

Classic Poetry Series

Charles Churchill

- poems -

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The Ghost: Book II (excerpt)

...
Pomposo (insolent and loud),
Vain idol of a scribbling crowd,
Whose very name inspires an awe,
Whose ev'ry word is sense and law,
For what his greatness hath decreed,
Like laws of Persia and of Mede,
Sacred thro' all the realm of wit,
Must never of repeal admit;
Who, cursing flatt'ry, is the tool
Of ev'ry fawning, flatt'ring fool;
Who wit with jealous eye surveys,
And sickens at another's praise;
Who, proudly seiz'd of learning's throne,
Now damns all learning but his own;
Who scorns those common wares to trade in,
Reas'ning, convincing, and persuading,
But makes each sentence current pass
With "Puppy," "Coxcomb," "Scoundrel," "Ass";
For 'tis with him a certain rule,
The folly's prov'd when he calls fool;
Who, to increase his native strength,
Draws words six syllables in length,
With which, assisted with a frown
By way of club, he knocks us down;
Who 'bove the vulgar dares to rise,
And sense of decency defies,
(For this same decency is made
Only for bunglers in the trade,
And, like the cobweb laws, is still
Broke thro' by great ones when they will)--
Pomposo, with strong sense supplied,
Supported, and confirm'd by pride,
His comrades' terrors to beguile,
"Grinn'd horribly a ghastly smile:"
Features so horrid, were it light,
Would put the Devil himself to flight.

...

Charles Churchill

The Ghost: Book III (excerpt)

...
Horrid, unwieldy, without form,
Savage, as ocean in a storm,
Of size prodigious, in the rear,
That post of honour, should appear
Pomposo; fame around should tell
How he a slave to int'rest fell,
How, for integrity renown'd,
Which booksellers have often found,
He for subscribers baits his hook,
And takes their cash--but where's the book?
No matter where--wise fear, we know,
Forbids the robbing of a foe;
But what, to serve our private ends,
Forbids the cheating of our friends?
No man alive, who would not swear
All's safe, and therefore honest there.
For, spite of all the learned say,
If we to truth attention pay,
The word dishonesty is meant
For nothing else but punishment.
Fame too should tell, nor heed the threat
Of rogues, who brother rogues abet,
Nor tremble at the terrors hung
Aloft, to make her hold her tongue,
How to all principles untrue,
Nor fix'd to old friends, nor to new,
He damns the pension which he takes,
And loves the Stuart he forsakes.
Nature (who justly regular,
Is very seldom known to err,
But now and then in sportive mood,
As some rude wits have understood,
Or through much work requir'd in haste,
Is with a random stroke disgrac'd)
Pomposo form'd on doubtful plan,
Not quite a beast, nor quite a man,
Like--God knows what--for never yet
Could the most subtle human wit
Find out a monster which might be
The shadow of a simile.

...

Charles Churchill

Times

The Time hath been, a boyish, blushing Time,
When Modesty was scarcely held a crime,
When the most Wicked had some touch of grace,
And trembled to meet Virtue face to face,
When Those, who, in the cause of Sin grown grey,
Had serv'd her without grudging day by day,
Were yet so weak an awkward shame to feel,
And strove that glorious service to conceal;
We, better bred, and than our Sires more wise,
Such paltry narrowness of soul despise,
To Virtue ev'ry mean pretence disclaim,
Lay bare our crimes, and glory in our shame.

ITALIA, nurse of ev'ry softer art,
Who, feigning to refine, unmans the heart,
Who lays the realms of Sense and Virtue waste,
Who marrs whilst she pretends to mend our taste,
ITALIA, to compleat and crown our shame,
Sends us a Fiend, and LEGION is his name.
The Farce of greatness, without being great,
Pride without Pow'r, Titles without Estate,
Souls without vigour, Bodies without force,
Hate without case, Revenge without remorse,
Dark, mean Revenge, Murder without defence,
Jealousy without Love, Sound without Sense,
Mirth without Humour, without Wit Grimace,
Faith without Reason, Gospel without Grace,
Zeal without Knowledge, without Nature Art,
Men without Manhood, Women without Heart,
Half-Men, who, dry and pithless, are debarr'd
From Man's best joys — no sooner made than marr'd —
Half-Men, whom many a rich and noble Dame,
To serve her lust, and yet secure her fame,
Keeps on high diet, as We Capons feed,
To glut our appetites at last decreed;
Women, who dance, in postures so obscene,
They might awaken shame in ARETINE,
Who, when, retir'd from the day's piercing light,
They celebrate the mysteries of night,
Might make the Muses, in a corner plac'd
To view their monstrous lusts, deem SAPPHO chaste;
These, and a thousand follies rank as these,
A thousand faults, ten thousand Fools, who please
Our pall'd and sickly taste, ten thousand knaves,
Who serve our foes as spies, and us as slaves,
Who by degrees, and unperceiv'd, prepare
Our necks for chains which they already wear,
Madly we entertain, at the expence
Of Fame, of Virtue, Taste, and Common-Sense.
Nor stop we here — the soft luxurious EAST,
Where Man, his soul degraded, from the Beast
In nothing diff'rent but in shape we view,

They walk on four legs, and he walks on two,
Attracts our eye, and flowing from that source,
Sins of the blackest character, Sins worse
Than all her plagues, which truly to unfold
Would make the best blood in my veins run cold,
And strike all Manhood dead, which but to name
Would call up in my cheeks the marks of shame,
Sins, if such Sins can be, which shut out grace,
Which for the guilty leave no hope, no place
E'en in God's mercy, Sins 'gainst Nature's plan
Possess the land at large, and Man for Man
Burn in those fires, which Hell alone could raise
To make him more than damn'd, which, in the days
Of punishment, when guilt becomes her prey,
With all her tortures she can scarce repay.

Be Grace shut out, be Mercy deaf, let God
With tenfold terrors arms that dreadful nod
Which speaks them lost, and sentenc'd to despair;
Distending wide her jaws, let Hell prepare
For Those who thus offend amongst Mankind,
A fire more fierce, and tortures more refin'd;
On Earth, which groans beneath their monstrous weight,
On Earth, alas! They meet a diff'rent fate,
And whilst the laws, false grace, false mercy shewn,
Are taught to wear a softness not their own,
Men, whom the Beasts would spurn, should they appear
Amongst the honest herd, find refuge here.

No longer by vain fear, or shame controul'd
From long, too long security grown bold,
Mocking rebuke, they brave it in our streets,
And LUMLEY e'en at noon his mistress meets.
So public in their crimes, so daring grown,
They almost take a pride to have them known,
And each unnat'ral Villain scarce endures
To make a secret of his vile amours.
Go where We will, at ev'ry time and place,
SODOM confronts, and stares us in the face;
They ply in public at our very doors,
And take the bread from much more honest Whores.
Those who are mean high Paramours secure,
And the rich guilty screen the guilty poor;
The Sin too proud to feel from Reason awe,
And Those, who practise it, too great for Law.

Woman, the pride and happiness of Man,
Without whose soft endearments Nature's plan
Had been a blank, and Life not worth a thought;
Woman, by all the Loves and Graces taught,
With softest arts, and sure, tho' hidden skill,
To humanize, and mould us to her will;

Woman, with more than common grace form'd here,
With the persuasive language of a tear
To melt the rugged temper of our Isle,
Or win us to her purpose with a smile;
Woman, by fate the quickest spur decreed,
The fairest, best reward of ev'ry deed
Which bears the stamp of hoinour, at whose name
Our antient Heroes caught a quicker flame,
And dar'd beyond belief, whilst o'er the plain,
Spurning the carcasses of Princes slain,
Confusion proudly strode, whilst Horror blew
The fatal trump, and Death stalk'd full in view;
Woman is out of date, a thing thrown by
As having lost its use; No more the Eye
With female beauty caught, in wild amaze,
Gazes entranc'd, and could for ever gaze;
No more the Heart, that seat where Love resides,
Each breath drawn quick and short, in fuller tides
Life posting thro' the veins, each pulse on fire,
And the whole body tingling with desire,
Pants for those charms, which Virtue might engage
To break his vow, and thaw the frost of age,
Bidding each trembling nerve, each muscle strain,
And giving pleasure which is almost pain.
Women are kept for nothing but the breed;
For pleasure we must have a GANYMEDE,
A fine, fresh HYLAS, a delicious boy,
To serve our purposes of beastly joy.

Fairest of Nymphs, where ev're Nymph is fair,
Whom Nature form'd with more than common care,
With more than common care whom Art improv'd,
And both declar'd most worthy to be lov'd,
— neglected wanders, whilst a croud
Pursue, and consecrate the steps —
She, hapless maid, born in a wretched hour,
Wastes life's gay prime in vain, like some fair flow'r,
Sweet in its scent, and lively in its hue,
Which withers on the stalk from whence it grew,
And dies uncropp'd, whilst He, admir'd, caress'd,
Belov'd, and ev'ry where a welcome guest,
With Brutes of rank and fortune plays the Whore,
For this unnat'ral lust a Common Sew'r.

Dine with APICIUS — at his sumptuous board
Find all, the world of dainties can afford —
And yet (so much distemper'd Spirits pall
The sickly appetite) amidst them all
APICIUS finds no joy, but, whilst he carves
For ev'ry guest, the Landlord sits and starves.

· · · ·
Whence flows this Sorrow then? behind his chair

Didst Thou not see, deck'd with a Solitaire
Which on his bare breast glitt'ring play'd and grac'd
With nicest ornaments, a Stripling plac'd,
A Smooth, Smug, Stripling, in life's fairest prime?
Didst Thou not mind too, how from time to time,
The monstrous Letcher, tempted to despise
All other dainties, thither turn'd his eyes?
How he seem'd inly to reproach us all,
Who strove his fix'd attention to recall,
And how he wish'd, e'en at the Time of grace,
Like JANUS, to have had a double face?
His cause of grief behold in that fair Boy;
APICIUS dotes, and CORYDON is coy.

Vain and unthinking Stripling! When the glass
Meets thy too curious eye, and, as You pass,
Flatt'ring, presents in smiles thy image there,
Why dost Thou bless the Gods, who made Thee fair?
Blame their large bounties, and with reason blame;
Curse, curse thy beauty, for it leads to shame.
When thy hot Lord, to work Thee to his end,
Bids show'rs of gold into thy breast descend,
Suspect his gifts, nor the vile giver trust;
They're baits for Virtue, and smell strong of lust.
On those gay, gaudy trappings, which adorn
The temple of thy body, look with scorn,
View them with horror, they pollution mean
And deepest ruin; Thou hast often seen,
From 'mongst the herd, the fairest and the best
Carefully singled out, and richly drest,
With grandeur mock'd, for scarifice decreed,
Only in greater pomp at last to bleed.
Be warn'd in time, the threat'ned danger shun,
To stay a moment is to be undone.
What tho', temptation proof, thy Virtue shine,
Nor bribes can move, nor arts can undermine,
All other methods failing, one resource
Is still behind, and Thou must yield to force.
Paint to thyself the horrors of a rape,
Most strongly paint, and, while Thou canst escape,
Mind not his promises — They're made in sport —
Made to be broke — Was He not bred at Court?
Trust not to Honour, He's a Man of birth;
Attend not to his oaths — They're made on earth,
Not register'd in Heav'n — He mocks at grace,
And in his Creed God never found a place —
Look not for Conscience — for He knows her not,
So long a Stranger, she is quite forgot —
Nor think thyself in Law secure and firm —
Thy Master is a Lord, and Thou a worm,
A poor mean Reptile, never meant to think,
Who, being well supplied with meat and drink,

And suffer'd just to crawl from place to place,
Must serve his lusts, and think he does Thee grace.

Fly then, whilst yet 'tis in thy pow'r to fly,
But whither can'st Thou go? on whom rely
For wish'd protection? Virtue's sure to meet
An armed host of foes, in ev'ry street.
What boots it, of APICIUS fearful grown,
Headlong to fly into the arms of STONE,
Or why take refuge in the house of pray'd,
If sure to meet with an APICIUS there?
Trust not Old Age, which will thy faith betray;
Saint SOCRATES is still a Goat, tho' grey;
Trust not greet Youth; FLORIO will scarce go down,
And, at eighteen, hath surfeited the Town;
Trust not to Rakes — alas! 'tis all pretence —
They take up raking only as a sence
'Gainst Common Fame — place H—— in thy view;
He keeps one Whore as BARROWBY kept two;
Trust not to Marriage — T—— took a Wife,
Who caste as Dian might have pass'd her life,
Had she not, far more prudent in her aim,
(To propagate the honours of his name,
And save expiring titles) taken care
Without his knowledge to provide an heir;
Trust not to Marriage, in Mankind unread;
S[ackville]'s a married man, and S[troud's] new wed.

Would'st Thou be safe? Society forswear,
Fly to the desert, and seek shelter there,
Herd with the Brutes — they follow Nature's plan —
There's not one Brute so dangerous as Man
In Afric's wilds — 'mongst them that refuge find,
Which Lust denies thee here among Mankind;
Renounce thy name, thy nature, and no more
Pique thy vain Pride on Manhood, on all four
Walk, as You see those honest creatures do,
And quite forget that once You walk'd on Two.

But, if the thoughts of Solitude alarm,
And social life hath one remaining charm,
If still Thou art to Jeopardy decreed
Amongst the monsters of AUGUSTA's breed,
Lay by thy sex, thy safety to procure;
Put off the Man, from Men to live secure;
Go forth a Woman to the public view,
And with their garb assume their manners too.
Had the light-footed GREEK of Chiron's school
Been wise enough to keep this single rule,
The Maudlin Hero, like a puling boy
Robb'd of his play-thing, on the plains of Troy
Had never blubber'd at Patroclus' tomb,

And plac'd his Minion in his Mistress' room.
Be not in this than Catamites more nice,
Do that for Virtue, which they do for Vice.
Thus shalt Thou pass untained life's gay bloom,
Thus stand uncourted in the drawing-room,
At midnight thus, untempted, walk the street,
And run no danger but of being beat.

Where is the Mother, whose officious zeal
Discreetly judging what her Daughters feel
By what she felt herself in days of yore,
Against that Letcher Man makes fast the door,
Who not permits, e'en for the sake of pray'r,
A Priest, uncastrated, to enter there,
Nor (could her wishes, and her care prevail)
Would suffer in the house a fly that's male?
Let her discharge her cares, throw wide her doors,
Her daughters cannot, if They would, be Whores,
Nor can a man be found, as Times now go,
Who thinks it worth his while to make them so.

Tho' they more fresh, more lively than the Morn,
And brighter than the noon-day Sun, adorn
The works of Nature, tho' the Mother's grace
Revives improv'd, in ev'ry Daughter's face,
Undisciplin'd in dull Discretion's rules,
Untaught, and Undebauch'd by Boarding-Schools,
Free and unguarded, let Them range the Town,
Go forth at random, and run pleasure down;
Start where she will, discard all taint of fear,
Nor think of danger, when no danger's near.
Watch not their steps — They're safe without thy care,
Unless, like Jennets, they conceive by air,
And ev're one of them may die a Nun,
Unless they breed, like Carrion, in the Sun.
Men, dead to pleasure, as they're dead to grace,
Against the law of Nature set their face,
The grand primaeval law, and seem combin'd
To stop the propagation of Mankind;
Vile Pathicks read the Marriage Act with pride,
And fancy that the Law is on their side.

Broke down, and Strength a stranger to his bed,
Old L—— tho' yet alive, is dead;
T—— lives no more, or lives not to our Isle;
No longer blest with a Cz——'s smile
T—— is at P—— disgrac'd,
And M—— grown grey, perforce grows chaste;
Nor to the credit of our modest race,
Rises one Stallion to supply their place.
A Maidenhead, which, twenty years ago,
In mid December, the rank Flky would blow

Tho' closely kept, now, when the Dog-Star's heat
Enflames the marrow, in the very street
May lie untouch'd, left for the worms, by Those
Who daintily pass by, and hold their nose.
Poor, plain Concupiscence is in disgrace,
And simple Letch'ry dares not shew her face
Lest she be sent to Bridewell; Bankrupts made,
To save their fortunes, Bawds leave off that trade,
Which first had left off them; to Well-close Square
Fine, fresh, young Strumpets (for DODD preaches there)
Throng for subsistence; Pimps no longer thrive,
And Pensions only keep L—— alive.

Where is the Mother, who thinks all her pain,
And all her jeopardy of travail, gain,
When a Man Child is born, thinks ev'ry pray'r,
Paid to the full, and answer'd in an heir?
Short-sighted Woman! little doth she know
What streams of sorrow from that source may flow,
Little suspect, while she surveys her Boy,
Her young NARCISSUS, with an eye of joy
Too full for Contenance, that Fate could give
Her darling as a cruse, that she may lvie,
E're sixteen Winters they short course have run,
In agonies of soul, to curse that Son.

Pray then for Daughters, Ye wise Mothers, pray;
They shall reward your love, not make ye grey
Before your time with sorrow; they shall give
Ages of peace and comfort, whilst Ye live
Make life most truly worth your care, and save,
In spite of death, your mem'ries from the grave.

· · · ·
Is a son born into this world of woe?
In never-ceasing streams let sorrow flow,
Be from that hour the house with sables hung
Let lamentations dwell upon thy tongue,
E'en from the moment that he first began
To wail and wive, let him not see a man.
Lock, Lock him up, far from the public eye,
Give him no opportunity to buy,
Or to be bought; B——, tho' rich, was sold,
And gave his body up to shame for gold.

Let it be bruited all about the Town,
That He is coarse, indelicate and brown,
An Antidote to Lust, his Face deep scarr'd
With the Small-Pox, his body maim'd and marr'd,
Eat up with the King's-evil, and his blood,
Tainted throughout, a thick and putrid flood,
Where dwells Corruption, making him all o'er,
From head to foot, a rank and running sore.

Should'st Thou report him as by Nature made,
He is undone, and by thy praise betray'd;
Give him out fair, Letchers in number more,
More brutal and more fierce, than throng'd the door
Of LOT in SODOM, shall to thine repair,
And force a passage, tho' a God is there.

Let him not have one Servant that is male;
Where Lords are baffled, Servants oft prevail.
Some vices They propose, to all agree;
H— was guilty, but was M— free?

Give him no Tutor — throw him to a punk,
Rather than trust his morals to a Monk —
Monks we all know — We, who have liv'd at home,
From fair report, and Travellers, who roam,
More feelingly — nor trust him to the gown,
'Tis oft a covering in this vile town
For base designs; Ourselves have liv'd to see
More than one Parson in the Pillory.
Should He have Brothers, (Image to thy view
A Scene, which, tho' not public made, is true)
Let jot one Brother be to t'other known,
Nor let his Father sit with him alone.
Be all his Servants, Female, Young, and Fair,
And if the Pride of Nature spur thy heir
To deeds of Venery, if, hot and wild,
He chance to get some score of maids with child,
Chide, but forgive him; Whoredom is a crime,
Which, more at this, than any other time,
Calls for indulgence, and, 'mongst such a race,
To have a bastard is some sign of grace.

Born in such time, should I sit tamely down,
Suppress my rage, and saunter thro' the town
As One who knew not, or who shar'd these crimes?
Should I at lesser evils point my rimes,
And let this Giant Sin, in the full eye
Of Observation, pass unwounded by?
Tho' our meek Wives, passive Obedience taught,
Patiently bear those wrongs, for which They ought,
With the brave Spirit of their dams possess'd,
To plant a dagger in each husband's breast,
To cut off male increase from this fair Isle,
And turn our Thames into another Nile;
Tho', on his Sunday, the smug PULPITEER,
Loud 'gainst all other crimes is silent here,
And thinks himself absolv'd, in the pretence
Of Decency, which meant for the defence
Of real Virtue, and to raise her price,
Becomes an Agent for the cause of Vice;
Tho' the Law sleeps, and thro' the care They take

To drug her well, may never more awake;
Born in such times, nor with that patience curst
Which Saints may boast of, I must speak, or burst.

But if, too eager in my bold career,
Haply I wound the nice, and chaster ear,
If, all unguarded, all too rude, I speak,
And call up blushes in the maiden's cheek,
Forgive, Ye Fair — my real motives view,
And to forgiveness add your praises too.
For You I write — nor wish a better plan,
The Cause of Woman is most worthy Man —
For You I still will write, nor hold my hand,
Whilst there's one slave of SODOM in the land.

Let them fly far, and skulk from place to place,
Not daring to meet Manhood face to face,
Their steps I'll track, nor yield them one retreat
Where They may hide their heads, or rest their feet,
'Till God in wrath shall let his vengeance fall,
And make a great example of them all,
Bidding in one grand pile this Town expire,
Her Tow'rs in dust, her Thames a lake of fire,
Or They (most worth our wish) convinc'd, tho' late,
Of their past crimes, and dangerous estate,
Pardon of Women with Repentance buy,
And learn to honour them, as much as I.

Charles Churchill