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bines, and jeſſamines, may flower together, and his beds be covered at the ſame time with lilies, violets, and amaranths. His ſoil is not reſtrained to any particular ſett of plants, but is proper either for oaks or myrtles, and adapts it ſelf to the products of every climate. Oranges may grow wild in it; myrrh may be met with in every hedge, and if he thinks it proper to have a grove of ſpices, he can quickly command Sun enough to raiſe it. If all this will not furniſh out an agreeable ſcene, he can make ſeveral new ſpecies of flowers, with richer ſcents and higher colours, than any that grow in the gardens of nature. His conſorts of birds may be as full and harmonious, and his woods as thick and gloomy as he pleaſes. He is at no more expence in a long viſta, than a ſhort one, and can as eaſily throw his caſcades from a precipice of half a mile high, as from one of twenty yards. He has his choice of the winds, and can turn the courſe of his rivers in all the variety of *Meanders*, that are moſt delightful to the Reader's imagination. In a word, he has the modelling of nature in his own hands, and may give her what charms he pleaſes, provided he does not reform her too much, and run into abſurdities, by endeavouring to excel.

N° 419. *Tueſday, July* 1.

------mentis gratiſſimus Error. Hor.

THERE is a kind of writing, wherein the Poet quite loſes ſight of nature, and entertains his Reader's imagination with the characters and actions of ſuch perſons as have many of them no exiſtence, but what he beſtows on them. Such are fairies, witches, magicians, demons, and departed ſpirits. This Mr. *Dryden* calls *the Fairy way of writing*, which is, indeed, more difficult than any other that depends on the Poet's fancy, becauſe he has no pattern to follow in it, and muſt work altogether out of his own invention.

There is a very odd turn of thought required for this ſort of writing, and it is impoſſible for a Poet to ſucceed in it, who has not a particular caſt of fancy, an imagination naturally fruitful and ſuperſtitious. Beſides this,

this, he ought to be very well verſed in Legends and Fables, antiquated Romances, and the traditions of nurſes and old women, that he may fall in with our natural prejudices, and humour thoſe notions which we have imbibed in our infancy. For, otherwiſe, he will be apt to make his Fairies talk like people of his own ſpecies, and not like other ſetts of Beings, who converſe with different objects, and think in a different manner from that of mankind;

Sylvis deducti caveant, me judice, Fauni
Ne velut innati triviis ac pæne forenſes
Aut nimium teneris juvenentur verſibus——— Hor.

I do not ſay with Mr. *Bays* in the *Rehearſal*, that Spirits muſt not be confined to ſpeak ſenſe, but it is certain their ſenſe ought to be a little diſcoloured, that it may ſeem particular, and proper to the perſon and the condition of the ſpeaker.

Theſe deſcriptions raiſe a pleaſing kind of horrour in the mind of the Reader, and amuſe his imagination with the ſtrangeneſs and novelty of the perſons who are repreſented in them. They bring up into our memory the ſtories we have heard in our childhood, and favour thoſe ſecret terrors and apprehenſions to which the mind of man is naturally ſubject. We are pleaſed with ſurveying the different habits and behaviours of foreign countries, how much more muſt we be delighted and ſurprized when we are led, as it were, into a new creation, and ſee the perſons and manners of another ſpecies? Men of cold fancies, and philoſophical diſpoſitions, object to this kind of poetry, that is has not probability enough to affect the imagination. But to this it may be anſwered, that we are ſure, in general, there are many intellectual Beings in the world beſides our ſelves, and ſeveral ſpecies of ſpirits, who are ſubject to different laws and oeconomies from thoſe of mankind; when we ſee, therefore, any of theſe repreſented naturally, we cannot look upon the repreſentation as altogether impoſſible; nay, many are prepoſſeſt with ſuch falſe opinions, as diſpoſe them to believe theſe particular deluſions; at leaſt, we have all heard ſo many pleaſing relations in favour of them, that we do not care for ſeeing through the falſhood, and willingly give our ſelves up to ſo agreeable an impoſture.

The Ancients have not much of this poetry among them, for, indeed, almoſt the whole ſubſtance of it owes its original to the darkneſs and ſuperſtition of later Ages, when pious frauds were made uſe of to amuſe mankind, and frighten them into a ſenſe of their duty. Our forefathers looked

looked upon nature with more reverence and horrour, before the world was enlightened by learning and philoſophy, and loved to aſtoniſh themſelves with the apprehenſions of witchcraft, prodigies, charms and enchantments. There was not a village in *England* that had not a ghoſt in it, the Church-yards were all haunted, every large common had a circle of fairies belonging to it, and there was ſcarce a ſhepherd to be met with who had not ſeen a ſpirit.

Among all the Poets of this kind, our *Engliſh* are much the beſt, by what I have yet ſeen, whether it be that we abound with more ſtories of this nature, or that the genius of our country is fitter for this ſort of poetry. For the *Engliſh* are naturally fanciful, and very often diſpoſed by that gloomineſs and melancholy of temper, which is ſo frequent in our nation, to many wild notions and viſions, to which others are not ſo liable.

Among the *Engliſh*, *Shakeſpear* has incomparably excelled all others. That noble extravagance of fancy, which he had in ſo great perfection, throughly qualified him to touch this weak ſuperſtitious part of his Reader's imagination; and made him capable of ſucceeding, where he had nothing to ſupport him beſides the ſtrength of his own genius. There is ſomething ſo wild and yet ſo ſolemn in the ſpeeches of his ghoſts, fairies, witches, and the like imaginary perſons, that we cannot forbear thinking them natural, though we have no rule by which to judge of them, and muſt confeſs, if there are ſuch Beings in the world, it looks highly probable they ſhould talk and act as he has repreſented them.

There is another ſort of imaginary Beings, that we ſometimes meet with among the Poets, when the Author repreſents any paſſion, appetite, virtue or vice, under a viſible ſhape, and makes it a perſon or an actor in his Poem. Of this nature are the deſcriptions of Hunger and Envy in *Ovid*, of Fame in *Virgil*, and of Sin and Death in *Milton*. We find a whole creation of the like ſhadowy perſons in *Spencer*, who had an admirable talent in repreſentations of this kind. I have diſcourſed of theſe emblematical perſons in former papers, and ſhall therefore only mention them in this place. Thus we ſee how many ways poetry addreſſes it ſelf to the imagination, as it has not only the whole circle of nature for its province, but makes new worlds of its own, ſhews us perſons who are not to be found in Being, and repreſents even the faculties of the ſoul, with her ſeveral virtues and vices, in a ſenſible ſhape and character.

I ſhall, in my two following papers, conſider in general, how other kinds of writing are qualified to pleaſe the imagination, with which I intend to conclude this Eſſay.

N° 420. *Wedneſday, July* 2.

——Quocunque volunt mentem auditoris agunto. Hor.

AS the writers in poetry and fiction borrow their ſeveral materials from outward objects, and join them together at their own pleaſure, there are others who are obliged to follow nature more cloſely, and to take entire ſcenes out of her. Such are Hiſtorians, natural Philoſophers, Travellers, Geographers, and in a word, all who deſcribe viſible objects of a real exiſtence.

It is the moſt agreeable talent of an Hiſtorian, to be able to draw up his armies and fight his battels in proper expreſſions, to ſet before our eyes the diviſions, cabals, and jealouſies of great men, and to lead us ſtep by ſtep into the ſeveral actions and events of his hiſtory. We love to ſee the ſubject unfolding it ſelf by juſt degrees, and breaking upon us inſenſibly, that ſo we may be kept in a pleaſing ſuſpence, and have time given us to raiſe our expectations, and to ſide with one of the parties concerned in the relation. I confeſs this ſhews more the art than the veracity of the Hiſtorian, but I am only to ſpeak of him as he is qualified to pleaſe the imagination. And in this reſpect *Livy* has, perhaps, excelled all who ever went before him, or have written ſince his time. He deſcribes every thing in ſo lively a manner, that his whole hiſtory is an admirable picture, and touches on ſuch proper circumſtances in every ſtory, that his Reader becomes a kind of ſpectator, and feels in himſelf all the variety of paſſions, which are correſpondent to the ſeveral parts of the relation.

But among this ſett of writers, there are none who more gratifie and enlarge the imagination, than the Authors of the new philoſophy, whether we conſider their Theories of the earth or heavens, the diſcoveries they have made by glaſſes, or any other of their contemplations on nature.

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