

CHARLES GOODALL (1671-1689), POET. For a brief biography of Goodall and other selections from his verse, see the print anthology, pp. 384-99, and the translations of the classical writer Theocritus in the *Online Companion*.

## POETICAL RECREATIONS (1688)

### THE PENITENT

#### I.

By Heav'n! 'tis scarce ten days ago,  
Since to myself I made a vow,  
That I would never have to do  
With Duserastes more;  
Till wine, and love, and ease complying,  
Bore down before 'em all denying,  
For having his perfections told me  
Made me break the oath I swore,  
Threw me headlong to his arms,  
Where tasting of his usual charms,  
No resolution can withhold me.  
Now, who but Duserastes in my eye?  
'Tis by his smiles I live, and by his frowns I die.

#### II.

Your sunny face, through cloudy frowns, in vain  
Would make my gazing eyes abstain,  
For I as soon can cease to be,  
As cease to love, and gaze on thee;  
Here could I take up mine eternity.  
As well one may  
Touch flaming coals, or with a serpent play,  
And yet receive no harm,  
As look on you unmoved by your charms.  
For my part, I am forced to lay down arms;  
Although I'm fain<sup>1</sup>  
To be content with nothing but disdain,  
And since those things are cheap, we easily obtain,  
I am content a while to live upon despair,  
Just as chameleons do on air.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *fain* obliged, necessitated.

<sup>2</sup> *Just .... air* a commonplace notion in the early modern period, derived from the ancients, particularly from Pliny's account of the chameleon in his *Natural History*.

### III.

I play and dally on Hell's brink,  
Till I perceive myself begin to sink,  
Or scorch myself too near so great a fire,  
And so am forced to retire.  
Anon forgetful of my former burn,<sup>3</sup>  
I must again, I must again return:  
So does the little gnat, by night,  
Fly round, and round, the candle's light,  
Until its busy daring wing  
Too near such heat begins to singe;  
Yet still unmindful of the smart,  
She must, she will repeat her former sport.

### IV.

Hence, hence, heroic Muse, adieu,  
For I must take my leave of you;  
Love, that usurps the rule of my poetic vein,  
Forbids Calliope's heroic strain;<sup>4</sup>  
Charges me nothing to endite<sup>5</sup>  
Concerning this or t'other fight,  
Nor of the Scythian, or the Parthian War to write,<sup>6</sup>  
Unless to beautify my poetry,  
Those stories to my love I fitly would apply.  
And now methinks I feign  
Myself an honest faithful Scythian,  
And he a perfidious flying Parthian,  
Whose turned dart  
Strikes his pursuer swiftly to the heart:  
So the more eager Phoebus followed on,  
The swifter Daphne did his presence shun;<sup>7</sup>  
So much the more increased his passion higher,  
As the chaste little virgin, she grew shy.

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<sup>3</sup> *Anon* instantly, immediately.

<sup>4</sup> *Calliope* the muse or semi-divine patron of epic poetry. On the Muses, see Glossary (print anthology).

<sup>5</sup> *endite* write.

<sup>6</sup> *Scythian or Parthian War* In Horace's *Odes* 1.19, the speaker says that his desire for the maiden Glycera has led to his possession by Venus, goddess of love, who forbids him to write about anything 'heroic,' such as the fierce warrior races, the Scythians and the Parthians. Although both were considered barbarous and savage, the Parthians were depicted as more 'perfidious,' since they would fire on their Scythian enemies from horseback, even when the Parthians themselves were fleeing from the battle.

<sup>7</sup> *So ... shun* Fleeing from the pursuit of the enamoured god of the sun, Apollo, the nymph Daphne prayed for rescue; the gods transformed her into the laurel tree, which became sacred to Apollo, and out of which were subsequently fashioned the crowns given to triumphant warriors and poets.

I ask not mutual love in equal weight,  
But only give me leave to love thee free from hate.