *wit*.—p. 59. l. 13. for *iban* read *iban*.—p. 63. l. 6. for *fears* read *fear*.

E S S A Y
ON
REPRESENTATIVE POETRY.

A FEW reflections have already been introduced on the character of lyrical compositions. We now return to the subject: the view, however, to be here taken of it will be different from that in the Introductory Essay. Indeed, though lyrical poetry is the proper subject of the following remarks, yet the chapter assumes a more characteristic title. Odes put on various forms, and move to very different measures: I shall now consider such only as are of an imitative, or, to speak, perhaps, more properly, of a representative nature.

Poetry, in reference to the person employed in it, is threefold. The poet must either speak in his own person, or he must assume a character ; or he must sometimes speak in his own person, and sometimes in the character of another. In the first case, we may call his compositions, narrative ; in the second, representative and dramatic ; in the last, the mixt character *.

All poetry, which is not original, that is, founded in the exercise of the poet's own genius, on his own feelings, on human manners, or natural objects, must be either translation, imitation of other poets, or representative of other persons and manners.

Translation is the conveying of a writer's sentiments from one language into another. This

* Scaliger, Poet. L. v. cap. 3.

exercise may be performed either, as it were, verbatim, by what is called literal translation ; or by a more liberal, though still a legitimate, interpretation of an author's meaning ; with the distinct excellencies and defects of which, whether a translator should consider himself merely as the *fidus interpres*, or attempt, in some measure, the manner of an original, I shall not, at present, intermeddle ; only adding, that the true meaning of his author should be preserved, yet the idioms of the two languages be kept distinct. On the subject of Imitation I beg leave to be a little copious.

All poetry, in its generic nature, has been considered, and has been so defined by Plato, Aristotle*, and subsequent critics, as Imitation ; in reference,

* See Aristotle, *ὡς τὸ Παιχνίδιον*, pars prima.

however, to nature only, as its great model or exemplar. Epic poetry, comedy, tragedy, lyric poetry, are all, in this sense, imitation. Other arts, painting, sculpture, and in some sort, music, are also in like manner, though in different degrees, imitative, —for they by no means coincide with those critics, who have entirely excluded music from the imitative arts*.

Our attention has been hitherto confined to that style of composition, in which the writer appears in his own person. Here he is evidently limited in his subjects, as well as in his mode of treating them. For though poetry, by its very

* See Beattie on Poetry and Music, p. 138. who largely discusses the subject, that music is not an imitative art. I am happy to accord in sentiment on this subject with two ingenious writers. See Webb's Observations on Poetry and Music, and Twining's second Essay, prefixed to his translation of Aristotle's Poetics.