

Story *English*, and neither too far distant from the Present Age, nor too near approaching it. Such it is in my Opinion, that I could not have wish'd a nobler Occasion to do Honour by it to my King, my Country, and my Friends; most of our ancient Nobility being concern'd in the Action. And your Lordship has one particular Reason to promote this Undertaking, because you were the first who gave me the Opportunity of discoursing it to his Majesty, and his Royal Highness. They were then pleas'd, both to commend the Design, and to encourage it by their Commands. But the Unsettldness of my Condition has hitherto put a stop to my Thoughts concerning it. As I am no Successor to *Homer* in his Wit, so neither do I desire to be in his Poverty. I can make no Rhapsodies, nor go a begging at the *Grecian* Doors, while I sing the Praises of their Ancestors. The Times of *Virgil* please me better, because he had an *Augustus* for his Patron. And to draw the Allegory nearer you, I am sure I shall not want a *Mæcenas* with him. 'Tis for your Lordship to stir up that Remembrance in his Majesty, which his many Avocations of Business have caus'd him, I fear, to lay aside. And (as himself and his Royal Brother are the Heroes of the Poem) to represent to them the Images of their Warlike Predecessors; as *Achilles* is said to be rouz'd to Glory, with the sight of the Combat before the Ships'.

Hieraus sieht man, dass Dryden aufgemuntert, aber auch unterstützt sein wollte, um sein heroisches Gedicht, sein Epos, zu schreiben. Was der Gegenstand dieses sein sollte, erfahren wir aus einer andern Stelle¹⁾. Zwei Themata hatte er für ein Epos: das eine ist wiederum 'König Arthur', das andre 'der schwarze Prinz.' Die obige Stelle kann mit der Bemerkung, dass die Vorfahren der meisten Vornehmen bei den Kämpfen, die Dryden besingen wolle, mitgekämpft hätten, eher auf das zweite deuten. Dagegen spricht der Umstand, dass König Karl und sein Bruder Jakob als 'Helden des Gedichtes' bezeichnet werden, eher für ein Epos 'König Arthur', das er wol, wie später die Oper 'King Arthur' durch das Vorspiel 'Albion and

1) Vgl. *Memoirs of John Dryden*. By Sir Walter Scott. Ich führe die Stellen an nach der Ausgabe: Paris 1825. B. 1, S. 200.