

Jonathan Swift, “Apollo Outwitted”

Description

JONATHAN SWIFT

“Apollo Outwitted”

To the Honourable Mrs. FINCH, under her Name of Ardelia.
Written, 1709.

PHOEBUS now shortning every Shade,
Up to the Northern *Tropick* came,
And thence Beheld a Lovely Maid
Attending on a Royal Dame.

THE God laid down his Feeble Rays, 5
Then lighted from his Glitt’ring Coach,
But fenc’d his Head with his own Bays
Before he durst the Nymph approach.

UNDER those Sacred Leaves, Secure
From common Lightning of the Skies, 10
He fondly thought he might endure
The Flashes of *Ardelia*’s Eyes.

THE Nymph who oft had read in Books,
Of that Bright God whom Bards invoke,
Soon knew *Apollo* by his looks, 15
And Guest his Business e’er he Spoke.

HE in the old Celestial Cant,
Confest his Flame, and Swore by *Styx*,
What e’er she would desire, to Grant,
But Wise *Ardelia* knew his Tricks. 20

OVID had warn’d her to beware,
Of Stroling Gods, whose usual Trade is,
Under pretence of Taking Air,
To Pick up Sublunary Ladies.

HOWE’ER she gave no flat Denial, 25
As having Malice in her Heart,
And was resolv’d upon a Tryal,
To Cheat the God in his own Art.

HEAR my Request the Virgin said
 Let which I please of all the Nine
 Attend when e'er I want their Aid,
 Obey my Call, and only mine. 30

BY Vow Oblig'd, By Passion led,
 The God could not refuse her Prayer;
 He wav'd his Wreath Thrice o'er her Head, 35
 Thrice mutter'd something to the Air.

AND now he thought to Seize his due,
 But she the Charm already try'd,
Thalia heard the Call and Flew
 To wait at Bright *Ardelia's* Side. 40

ON sight of this Celestial *Prude*,
Apollo thought it vain to stay,
 Nor in her Presence durst be Rude,
 But made his Leg and went away.

HE hop'd to find some lucky Hour, 45
 When on their Queen the Muses wait;
 But *Pallas* owns *Ardelia's* Power,
 For Vows Divine are kept by Fate.

THEN full of Rage *Apollo* Spoke,
 Deceitful Nymph I see thy Art, 50
 And tho' I can't my gift revoke,
 I'll disappoint its Nobler Part.

LET Stubborn Pride Possess thee long,
 And be thou Negligent of Fame,
 With ev'ry Muse to Grace thy Song, 55
 May'st thou despise a Poets Name.

OF Modest Poets thou be first,
 To silent Shades repeat thy Verse,
 Till *Fame* and *Eccho* almost burst,
 Yet hardly dare one Line Rehearse. 60

AND last, my Vengeance to Compleat,
 May you Descend to take Renown,
 Prevail'd on by the Thing you hate,
 A [Whig] and one that wears a Gown.

NOTES:

Dedication *Ardelia* Anne Finch's poetical name for herself.

1 *PHOEBUS* "[Ancient Greek name of Apollo] god of light, poetry and music" (*OED*).

2 *Northern Tropick* "Tropic of Cancer," which includes Britain (*Britannica*).

4 *Royal Dame* Finch was appointed Maid of Honour to Mary of Modena in 1682. Mary became queen in 1685 when her husband ascended the throne as James II, though Finch had resigned her court position in 1684 after marrying.

7 *Bays* "Leaves or sprigs of this tree, esp. as woven into a wreath or garland to reward a conqueror or poet; hence figurative the fame and repute attained by these" (*OED*).

14 *Bards* "A lyric or epic poet, a 'singer'; a poet generally" (*OED*).

18 *Styx* "A river of the lower world or Hades, over which the shades of the departed were ferried by Charon, and by which the gods swore their most solemn oaths" (*OED*).

21 *OVID* Roman poet (43BC-17AD), famous for *Metamorphoses*.

30 *all the Nine* The muses.

39 *Thalia* "The eighth of the muses, presiding over comedy and idyllic poetry" (*OED*).

47 *Pallas* Epithet for Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and war.

64 [*Whig*] "A person who supported the exclusion of James, Duke of York (later James II), from the succession to the thrones of England, Scotland, and Ireland on account of his Roman Catholicism during the late 1670s and 1680s" (*OED*); added in later printings of the poem; *one that wears a Gown* Swift himself.

SOURCE: *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* (London, 1711), pp. 399–403. [Google Books]

Edited by Jake Araiza