Aphra Behn, â??On a Juniper-Tree, cut down to make Busksâ?•

Description

APHRA BEHN

â??On *a* Juniper-Tree*, cut down to make* Busks.â?•

Whilst happy I Triumphant stood,
The Pride and Glory of the Wood;
My Aromatick Boughs and Fruit,
Did with all other Trees dispute.
Had right by Nature to excel,
In pleasing both the tast and smell:
But to the touch I must confess,
Bore an Ungrateful Sullenness.
My Wealth, like bashful Virgins, I
Yielded with some Reluctancy;
For which my vallue should be more,
Not giving easily my store.
My verdant Branches all the year
Did an Eternal Beauty wear;
Did ever young and gay appear.
Nor needed any tribute pay,
For bounties from the God of Day:
Nor do I hold Supremacy,
(In all the Wood) oâ??er every Tree.
But even those too of my own Race,
That grow not in this happy place.
But that in which I glory most,
And do my self with Reason boast,
Beneath my shade the other day,
Young *Philocles* and *Cloris* lay,
Upon my Root she leanâ??d her head,
And where I grew, he made their Bed:
Whilst I the Canopy more largely spread.
Their trembling Limbs did gently press,
The kind supporting yielding Grass:
Neâ??er half so blest as now, to bear
A Swain so Young, a Nimph so fair:
My Grateful Shade I kindly lent,
And every aiding Bough I bent.
So low, as sometimes had the blisse,
To rob the Shepherd of a kiss,
Whilst he in Pleasures far above

The Sence of that degree of Love:
Permitted every stealth I made,
Unjealous of his Rival Shade.
I saw â??em kindle to desire,
Whilst with soft sighs they blew the fire:
Saw the approaches of their joy,
He growing more fierce, and she less Coy,
Saw how they mingled melting Rays,
Exchanging Love a thousand ways.
Kind was the force on every side,
Her new desire she could not hide:
Nor wouâ??d the Shepherd be denyâ??d.
Impatient he waits no consent
But what she gave by Languishment,
The blessed Minute he pursuâ??d;
And now transported in his Arms,
Yeilds to the Conqueror all her Charmes,
His panting Breast, to hers now joinâ??d,
They feast on Raptures unconfinâ??d;
Vast and Luxuriant, such as prove
The Immortality of Love.
For who but a Divinitie,
Could mingle Souls to that Degree;
And melt â??em into Extasie.
Now like the *Phenix*, both Expire,
While from the Ashes of their fire,
Sprung up a new, and soft desire.
Like Charmers, thrice they did invoke,
The God! and thrice new vigor took.
Nor had the Mysterie ended there,
But *Cloris* reassumâ??d her fear,
And chid the Swain, for having prest,
What she alas wouâ??d not resist:
Whilst he in whom Loves sacred flame,
Before and after was the same,
Fondly implorâ??d she wouâ??d forget
A fault, which he wouâ??d yet repeat.
From Active Joyes with some they hast,
To a Reflexion on the past;
A thousand times my Covert bless,
That did secure their Happiness:
Their Gratitude to every Tree
They pay, but most to happy me;
The Shepherdess my Bark carest,
Whilst he my Root, Loveâ??s Pillow, kist;
And did with sighs, their Fate deplore,
Since I must shelter them no more;
And if before my Joyes were such,

In having heard, and seen too much,
My Grief must be as great and high,
When all abandonâ??d I shall be,
Doomâ??d to a silent Destinie.
No more the Charming strife to hear,
The Shepherds Vows, the Virgins fear:
No more a joyful looker on,
Whilst Loves soft Battelâ??s lost and won.
With grief I bowâ??d my murmering Head,
And all my Christal Dew I shed.
Which did in *Cloris* Pity move,
(*Cloris* whose Soul is made of Love;)
She cut me down, and did translate,
My being to a happier state.
No Martyr for Religion diâ??d
With half that Unconsidering Pride;
My top was on that Altar laid,
Where Love his softest Offerings paid:
And was as fragrant Incense burnâ??d,
My body into Busks was turnâ??d:
Where I still guard the Sacred Store,
And of Loves Temple keep the Door.

NOTES:

3 *Boughs* â??An arm or large shoot of a tree, bigger than a branch, yet not always distinguished from itâ?• (Johnson).

6 *tast* Variant for â??taste.â?•

13 *verdant* Green.

17 *God of Day* Helios, Greek god of the sun.

44 *Coy* Modest.

56 *Raptures* â??Ecstasy; transport; violence of any pleasing passion; enthusiasm; uncommon heat of imaginationâ?• (Johnson).

62 *Phenix* Phoenix. An ancient mythological bird associated with the worship of the sun. â??As its end approached, the phoenix fashioned a nest of aromatic boughs and spices, set it on fire, and was consumed in the flamesâ?• (*Britannica*).

105 *Busks* Popular in womenâ??s fashion as an undergarment during the 16th to early 20th century. â??A strip of wood, whalebone, steel, or other rigid material attached vertically to the front section of a corset so as to stiffen and support it. Hence occasionally: the corset itselfâ?• (*OED*).

SOURCE: ***Poems Upon Several Occasions: with a Voyage to the Island of Love*** **(London, 1684), pp. 19-24. [Google Books]**

Edited by Alana Croft