

Mii9 What hatfull fury dipt thy raging Quill

Notes. This poem responds to “When you awake, dull Brittons, and behold”, defending the parliament’s treatment of Bacon. In the process, it develops a trenchant argument, with some republican undertones, in support of the role of parliament.

“A defence to the Answer made for the Lord Bacon”

What hatfull fury dipt thy raging Quill
in deadly Acconite¹ that thow doest fill
each Line with slander and invective spight
against a Sennate whose grave Doome can fright
the most out daring Insolence! fond elfe 5
to vallew worth by thine unworthy selfe
no monster multitude (ill tutord mate)
censur’d thy faulty Lord butt such a state
as verry hardly parraleld may bee
for wisdom Courage & Integrety 10
Athens Rome Vennice² yeild preheminnence
to theyr farr more admired excellence
butt weer our Comons of a Common merritt
none butt a mallepert³ oreweening⁴ spirritt
durst tax theyse brave Heroes of the state 15
and Reverend Clergy as inordinate
in theyr first sentence, was it not theyr power
that curbed & crusht your famous Chancellour
and this fayre act which you doe brand with shame
shall add renoune to theyr thrice honoured name 20
what if defrauding none of that is dew
we graunt that many praysfull parts are trew
which you invest him with, be he a Jemm
fitt to adorne a Royall dyadem

for abstruce knowledg, though the quintessence 25
of arts in him keepe private residence
beyond all Common streyn, lett us agree
[gap in the ms: suggesting a missing line]
that he's the only Phenix of the time
yett this most salvage & inhumane Crime 30
of foule extortion soe doth stayne the rest
that whome we most admire, we most detest
oh thow misterious deepe Philosophy
o thow a kingdomes Pillar Pollecy
o filed Phrase, inchaunting elloquence 35
why are yee thus estrang'd from innocence
o wretched time; O world of wofull case
wheer wismen studdy Nature more then grace
if that faire Nimph whose awfull majesty
in luster farr surmounts the heavens bright eye 40
devine Astraea⁵ had been harbourd by him
no Cicero, no Cato⁶ had come nigh him
nor may he now be stild his Country's father
butt both a name a fact aversed⁷ it rather
who can with tears bemoane this great mans fall 45
or gild his foule sine like a painted wall
who knowing soe much good soe ill did doe
selling both right & wrong & conscience too
A heynous fault & in him most unjust
who had the conscience of a King in trust 50
who with such peccadilloes can dispence
I know not what heele call a great offence
butt God and his immediate substitute
would not permitt him longer to pollute
that sacred state but both make ready way 55

to what he fear'd, as his doomes dreadfull day
thus is he brought to tast corrections rodd
as a vayne man, not as a demmy God
whose property in doing good, butt evell
though joynd with rarest parts befitts a divell 60
who was an angell alsoe ere he fell
and angell like was made Achitophell⁸
what doe you gaine when with insulting rage
yow bring the dead in scorne upon the stage
if others have done ill, their's no defence 65
found in retorting crimes, but innocence
or what can it prevayle if man pretend
in doeing evell some more specious end
robbing to purchase land, or give away
will find small difference at the reckoning day 70
a just damnation doth to them belong
who under foule pretence, doe fowlest wrong
since then his fault was of soe high a strayne
tweer great ingratitude should he complaine
of his light censure, when that life and limbe 75
and Noble titles are preserv'd to him
only the power & wisdom of the land
wrested a weapon from a madd mans hand
had they been more sever, the Parlament
was nott unfurnisht of a President⁹ 80
Tressillian learnt a tricke to stretch a string
though by preventing law to please a King¹⁰
but your inconstant moon as ill hath done
not for a King but for Endimion¹¹
your Alban¹² knowes (who knowes much more then I) 85
how a corrupt Judg was adjudg'd to dye

and his head skinn made lining for a chare
 wher his suckessor satt, he knowes how fayre
 Faine speake Count Holland, who for one poore Cowe¹³
 condem'd his bailife to the fatall Bough 90
 butt fayrer fall the learned Verrulam
 and lett this stayne, that late did stayne his fame
 be washt by pennyntence; long may he live
 and from his unexhausted treasure give
 Jewels of witt, art, Language, Pollecye 95
 and teach the world each hidden mistery
 of Nature, lett him open all the springs
 of Councill fitt to guide the wisest Kings
 for lett oblivion cover former Crimes
 and he stand honourd to succeeding times 100

Source. Huntington MS HM 198, 1.134-36

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- ¹ *Acconite*: a poison, derived from a genus of plants of the same name.
- ² *Athens Rome Vennice*: cities associated with republican government, either in ancient or modern times.
- ³ *mallepert*: presumptuous, impudent.
- ⁴ *oreweening*: i.e. “overweeing” (having an inflated opinion of oneself).
- ⁵ *Astraea*: in classical mythology, the Just Virgin of the Golden Age; hence a figure representative of justice.
- ⁶ *no Cicero, no Cato*: Roman writers and politicians invoked in “When you awake, dull Brittons, and behould” by way of comparison with Bacon.
- ⁷ *aversed*: averted; opposed. The point is that for Bacon a “fact” of corruption stands in opposition to any “name” of dignity.

⁸ *Achitophell*: i.e. Ahitophel, counsellor of King David who plotted against his master (2 Samuel 15.31, 17.1-23).

⁹ *President*: i.e. precedent.

¹⁰ *Tressillian learnt...King*: reference to Sir Robert Tressilian, Chief Justice of the King's Bench under Richard II, who played a critical role in the constitutional crisis of 1386-88. Tressilian co-authored a series of legal statements on the scope of the royal prerogative against the claims of parliament, which effectively accused the parliament of treason. In response, Richard's baronial enemies accused five of Richard's advisors of treason, and eventually two (including Tressilian) were executed. Presumably the conviction and execution of Tressilian is the "precedent" to which the poem refers.

¹¹ *but your...Endimion*: in classical mythology, Endymion was a mortal who loved the moon, and was either put into a permanent sleep by her, or else chose this condition himself. In the early Stuart period the meaning of the figure is also informed by John Lyly's Elizabethan allegorical play *Endimion, The Man in the Moone*, in which Endimion (probably the Earl of Leicester) is in fact released from sleep by Cynthia (the moon; Queen Elizabeth). In the present poem, "Endimion" is almost certainly a figure representative of Buckingham: the suggestion being that Bacon has stretched the law for the favourite's benefit.

¹² *your Alban*: i.e. Bacon, Viscount St. Albans.

¹³ *how a corrupt...Cowe*: the details of these precedents, whether factual or mythical, are unclear; however, the poem's point, about legal corruption and self-interest, is relatively straightforward.
