

Dédicace de The Feigned Curtezans

Auteur : Behn, Aphra

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Les folios

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4 Fichier(s)

Informations éditoriales

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Auteur de la pièce Behn, Aphra

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T O
Mrs. ELLEN GUVIN.

Madam,

TIS no wonder that hitherto I followed not the good example of the believing Poets, since less faith and zeal then yon alone can inspire, had wanted power to have reduc't me to the true worship : Your permission, *Madam*, has inlightened me, and I with shame look back on my past Ignorance, which suffered me not to pay an Adoration long since, where there was so very much due, yet even now though secure in my opinion, I make this Sacrifice with infinite fear and trembling, well knowing that so Excellent and perfect a Creature as your self differs only from the Divine powers in this ; the Offerings made to you ought to be worthy of you, whilst they accept the will alone ; and how *Madam*, would your Altars be loaded, if like heaven you gave permission to all that had a will and desire to approach 'em, who now at distance can only wish and admire, which all mankinde agree to do ; as if *Madam*, you alone had the pattent from heaven to angrofs all hearts ; and even those distant slaves whom you conquer with your fame, pay an equall tribute to those that have the blessing of being wounded by your Eyes, and boast the happiness of be-

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holding you dayly; insomuch that succeeding ages who shall with joy survey your History shall Envy us who lived in this, and saw those charming wonders which they can only reade of, and whom we ought in charity to pity, since all the Pictures, pens or pencils can draw, will give give 'em but a faint Idea of what we have the honour to see in such absolute Perfection ; they can only guess She was infinitely fair, witty, and deserving, but to what Vast degrees in all, they can only Judge who liv'd to Gaze and Listen ; for besides Madam, all the Charms and attractions and powers of your Sex, you have Beauties peculiar to your self, an eternal sweet-ness, youth and ayr, which never dwelt in any face but yours, of which not one unimitable Grace could be ever borrow'd, or assumed, though with never so much industry, to adorn another, they cannot steal a look or smile from you to enhance their own beauties price, but all the world will know it yours ; so Natural and so fitted are all your Charms and Excellencies to one another, so intirely design'd and created to make up in you alone the most perfect lovely thing in the world; you never appear but you glad the hearts of all that have the happy fortune to see you, as if you were made on purpose to put the whole world into good Humour, whenever you look abroad, and when you speak, men crowd to listen with that awfull reverence as to Holy Oracles or Divine Prophesies, and bears away the precious words to tell at home to all the attentive family, the Gracefull things you utter'd and ery, *but oh she spoke*.

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speeked with such an Ayr, so gay, that half the beauty's lost in the repetition. 'Tis this that ought to make your Sex vain enough to despise the malicious world that will allow a woman no wit, and bless our selves for living in an Age that can produce so wondrous an argument as your undeniable self, to shame those boasting talkers who are Judges of nothing but faults.

But how much in vain Madam, I endeavour to tell you the sence of all mankinde with mine, since to the utmost Limits of the Univerfe your mighty Conquests are made known : And who can doubt the Power of that Illustrious Beauty, the Charms of that tongue, and the greatness of that minde, who has subdu'd the most powerfull and Glorious Monarch of the world : And so well you bear the honours you were born for; with a greatness so unaffected, an affabillity so easie, an Humor so soft, so far from Pride or Vanity, that the most Envious & most disaffected can finde no cause or reason to wish you less, Nor can Heaven give you more, who has exprest a particular care of you every way, and above all in bestowing on the world and you, two noble Branches, who have all the greatness and sweetness of their Royal and beautiful stock; and who give us too a hopeful Prospect of what their future Braveries will perform, when they shall shoot up and spread themselves to that degree, that all the lesser world may finde repose beneath their shades ; and whom you have permitted to wear those glorious Titles which you your self Generously neglected, well knowing

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knowing with the noble Poet ; 'tis better far to merit Titles than to wear 'em.

Can you then blame my Ambition, Madam, that lays this at your feet, and begs a Sanctuary where all pay so great a Veneration ? 'twas Dedicated yours before it had a being, and overbusy to render it worthy of the Honour, made it less grateful ; and Poetry like Lovers often fares the worse by taking too much pains to please ; but under so Gracious an Influence my tender Lawrells may thrive, till they become fit Wreaths to offer to the Rays that improve their Growth : which Madam, I humbly implore, you still permit her ever to do, who is,

Madam,

Your most humble,

and Most Obedient Servant.

A. Behn.

The