

Sir John Denham

TO SIR RICHARD FANSHAW
UPON HIS TRANSLATION OF *PASTOR FIDO*



Such is our Pride, our Folly, or our Fate,
That few but such as cannot write, Translate.
But what in them is want of Art, or voice,
In thee is either Modesty or Choice.
Whiles this great piece, restor'd by thee doth stand
Free from the blemish of an Artless hand.
Secure of Fame, thou justly dost esteem
Less honour to create, than to redeem.
Nor ought a Genius less than his that writ,
Attempt Translation; for transplanted wit,
All the defects of air and soil doth share,
And colder brains like colder Climates are:
In vain they toil, since nothing can beget
A vital spirit, but a vital heat.
That servile path thou nobly dost decline
Of tracing word by word, and line by line.
Those are the labour'd births of slavish brains,
Not the effects of Poetry, but pains;
Cheap vulgar arts, whose narrowness affords
No flight for thoughts, but poorly sticks at words.
A new and nobler way thou dost pursue
To make Translations and Translators too.
They but preserve the Ashes, thou the Flame,
True to his sense, but truer to his fame.
Foording his current, where thou find'st it low
Let'st in thine own to make it rise and flow;
Wisely restoring whatsoever grace

TO SIR RICHARD FANSHAW

It lost by change of Times, or Tongues, or Place.
Nor fetter'd to his Numbers, and his Times,
Betray'st his Musick to unhappy Rimes,
Nor are the nerves of his compacted strength
Stretch'd and dissolv'd into unsinnewed length:
Yet after all, (lest we should think it thine)
Thy spirit to his circle dost confine.
New names, new dressings, and the modern cast,
Some Scenes some persons alter'd, had out-fac'd
The world, it were thy work; for we have known
Some thank't and prais'd for what was less their own.
That Masters hand which to the life can trace
The airs, the lines, and features of a face,
May with a free and bolder stroke express
A varied posture, or a flatt'ring Dress;
He could have made those like, who made the rest,
But that he knew his own design was best.

Denham, John. "To Sir Richard Fanshaw Upon His Translation of Pastor Fido."
The Penn State Archive of Samuel Johnson's Lives of the Poets. Ed.
Kathleen Nulton Kemmerer. 1 September 2000.
<http://www.hn.psu.edu/faculty/kkemmerer/poets/denham/fido.htm>