AN HEROIC POEM

[1681]

The anonymous author of this most unheroic satire sneers at a brace of friends, attacks a group of leading Whigs, libels a pair of Court officials and a Court bawd, and ends by vilifying a bevy of Maids of Honor. He seems to have been motivated more by spite than by moral or political indignation. Curiously, he has nothing to say against Whig principles, and he carefully ignores the Whig leader, Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, now in the Tower awaiting trial for high treason.

The copy text is Harleian MS. 6913, p. 197. The poem is called "A Satyr" in Sloane MS. 655, f. 57; "A New Satyr. 1681" in Dyce MS. 43, II, 560; "Satyr against Whigs" in Add. MS. 21,094, f. 70; and "A Satyr, by Dryden," in Harleian MS. 7317, p. 91. The date is certainly before the death of Lady Betty Felton, December 14, 1681.

Of villains, rebels, cuckolds, pimps and spies,
Cowards and fools, and stormers of dirt pies,
Bawds, panders, whores, even all that would be so,
Stale Maids of Honor that are wooed or woo,
Of scouring drunken drabs, foul, old and pocky,
That cuckold king, lord, captain, knight or jockey,
I sing. Assist me, Shepherd, as thou’rt true
To sacred scandal. Aid me, Fanshaw, too;
So may thy princess thy King’s evil cure,
So may ye drink while Dorset’s rents endure.

Perkin, shall never I lampoon rehearse
But thou must thrust thyself into my verse?
Begone, for satire’s weary of thee grown,
As thou art of the cause thou seem’st to own.
Thy chief deserts were but at best our sport,
And scandal scorns thee now as does the Court.

But of all villains Macclesfield's the worst;
The royal cause was always in him cursed.
When gallant, bare-faced rogues forsook it quite,
And openly against their king durst fight, 20
He was a vermin that stuck fast to bite;
Put sullen virtue on to cloak his sin,
Scipio without, but Cataline within.
Witness against him Newark, where his pride
And falsehood drew him to the rebels' side; 25
Unmoved, he saw's afflicted master's tears,
And heard his plaints, yet still he has his ears.

A son he has too (Brandon is his name),
For playhouse noises much renowned by fame,
And midnight brawls. Arms, arms is all his joy, 30
For 'tis recorded once he slew a boy.
This fat, unwieldy fool would needs be great,
So in the lower senate got a seat,
Where in the government great faults he saw,
For from his sire he loyalty did draw,
And learned Cox the Tartar taught him law.

But for a faithful friend give me Bab May,
Who scorns as much to cheat as to betray,
Keeps from his master's friends his bounty close,
But lavishes his weakness to his foes; 40
Nay, to deserve a confidence so large,
Still keeps cast shitten Moll at the King's charge.

But prithee, Fenwick, wherefore art thou grieved?
Thy wants have by preferment been relieved;
Thy lady longed and had her wished delight; 45
The King dubbed her a whore and thee a knight,
And none can tell which best deserved the grace:
Thy mighty courage or her lovely face.

Then for Whig Arran, bless us, who can bear
That jewel hanging at a monarch's ear,
When so many old gibbets on each road 50
Stand empty and e'en grieve for want of load?
That shrewd, discerning youth's sent here a spy.
Oh, Hamilton, how great's thy policy!
Who'd guess this son, this certain son of thine,
Were fit for less than such a deep design?
Survey his face, you politicians all,
And there behold your meditated fall;
Before him let your vanquished wisdonys bow.
Victorious dullness sits upon his brow,
And in each line of his notorious face,
As in its proper indisputed place.
In full defiance to pretense of wit,
In broad Scotch characters, Fool, Fool is writ.

At thee, old Newport, who can choose but laugh,
With thy white wig, white gloves, and thy white staff?
Thou art so neat a vermin we're i'th' dark
How to divide the rascal from the spark.
But dog thou art—Pardon me, oh, you race
Of honest curs if I your worth disgrace,
For you, they say, are true and never wrong
The benefactors that have fed you long.
But this vile cur's a scandal to your kind,
Who never missed the crust for which he whined;
With a she wolf of Bedford falsely joined,
And whelps begot, destined to many a kick:
Fat turnspit Frank and the starved greyhound Dick.

Bulkeley, how bear'st thee still that burden, life?
For shame, get rid of that, or of thy wife.
Was it thy choice or thy unlucky chance
To attend Godolphin's relict into France?
Of fate by bullet thou hast been bereft,
But yet, what's more thy due, there's halter left.
Make that thy honorable last resort,
And come no more into the grinning Court.

But Poslin, Poslin, how hadst thou pretense
To so much roguery with so little sense?
What devil made thee dote on politics,
Hast thou a head t’riddle all their tricks?
Sure everyone that with his mother lies,
Though lewd as Oedipus is not so wise.
Now womankind I challenge if it can
Be half so vile and scandalous as man.
Crofts for her sex advancing first we see,
To claim pre-eminence of infamy;
With age and ugliness and—what is worst
Of all—with sense enough to know it, cursed.
For wit she has, they say, and sure she has;
How else could she be whore with such a face?
No vulgar sense or parts of common size
To pimp for so much filthiness suffice.
She now excels in the procuring trade,
The ugliest whore makes the most able bawd;
For all that’s learned b’experience or age,
Examples or advice of matrons sage,
Of mere necessity to her does come;
Bawding, like charity, begins at home.
From bawd to stateswoman advanced she sits
At helm and vies with any of the Chits.
And who so fit for business of the nation
As those of this so public a vocation?
Bawding the mind enures and does prepare
For politics as hunting does for war;
Th’ intrigues and stratagems of both the same,
The like sincerity in either game.
So her the factious their chief tool create,
As Charles makes pimps his ministers of state.
Pert Villiers, red Godolphin, widow Swan
(For such she is since Ossory is gone,
Sacred to fame in Otway’s mighty line)
Shall never, never be profaned in mine;
Never till Dering Villiers does embrace,
His false teeth printing in her falser face;
Till Sunderland's love-cant and mein prevail
That now Godolphin's tender heart assail;
Till a new general shall dote on Swan,
That is, till Birnam Wood reach Dunsinane.
First Temple shall forbear t'admire the back
Of some spread pampered stallion robed in black,
She who so long a fallow land has laid,
And brought a scandal on the name of Maid,
Who while before the other nymphs she walks,
And with her hanging dugs like dewlaps stalks,
As some milch cow that leads the tender mulls,
Licks up and goads the cuds of slouching bulls;
So, drunk with lust, she rambles up and down
And bellows out, "I'm bulling round the town."
Not Felton's wife was in her youth more lewd,
Or on the rising cud has oft'ner chewed,
Nor Nell so much inverted nature spewed.

2. dirt pies. Mock fortifications, probably in reference to the mimic siege of Maestricht staged at Windsor in the summer of 1678. See “In Defense of Satire” (POAS, Yale, I, 338),
Warlike, dirt pies our hero Paris [Monmouth] forms,
Which desperate Bessus [Armstrong] without armor storms.

7. Shepherd. Fleetwood Shepherd; see Appendix.
8. Fanshaw. William Fanshaw, Master of Requests. His “princess” in the next line was his wife, Mary. See Appendix.
11. Perkin. A derisive term applied to James, Duke of Monmouth (presumably by Nell Gwyn) in allusion to Perkin Warbeck, a pretender to the throne in the reign of Henry VII. Monmouth had returned without permission on November 27, 1679, and when he refused to return to banishment the King forbade him the Court.
17. Macclesfield. Charles Gerard, first Earl of Macclesfield, a proud and selfish peer. In October, 1645, King Charles I appointed Lord Belasyse governor of Newark, replacing Sir Richard Willis. Willis's friends, including Prince Rupert and General Gerard, protested, and when their protests were ignored they left the Court, “The King looking out of a window and weeping to see them as they went” (Eliot Warburton, Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers, 1849, III, 203-7).

27. his ears. Ear-cropping was a punishment usually reserved for cheats and libelers.


29. playhouse noises. Probably Brandon was one of the Whig "gentlemen in their cups" who, on February 4, 1680, invaded the Duke's Theatre, "flinging links [torches] at the actors, and using several reproachful speeches against the Duchess of [portsmouth] and other persons of honor" (True News; or Mercurius Anglicanus, February 2–7, 1680). Again, on February 19, 1680, Lady Sunderland wrote that "The players have been disturbed again by drunken people's jokes" (Cartwright, Sacharissa, p. 234).

33. a seat. Lord Brandon was elected to Parliament from Lancaster on September 9, 1679, and again on February 22, 1681.


37. Bab May. Baptist May (c. 1627–93), Keeper of the King's Privy Purse. (I have transposed lines 37–40 with lines 43–48, as given in Sloane MS. 655, for continuity of thought.)

40. weakness. Var. Sloane MS. 655, "secrets."

42. Moll. Moll Davis, actress, and once mistress to the King. The scatological epithet refers to an unfortunate encounter she is said to have had with the King after Nell Gwyn had given her a purgative jalap. In Add. MS. 23,722, f. 15, is a squib entitled "On the King's Chamber Door,"

Charles, by the grace of God King of Great Britain,
By little Miss Davis was all beshitten.

43. Fenwick. Sir John Fenwick of Fenwick, Northumberland, was knighted in 1677 and inherited as third baronet in 1682. On July 14, 1663, he married Lady Mary Howard, eldest daughter of Charles, Earl of Carlisle. The poet asserts that Fenwick was knighted because his wife was the King's mistress. Fenwick, later an ardent Jacobite, was attainted for high treason and executed January 27, 1697.

49. Arran. James Douglas, Lord Arran, son of William, Earl of Selkirk, and grandson of the second Duke of Hamilton in Scotland. Born April 11, 1658, he came to Court in 1679 as a Gentleman of the Bedchamber and, sub rosa, a representative of the Scots' interest. In 1694 he became Duke of Hamilton, and in 1712 was killed by Lord Mohun in a duel. This is the gentleman aggrandized by Thackeray in Henry Esmond as the honorable and illustrious Duke of Hamilton.

54. Hamilton. William, Earl of Selkirk, was also Duke of Hamilton, for life only.

65. Newport. Francis, Baron Newport (1620–1708) was created Viscount Newport of Bradford in 1675 and Earl of Bradford in 1694. He was Comptroller of the King's Household 1668–72, and Treasurer of the Household 1672–87 and 1689–1708. In 1642 he married Lady Diana Russell ("A she wolf of Bedford"), daughter of Francis, fourth Earl of Bedford.

77. Frank. Francis ("bold Frank") Newport, second son of Lord Newport, died unmarried November 21, 1692. The epithet "turnspit" refers to the fact that small dogs used in a treadmill to turn a spit usually became very fat. Dick. Richard Newport
(1642–1723), first son of Lord Newport and Member of Parliament from Shropshire, married April 20, 1681, Mary, daughter of Sir Thomas Wilbraham. His leanness was well known. When fat Henry Savile complained about being wasted by illness, he described his “taille” as like Dick Newport’s (*Rochester-Savile Letters*, p. 61).

78. *Bulkeley*. Henry Bulkeley, Master of the Household. A pass for Bulkeley and one servant to go abroad is listed in *CSPD*, 1681, p. 431, August 27, 1681.

81. *Godolphin’s relic*. According to the gossips, Mrs. Sophia Bulkeley was for some years mistress to Sidney Godolphin, a Lord Commissioner of the Treasury. “Relict” suggests that by this time Godolphin had left her.

86. *Poslin*. Apparently a nickname. Writing to his wife on September 28, 1677, Lord Danby wrote, “You must excuse me to my brother because I have scarce time to write this to you, the King just going abroad, and I making myself as good a waiter as Poslin himself” (*Browning, Danby*, II, 40). A marginal note in Sloane. 655 identifies “Poslin” as “Tom Howard,” perhaps Lord Thomas, second son of Henry, sixth Duke of Norfolk.

Another candidate is Edward Howard, the poet, fifth son of Thomas, Earl of Berkshire. In the *Gyldenstolpe Manuscript* version of “Julian” (p. 185) appears the line “May Pozling Howard live by poetry.” In other versions of the satire “pozling” becomes “puzzling.” Edward Howard’s more famous brother, Sir Robert, was often referred to as “Sir Poz,” because of Shadwell’s satiric portrait of him as Sir Positive-at-all in *The Sullen Lovers*, 1668. “Pozling” may be a diminutive of “Poz.” As a poet, Edward Howard was heartily despised.

94. *Crofts*. Catherine Crofts (1637–86), spinster sister of William, Lord Crofts, of Little Saxham, Suffolk, who had been guardian to the Duke of Monmouth. Mrs. Crofts had apartments in Whitehall and a pension said to be £1,500 a year. Her function is defined in these lines from “A Satire upon the Mistresses” (*Harleian MS. 6913*, p. 365),

Next let us view the cock bawds of the Court,
Kate Crofts and Knight, contrivers of the sport;
The one for Shaftesbury, th’ other spy for Rome;
When things move thus, who mayn’t pronounce our doom?

Apparently her lodgings were always open to the Whig leaders; see, for example, *Ormonde MS*, N.S., VI, 244. December 3, 1681.

109. *the Chits*. Sidney Godolphin and Lawrence Hyde, two Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, and Robert, Earl of Sunderland, First Secretary of State, formed a triumvirate, satirically called “the Chits” (children), which was, in effect, the ministry from 1679 to 1681.

118. *Villiers*. Katherine Villiers, second daughter to Sir Edward Villiers, was a Maid of Honor to the Queen, 1680–85. *Godolphin*. Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Godolphin, was appointed Maid of Honor to the Queen in December, 1677 (*Rutland MS*, II, 43). She died at the age of eighteen, and was buried March 17, 1683 (Collins). In the seventeenth century red hair was considered a blemish. *Swan*. Cecilia Swan, a Maid of Honor to the Queen from 1676 to 1685. According to Carte (*Ormonde*, IV, 594), Thomas Butler, the gallant Earl of Ossory, “was deemed not insensible of the charms of a daughter of Sir C [Wm] Swan, with whom he was really in love, and could not help showing it by a change of countenance or some other mark when she was in company.” Ossory died July 30, 1680; hence “Widow” Swan.
120. **Otway.** Thomas Otway dedicated a long poem, *The Poet's Complaint of his Muse*, 1680, to Lord Ossory.

122. **Dering.** Charles, second son of Sir Edward Dering of Surrenden, Kent, was a noted duelist. According to “A Faithful Catalogue of Our Most Eminent Ninnies,” 1687 (POAS, Yale, IV, 200),

> Whoever, like Charles Dering, scorns disgrace,  
> Can never want, although he lose his place;  
> That toothless murd'rer, to his own reproach,  
> Pimps for his sister to maintain a coach.

In 1687 Dering was a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber to King James II. Later he was M.P. for Kent and Auditor of the Exchequer in Ireland.

124. **Sunderland.** Robert Spencer, second Earl of Sunderland (1641–1702), a clever opportunist, was dismissed as Secretary of State on January 24, 1681.

126. **general.** The Earl of Ossory had been general of the English forces in the pay of the Netherlands.

128. **Temple.** Philippa Temple, Maid of Honor to the Queen from c. 1674 to 1692.

134. **mulls.** Heifers.

137. **bulling.** Hunting like a bull in heat.

138. **Felton's wife.** Lady Elizabeth, wife of Thomas Felton, died December 14, 1681.

140. **Nell.** Nell Gwyn.