

# Aphra Behn, "On a Juniper-Tree, cut down to make Busks"

## Description

APHRA BEHN

### •œOna Juniper-Tree, cut down to make Busks.œ•

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, Â 5  
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; Â 10  
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. Â 15  
Nor needed any tribute pay,  
For bounties from the God of Day:  
Nor do I hold Supremacy,  
(In all the Wood) œ™er every Tree.  
But even those too of my own Race, Â 20  
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, Â 25  
Upon my Root she leanœ™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: Â 30  
Neœ™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, Â 35  
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.    40

I saw   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,    45

Exchanging Love a thousand ways.

Kind was the force on every side,

Her new desire she could not hide:

Nor wou<sup>d</sup> the Shepherd be deny<sup>d</sup>.

Impatient he waits no consent    50

But what she gave by Languishment,

The blessed Minute he pursu<sup>d</sup>;

And now transported in his Arms,

Yeilds to the Conqueror all her Charmes,

His panting Breast, to hers now join<sup>d</sup>,    55

They feast on Raptures unconfin<sup>d</sup>;

Vast and Luxuriant, such as prove

The Immortality of Love.

For who but a Divinitie,

Could mingle Souls to that Degree;    60

And melt   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,    65

The God! and thrice new vigor took.

Nor had the Mysterie ended there,

But *Cloris* reassum<sup>d</sup> her fear,

And chid the Swain, for having prest,

What she alas wou<sup>d</sup> not resist:    70

Whilst he in whom Loves sacred flame,

Before and after was the same,

Fondly implor<sup>d</sup> she wou<sup>d</sup> forget

A fault, which he wou<sup>d</sup> yet repeat.

From Active Joyes with some they hast,    75

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;    80

The Shepherdess my Bark carest,

Whilst he my Root, Love<sup>s</sup> Pillow, kist;

And did with sighs, their Fate deplore,

Since I must shelter them no more;

And if before my Joyes were such, Â 85

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, Â 90

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 murmuring Head,  
And all my Christal Dew I shed. Â 95

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 Â 100

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: Â 105

Where I still guard the Sacred Store,  
And of Loves Temple keep the Door.

**NOTES:**

**3** *Boughs* â€™œAn arm or large shoot of a tree, bigger than a branch, yet not always distinguished from itâ€™œ (Johnson).

**6** *tast* Variant for â€™œtaste.â€™œ

**13** *verdant* Green.

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

**44** *Coy* Modest.

**56** *Raptures* â€™œEcstasy; transport; violence of any pleasing passion; enthusiasm; uncommon heat of imaginationâ€™œ (Johnson).

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

**105** *Busks* Popular in womenâ€™s fashion as an undergarment during the 16th to early 20th century. â€™œA 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€™œ *QED*).

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

*Edited by Alana Croft*