ABRAHAM COWLEY (1618–67) was an M.D. of Oxford, though apparently he never practised. Regarded in his day as the foremost English poet, he pays graceful tribute in the following Ode to the great achievements of William Harvey.

ODE

UPON DR. HARVEY

1

COY Nature, (which remain'd, though aged grown,
A Beauteous virgin still, injoy'd by none,
Nor seen unveil'd by any one)
When Harveys violent passions she did see,
Began to tremble, and to flee,
Took Sanctuary like Daphne in a tree:
There Daphnes lover stop't, and thought it much
The very leaves of her to touch,
But Harvey our Apollo, stopt not so,
Into the Bark, and root he after her did goe:
No smallest Fibres of a Plant,
For which the eiebeamns Point doth sharpness want,
His passage after her withstood.
What should she do? through all the moving wood
Of Lives endow'd with sense she took her flight,
Harvey pursues, and keeps her still
in sight.
But as the Deer long-hunted takes a flood,
She leap't at last into the winding streams of blood;
Of man's Meander all the Purple reaches made,
Till at the heart she stay'd,
Where turning head, and at a Bay,
Thus by well-purged ears, was she o're-heard to say.

2

HERE sure shall I be safe (said she)
None will be able sure to see
This my retreat, but only He
Who made both it and me.
The heart of Man, what Art can a're reveal?
A wall impervious between
Divides the very Parts within,
And doth the Heart of man ev'n from its self conceal.
She spoke, but e'er she was aware,
Harvey was with her there,
And held this slippery Proteus in a chain,
Till all her mighty Mysteries she descry'd,
Which from his wit the attempt before to hide
Was the first Thing that Nature did in vain.

3

HE the young Practise of New life did see,
Whil'st to conceal its toilsome Poverty,
It for a living wrought, both hard, and privately.
Before the Liver understood
The noble Scarlet Dye of Blood,
Before one drop was by it made,
Or brought into it, to set up the Trade;
Before the untaught Heart began to beat
The tuneful March to vital Heat,
From all the Souls that living Buildings rear,
Whether imply'd for Earth, or Sea, or Air,
Whether it in the Womb or Egg be wrought,
A strict account to him is hourly brought,
How the Great Fabrick does proceed,
What time and what materials it does need.
He so exactly does the work survey,
As if he hir'd the workers by the day.

4

THUS Harvey sought for Truth in Truth's own Book
The Creatures, which by God himself was writ;
And wisely thought 'twas fit,
Not to read Comments only upon it,
But on th'original it self to look.
Methinks in Arts great Circle others stand
Lock't up together, Hand in Hand,
Every one leads as he is led,
The same bare path they tread,
And Dance like Fairies a Fantastick round,
But neither change their motion, nor their ground:
Had Harvey to this Road confin'd his wit,
His noble Circle of the Blood, had been untrodden yet.
Great Doctor! Th' Art of Curing's cur'd by thee,
We now thy patient Physick see,
From all inveterate diseases free,
Purg'd of old errors by thy care,
New dieted, put forth to clearer air,
It now will strong and healthful prove,
It self before Lethargick lay, and could not move.

5

THESE useful secrets to his Pen we owe,
And thousands more 'twas ready to bestow;
Of which a barbarous Wars unlearned Rage
Has robb'd the ruin'd age;
O cruel loss! as if the Golden Fleece,
Has sunk ev'n in the Ports of Greece.
O cursed Warr! who can forgive thee this?
Houses and Towns may rise again,
And ten times easier it is
to rebuild Pauls, than any work of his.
That mighty Task none but himself can do,
Nay, scarce himself too now,
For though his Wit the force of Age withstand,
His Body alas! and Time it must command,
And Nature now, so long by him surpass't,
Will sure have her revenge on him at last.