

**A DIALOGUE ON
BEAUTY: IN THE
MANNER OF PLATO**

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A Dialogue on Beauty: In the Manner of Plato by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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Stubbes, George

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T O

Mr. Dodington.

DEAR SIR,

TAKE the Liberty to send you a Dialogue in Imitation of PLATO, of which I shewed you an imperfect Sketch, when you was last in the Country. I am so much pleased with this agreeable Manner of Writing, which, by enlivening Philosophy with the Charms of Poesy, entertains at once the Understanding and the Imagination, that if you approve of

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this first Essay, I may perhaps endeavour to divert you with some other Performances of the same Nature. It is, indeed, owing to you, that I ever attempted to write any thing in this Way: For, tho' I am as fond of PLATO as of any of the ancient Poets, I should not have entertained a Thought of imitating him, had not some *Socratic* Conversations at EASTBURY, in which I had the Pleasure to bear a (very little) Part, first made me conceive it an Attempt not altogether impracticable.

As the different Opinions in Morality, debated in these Dialogues, are the strongest Lineaments, by which Characters are distinguished; so these Representations of them may be looked on as serious Comedies, more just and instructive, as well as more decent and refined, than those of a lighter sort, which represent Humane Life under its more superficial Appearances. I only entertain you at present with one single Character (besides that of SOCRATES himself) as innocent and as beautiful as can be formed by my Imagination, but simple and uniform:

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The various and inconsistent Characters of a *PROTAGORAS*, a *HIPPIAS*, or an *EUTHYPHRON*, tho' void of Beauty, may furnish no less agreeable Entertainment in some future Dialogues.

THE principal Motive of publishing this little Piece, is an Ambition to have the Honour of presenting it, by your Hand, to his Grace the *DUKE* of *DORSET*, as a Specimen of my Duty, since my Attendance may perhaps not be required.

As nothing of this Kind has been attempted in our Language, it is very uncertain what Success it may find: Some few Dialogues have indeed been received with just Applause; but none of them are strict Imitations of *PLATO*, or much designed to resemble him. The few, who read his Works with Taste, will find in this Sketch so much Resemblance of them, as may engage them to look on it with the same Indulgence we are apt to entertain for a new Face, which has some Lineaments of a beloved Friend, or Mistress. Such as are unacquainted
with

with his elegant Manner of Writing, should methinks be the more pleased even with a faint Imitation of it, since its great Disproportion to the inimitable Beauty of the Original will be less visible to them.

HAD I no farther View than to gain it a favourable Reception from the Men of Literature and Politeness, nothing could have a greater Influence on them, than the Favour of HIS GRACE'S Protection, had I the Presumption to ask it: But, to speak freely, the Subject of it has led me to a more nice and flattering Ambition, by inducing me to design it as a not uninstruative Entertainment for young Ladies, even of the highest Rank. To engage them to read it, I have endeavoured to give the beautiful Nymph in the Dialogue every Accomplishment, every Ingenuity, agreeable to a refined Education. To shew them with how much Ease they may enter into the Reasoning Part of it, I have avoided giving her the least Tincture of Philosophy, the least Degree of Knowledge, unsuitable to her early Age or Sex.

Sex. A mere Readiness of Apprehension, and an ingenuous Desire to be informed, lead her on with Pleasure thro' a System of Beauty entirely new to her, and discover to her View the secret Foundations of Moral Excellence. To recommend it to them in the most prevailing Manner, my Imagination, if unrestrained, would suggest a Thought beyond my utmost Hope ; a Thought almost too extravagant to be formed into a Wish. You, who are so well acquainted with my Romantic Temper, will easily conclude it must be some Scheme worthy to be preserved in the Annals of *La Mancha* : And tho' I do not yet dream of the Government of an Island, I will own to you, that I should esteem myself as happy as *Sancho*, when in Conversation with the Dutchess, had I the Honour to find a Fair Patroness in HIS GRACE'S Family.

To apply for a Permission of this Nature, is so very tender and delicate a Point, that it would be trespassing too far on the Friendship you have so long honoured me with, to endeavour to en-
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gage you in it: Were I inclined to take Advantage of the generous Warmth, with which you espouse every thing proposed in my Favour, I could find a pleasant Expedient to overcome your Delicacy, by insinuating that, unless you obtained this Permission for me, I should be tempted to leave this Orphan to your Guardian Care, by addressing it to you in this plain familiar Epistle. I am very sensible of the Pain every thing of this Nature is apt to give you: But, in this Instance, it would be made agreeable to you by the Assurance of receiving HER GRACE'S Thanks for skreening Her, in so handsome a Manner, from the Importunity of,

DEAR SIR,

Your most Obliged,

and most Devoted

Humble Servant,

GEORGE STUBBES.