

And made their bends adornings: at the helm  
A seeming mermaid steers: the silken tackle  
Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands,  
That yarely frame the office. From the barge  
A strange invisible perfume hits the sense  
Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast  
Her people out upon her; and Antony,  
Enthron'd i' the market place, did sit alone,  
Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,  
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,  
And made a gap in Nature.

In comparing the passages we must remember who is the speaker in each case; Enobarbus is a more impressive witness than Antony, to whom Dryden has transferred the description.

Is either passage a very good specimen of its author? Certainly neither is above criticism. Thus in Shakespeare's lines we may take exception to the oars which make the water follow faster '*as amorous of their strokes*'; and to the air which 'but for vacancy, Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too, And made a gap in Nature'! I am glad also to be rid of 'yarely frame the office' and of 'did seem,' 'did cool,' 'what they undid did.' But on the other hand we miss the barge 'burn'd on the water'—her person 'beggar'd all description'—'tended her i' the eyes'—and the 'invisible perfume.' These touches Dryden seems to have dropped needlessly.

Scott, who compares the two passages, prefers Dryden for 'the easy flow of the verse, which seems to soften with the subject,' and for the rapture 'without hyperbole.' As to the first point, the