Elizabeth Tollet, â??In Memory of the Countess of Winchelseaâ?•

Description

ELIZABETH TOLLET

â??**In Memory of the Countess of Winchelseaâ?•**

â??Effugiunt avidos carmina sola rogos. Ovid.

Sad *Cypress* and the Muses Tree
Shall shade *Ardeliaâ??s* sacred Urn:
These with her Fame and Fate agree,
And ever live, and ever mourn.

While evâ??ry Muse with vocal Breath
In moving Strains recites her Praise:
And there assumes the *Cypress* Wreath,
And on her Tomb resigns the Bays.

What Powâ??r shall aid the Virgin Choir
To make her Worth and Virtue known?
Who shall the Sculptorâ??s Art inspire
To write them on the lasting Stone?

The honourâ??d Streams of ancient Blood,
And Titles, are by Fortune givâ??n:
But to be virtuous, wise, and good,
Derives a kindred Claim from Heavâ??n.

Virtue, and Wit in Courts admirâ??d,
The shining Pattern shall diffuse:
Nor, thoâ?? to private Life retirâ??d,
Are lost, but flourish with her Muse.

Of those the *Sister-Nine* shall sing,
Yet with their Voice their Verse shall pass:
And Time shall sure Destruction bring
To wounded Stone, or molten Brass.

Thoâ?? Titles grace the stately Tomb,
Vain Monument of mortal Pride!
The Ruins of the mouldâ??ring Dome
Its undistinguishâ??d Heap shall hide.

Wit, which outlasts the firmest Stone,
Shall, *Phoenix*-like, its life prolong;

No Verse can speak her but her own,
The Spleen must be her funâ??ral Song.

NOTES:

Title *Countess of Winchelsea* The poet Anne Finch (1661-1720); she gained her title in 1712 when her husband, Heneage Finch, became the 5th Earl of Winchilsea.

Epigraph *Effugiunt avidos carmina sola rogos* â??Only songs escape the greedy funeral pyres.â?• From Ovidâ??s â??Elegy on the death of Tibullus,â?• *Amores* iii.9.

1 *Cypress* In ancient Greece, the cypress tree was associated with sorrow, and was often planted near graves to ward off evil spirits; *Muses Tree* The laurel tree, associated in ancient Greece with Apollo and the muses.

2 *Ardelia* Literary name or pseudonym used by Anne Finch; *Sacred Urn* Used to hold ashes.

21 *Sister-Nine* The nine muses. Goddesses of science, literature, and art.

27 *mouldering Dome* That is, the decaying tomb, or monument, that marks Finchâ??s grave.

30 *Phoenix* Mythological bird with the ability to resurrect. After the phoenix dies in a self-made fire, it is reborn and rises from its own ashes.

32 *The Spleen* An ode written by Anne Finch, first published in 1701.

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions. With Anne Boleyn to King Henry VIII. An Epistle* (London, 1755), pp. 49-50. [Google Books]

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