

Mary Barber, "To a Gentleman, who had abused Waller"

Description

[MARY BARBER]

"To a Gentleman, who had abused Waller"

I Grieve to think that WALLER'S blame,
WALLER, so long, so justly, famed.
Then own your Verses writ in Haste,
Or I shall say, you've lost your Taste.

Perhaps your loyal Heart disdains
A Poet, who could take such Pains, 5
To tune his sweet, immortal Lays
To an usurping Tyrant's Praise:
And, where you hate the *Man*, I see,
You never like his *Poetry*. 10
The Truth of this your Verse discovers;
So you abused the *Conscious Lovers*.

Though in your Principles you glory,
The Muses are nor *Whig* nor *Tory*:
So from your Sentence they appeal, 15
Nor will be judged by *Party Zeal*.
When'er a Poet's to be tried,
Let *Pope* hereafter be your Guide.
Survey the Whole, nor seek slight Faults to find,
Where Nature moves, and Rapture warms the Mind. 20

NOTES:

Title Waller Edmund Waller (1606-1687), poet and politician. Waller's adoption of smooth regular versification prepared the way for the heroic couplet's emergence by the end of the century as the dominant form of poetic expression (Britannica).

1 Waller's blame As a member of Parliament during the political turmoil of the 1640s, Waller famously switched sides, first actively supporting the opposition to the monarchy but then becoming an active member of the Royalist cause by 1643 (Britannica).

7-8 To tune 'usurping Tyrant's Praise In 1655, Waller celebrated his distant cousin, Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), Lord Protector of the Commonwealth from 1653, with his Panegyric to my Lord Protector (Britannica).

12 *Conscious Lovers* A popular sentimental comedy by Richard Steele (c. 1671-1729). It was first staged on 7 November 1722 at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

14 *Muses* The nine goddesses of literature, science, and the arts in Greek mythology (*OED*); *Whig nor Tory* References the two political parties that dominated British politics in the late seventeenth century.

18 *Pope* Alexander Pope (1688-1744), poet, translator, and satirist.

19-20 • *Essay on Criticism* • [Author's note]. Barber quotes lines 235-236 from Part II here (Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism: Part II* [London, 1711]).

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1735), pp. 80-81. [Google Books]

Edited by Shivangi Ghissing