

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-43274-1 - Abraham Cowley: Essays, Plays and Sundry Verses  
The Text Edited by A. R. Waller  
Excerpt  
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# POETICALL BLOSSOMES.

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*The third Edition.*

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Enlarged by the Author.

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—*fit surculus Arbor.*

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LONDON.

Printed by E. P. for HENRY SEILE,  
and are to bee sold at his shop at the signe  
of the Tygers-head in Fleet-street  
between the Bridge and  
the Conduit  
1637.

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TO  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
AND RIGHT REVEREND FATHER  
IN GOD, JOHN LORD BISHOP  
OF LINCOLNE AND DEANE  
OF WESTMINSTER

MY LORD,

*I might well feare, least these my rude and unpolisht  
lines, should offend your Honourable survey; but that I hope your  
Noblenesse will rather smile at the faults committed by a Child,  
then censure them. Howsoever I desire your Lordships pardon,  
for presenting things so unworthy to your view, and to accept the  
good will of him, who in all dutie is bound to be*

Your Lordships

most humble servant.

*Abraham Cowley.*

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## To the Reader.

READER (I know not yet whether Gentle or no) Some, I know, have beene angrie (I dare not assume the honour of their envie) at my Poeticall boldnes, and blamed in mine, what commends other fruits, earliness : others, who are either of a weake faith, or strong malice, have thought me like a Pipe, which never sounds but when 'tis blowed in, and read me, not as *Abraham Cowley*, but *Authorem anonymum*: to the first I answer, that it is an envious frost which nippes the Blossomes, because they appeare quickly : to the latter, that he is the worst homicide who strives to murther anothers fame; to both, that it is a ridiculous follie to condemne or laugh at the starres, because the Moone and Sunne shine brighter. The small fire I have is rather blowne then extinguished by this wind. For the itch of Poesie by being angered encreaseeth, by rubbing, spreads farther; which appeares in that I have ventured upon this third Edition. What though it be neglected? It is not, I am sure, the first booke, which hath lighted Tobacco, or been employed by Cooks, and Groacers. If in all mens judgements it suffer shipwracke, it shall something content mee, that it hath pleased My selfe and the Bookseller. In it you shall finde one argument (and I hope I shall need no more) to confute unbelievers : which is, that as mine age, and consequently experience (which is yet but little) hath increased, so they have not left my Poesie flagging behind them. I should not bee angrie to see any one burne my *Pyramus*, and *Thisbe*, nay I would doe it my selfe, but that I hope a pardon may easily bee gotten for the errors of ten yeeres age. My *Constantia* and *Philetus* confesseth mee two yeeres older when I writ it. The rest were made since upon severall occasions, and perhaps doe not belie the time of their birth. Such as they are, they were created by mee, but their fate lies in your hands, it is onely you, can effect, that neither the Booke-seller repent himselfe of his charge in printing them, nor I of my labour in composing them. Farewell.

A. C.

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To his deare Friend and Schoole-fellow *Abraham Cowley*, on his flourishing and hopeful BLOSSOMES.

Nature we say decays, because our Age  
 Is worse then were the Times of old: The Stage  
 And Histories the former times declare:  
 In these our latter Dayes what defects are  
 Experience teacheth, What then? shall wee blame  
 Nature for this? Not so; let us declame  
 Rather against our Selves: 'tis we Decay,  
 Not She: Shee is the same every way  
 She was at first. COWLEY, thou prov'st this truth.  
 Could ever former Age brag of a Youth  
 So forward at these yeeres? Could NASO write  
 Thus young such wittie Poems? TULLY's mite  
 Of Eloquence, at this age was not seene.  
 Nor yet was CATO's Judgement, at Thirteene  
 So great as thine. Suppose it were so; yet  
 He CIC'RO's Eloquence, TULLY the Wit  
 Of OVID wanted: OVID too came farre  
 In Judgement behind CATO. Therefore are  
 None of all equall unto Thee, so pretty,  
 So Eloquent, Judicious, and Witty.  
 Let the world's spring time but produce and show  
 Such Blossomes as thy Writings are, and know,  
 Then (not till then) shall my opinion be,  
 That it is Nature faileth, and not wee.

BEN. MASTERS.

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To his Friend and Schoole-fellow ABRAHAM  
COWLEY, on his Poeticall  
BLOSSOMES.

*M* Any, when Youths of tender Age they see  
Expressing CATO, in their Gravity,  
Judgement, and Wit, will oftentimes report,  
They thinke their thread of Life exceeding short.  
But my opinion is not so of Thee,  
For thou shalt live, to all Posterity.  
These gifts will never let thee dye, for Death  
Can not bereave thee of thy fame, though breath.  
Let snarling Criticks spend their braines to find  
A fault, though there be none; This is my mind;  
Let him that carpeth with his vipers Tongue,  
Thinke with himselfe what he could doe as young.  
But if the Springing Blossomes, thus rare bee,  
What ripen'd Fruit shall we hereafter see?

ROB. MEADE,

Condiscipulus.

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## To the Reader.

## I.

**I** call'd the buskin'd Muse Melpomene,  
 And told her what sad Story I would write:  
 Shee wept at hearing such a Tragedie,  
 Though wont in mournfull Ditties to delight.  
 If thou dislike these sorrowfull lines; Then know  
 My Muse with teares, not with Conceits did flow.

## II.

And as shee my unabler quill did guide,  
 Her briny teares did on the paper fall,  
 If then unequall numbers bee espied,  
 Oh Reader! doe not that my error call,  
 But thinke her teares defac't it, and blame then  
 My Muses grieffe, and not my missing Pen.

Abraham Cowley.

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## CONSTANTIA

AND

## PHILETUS.

I.

I Sing two constant Lovers various fate,  
The hopes, and feares which equally attend  
Their loves: Their rivals envie, Parents hate;  
I sing their sorrowfull life, and tragicke end.  
Assist me this sad story to rehearse  
You Gods, and be propitious to my verse.

2.

In *Florence*, for her stately buildings fam'd,  
And lofty roofes that emulate the skie;  
There dwelt a lovely Mayd *Constantia* nam'd  
Renown'd, as mirrour of all *Italy*.  
Her lavish nature did at first adorne,  
With *Pallas* soule in *Cytherea's* forme.

3.

And framing her attractive eyes so bright,  
Spent all her wit in studie, that they might  
Keepe th'earth from *Chaos*, and eternall night;  
But envious Death destroy'd their glorious light.  
Expect not beauty then, since shee did part;  
For in her Nature wasted all her Art.

4.

Her hayre was brighter then the beams which are  
A Crowne to *Phæbus*, and her breath so sweet,  
It did transcend *Arabian* odours farre,  
Or th'smelling Flowers, wherewith the Spring doth greet  
Approaching Summer, teeth like falling snow  
For white, were placed in a double row.

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5.

Her wit excell'd all praise, all admiration,  
 And speech was so attractive it might be  
 A meanes to cause great *Pallas* indignation,  
 And raise an envie from that Deity.  
 The mayden Lillyes at her lovely sight  
 Waxt pale with envie, and from thence grew white.

6.

She was in birth and parentage as high  
 As in her fortune great, or beauty rare,  
 And to her vertuous mindes nobility  
 The gifts of Fate and Nature doubled were;  
 That in her spotlesse Soule, and lovely Face  
 Thou might'st have seene each Deity and grace.

7.

The scornefull Boy *Adonis* viewing her  
 Would *Venus* still despise, yet her desire,  
 Each who but saw, was a Competitor  
 And rivall, scorcht alike with *Cupid's* fire.  
 The glorious beames of her fayre Eyes did move,  
 And light beholders on their way to Love.

8.

Amongst her many Sutors a young Knight  
 Bove others wounded with the Majesty  
 Of her faire presence, presseth most in sight;  
 Yet seldome his desire can satisfie  
 With that blest object, or her rarenesse see;  
 For *Beauties* guard, is *watchfull Jealousie*.

9.

Of-times that he might see his *Dearest-faire*,  
 Vpon his stately Jennet he in th'way  
 Rides by her house, who neigh's, as if he were  
 Proud to be view'd by bright *Constantia*.  
 But his poore Master though to see her move  
 His joy, dares show no looke betraying love.

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## CONSTANTIA AND PHILETUS

10.

Soone as the morne peep'd from her rosie bed  
 And all Heavens smaller lights expulsed were:  
 She by her friends and neere acquaintance led  
 Like other Maids oft walk't to take the ayre;  
*Aurora* blusht at such a sight unknowne,  
 To see those cheekes were redder then her owne.

11.

Th'obsequious Lover follows still her traine  
 And where they goe, that way his journey feines.  
 Should they turne backe, he would turne backe againe;  
 For where his Love, his businesse there remains.  
 Nor is it strange hee should be loath to part  
 From her, since shee had stolne away his heart.

12.

*Philetus* hee was call'd sprung from a race  
 Of Noble ancestors; But greedy *Time*  
 And envious *Fate* had labour'd to deface  
 The glory which in his great Stocke did shine;  
 His state but small, so Fortune did decree,  
 But *Love* being blind, hee that could never see.

13.

Yet he by chance had hit his heart aright,  
 And on *Constantia's* eye his Arrow whet,  
 Had blowne the Fire, that would destroy him quite,  
 Unlesse his flames might like in her beget:  
 But yet he feares, because he blinded is,  
 Though he have shot him right, her heart hee'l misse.

14.

Unto *Loves* Altar therefore hee repayers,  
 And offers there a pleasing Sacrifice;  
 Intreating *Cupid* with inducing Prayers,  
 To looke upon, and ease his Miseries:  
 Where having wept, recovering breath againe,  
 Thus to immortall *Love* he did complaine:

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## ABRAHAM COWLEY

15.

*Oh Cupid! thou whose uncontrolled sway,  
Hath oft-times rul'd the Olympian Thunderer,  
Whom all Cælestiall Deities obey,  
Whom Men and Gods both reverence and feare!  
Oh force Constantias heart to yeeld to Love,  
Of all thy Workes the Master piece 'twill prove.*

16.

*And let me not Affection vainely spend,  
But kindle flames in her, like those in me;  
Yet if that guift my Fortune doth transcend,  
Grant that her charming Beauty I may see:  
And view those Eyes which with their ravishing light,  
Doe onely give contentment to my sight.*

17.

*Those who contemne thy sacred Deity,  
And mocke thy power, let them thine anger know,  
I faultlesse am, nor can't an honour be  
To wound your slave alone, and spare your Foe.  
Here teares and sighes speake his imperfect mone,  
In language farre more dolorous than his owne.*

18.

*Home he retyr'd, his Soule he brought not home,  
Just like a Ship whil'st every mounting wave  
Tost by enraged Boreas up and downe,  
Threatens the Mariner with a gaping grave;  
Such did his case, such did his state appeare,  
Alike distracted betweene hope and feare.*

19.

*Thinking her love hee never shall obtaine,  
One morne he goes to th' Woods, and doth complaine  
Of his unhappy Fate, but all in vaine,  
And thus fond *Eccho*, answers him againe.  
So that it seemes *Aurora* wept to heare,  
For th'verdant grasse was dew'd with many a teare.*