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of the English Stage, by Jeremy Collier

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A SHORT VIEW OF THE
IMMORALITY, AND PROFANENESS OF THE ENGLISH STAGE ***

Transcriber's note: The errata have been applied. They appear in the text like this, and the explanation will appear when the mouse pointer is moved over the marked passage. Otherwise no attempt has been made to distinguish likely typographical errors from the natural variability of 17th century orthography.

A few short phrases proved illegible on the scan: these are marked [.....].

A SHORT

VIEW

OF THE

Immorality, and Profaneness

OF THE

English Stage,

TOGETHER

With the Sence of Antiquity
upon this Argument,

By *JEREMY COLLIER*, M.A.

London, Printed for **S. Keble** at the *Turk's-Head*
in *Fleetstreet*, **R. Sare** at *Gray's-Inn-Gate*,
and **H. Hindmarsh** against the *Exchange* in
Cornhil. 1698.

THE

PREFACE

*Being convinc'd that nothing has gone farther in Debauching the Age than the Stage Poets,
and Play-House, I thought I could not employ my time better than in writing against them.*

These Men sure, take Vertue and Regularity, for great Enemies, why else is their Disaffection so very Remarkable? It must be said, They have made their Attack with great Courage, and gain'd no inconsiderable Advantage. But it seems Lewdness without Atheism, is but half their Business. Conscience might possibly recover, and Revenge be thought on; and therefore like Foot-Pads, they must not only Rob, but Murther. To do them right their Measures are Politickly taken: To make sure work on't, there's nothing like Destroying of Principles; Practise must follow of Course. For to have no good Principles, is to have no Reason to be Good. Now 'tis not to be expected that people should check their Appetites, and balk their Satisfactions, they don't know why. If Virtue has no Prospect, 'tis not worth the owning. Who would be troubled with Conscience if 'tis only a Bugbear, and has nothing in't but Vision, and the Spleen?

My Collection from the English Stage, is much short of what They are able to furnish. An Inventory of their Ware-House would have been a large Work: But being afraid of over charging the Reader, I thought a Pattern might do.

In Translating the Fathers, I have endeavour'd to keep close to their Meaning: However, in some few places, I have taken the Liberty of throwing in a Word or two; To clear the Sense, to preserve the Spirit of the Original, and keep the English upon its Legs.

There's one thing more to acquaint the Reader with; 'Tis that I have Ventured to change the Terms of Mistress and Lover, for others somewhat more Plain, but much more Proper. I don't look upon This as any failure in Civility. As Good and Evil are different in Themselves, so they ought to be differently Mark'd. To confound them in Speech, is the way to confound them in Practise. Ill Qualities ought to have ill Names, to prevent their being Catching. Indeed Things are in a great measure Govern'd by Words: To Guild over a foul Character, serves only to perplex the Idea, to encourage the Bad, and mislead the Unwary. To treat Honour, and Infamy alike, is an injury to Virtue, and a sort of Levelling in Morality. I confess, I have no Ceremony for Debauchery. For to Compliment Vice, is but one Remove from worshipping the Devil.

March 5th. 169⁷/₈.

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ERRATA.

Page 31 Margin for Κῶρον, r. Μῶρον. p. 37. l. 1. for *by his*, r. *his*. l. 2. for *other*, r. *his other*. l. 25. for *præstr*, r. *præter*. p. 39. l. 18. for *Poets, Knaves*, r. *Poets Knaves*. p. 44. l. 14. for *Concianotores*, r. *Concionatores*. p. 45. l. 25. for *Debaush*, r. *Debauchee*. p. 46. l. 9. for *Enterprizes*, r. *Enterprize*. p. 47. l. 9. for *ridicules*, r. *ridiculous*. p. 52. l. 1. for *justifying*, r. *and justifie*. p. 60. l. 2. for *tempestiuous*, r. *tempestuous*. l. 31. for *pray*, r. *should pray*. p. 80. for *executed*, r. *exerted*. p. 108. l. 4. for *Antarkick*. r. *Antartick*. p. 117. l. 12. for *Angitia*, r. *Angitiæ*. p. 121. l. 24. for *Auger*, r. *Augur*. p. 135. margin, for *Hegllins Cosmog*, r. *Heyllins Cosmog*. p. 154. l. 22. dele up. p. 163. l. 28. for *then*, r. *therefore*. p. 183. l. 6. for *to*, r. *too*. p. 186. l. 6. dele *And*. p. 191. l. 18. for *Circumstance*, r. *Circumstances*. p. 222. l. 9. for *Cup*, r. *a Cup*. p. 237. l. 2. for *apon't*, r. *upon't*. 245. l. 25. for *Le*, r. *Les*. p. 257. l. 28. for *Correspondence* r. *this Correspondence*. p. 272. l. 9. for *himself*. r. *themselves*.

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The business of *Plays* is to recommend Virtue, and discountenance Vice; To shew the Uncertainty of Humane Greatness, the suddain Turns of Fate, and the Unhappy Conclusions of Violence and Injustice: 'Tis to expose the Singularities of Pride and Fancy, to make Folly and Falsehood contemptible, and to bring every Thing that is Ill Under Infamy, and Neglect. This Design has been oddly pursued by the English *Stage*. Our *Poets* write with a different View, and are gone into an other Interest. 'Tis true, were their Intentions fair, they might be *Serviceable* to this *Purpose*. They have in a great measure the Springs of Thought and Inclination in their Power. *Show, Musick, Action, and Rhetorick*, are moving Entertainments; and rightly employ'd would be very significant. But Force and Motion are Things indifferent, and the Use lies chiefly in the Application. These Advantages are now, in the Enemies Hand, and under a very dangerous Management. Like Cannon seized they are pointed the wrong way, and by the Strength of the Defence the Mischief is made the greater. That this Complaint is not unreasonable I shall endeavour to prove by shewing the Misbehaviour of the *Stage* with respect to *Morality, and Religion*. Their *Liberties*, in the Following Particulars are intolerable. *viz.* Their *Smuttiness* of *Expression*; Their *Swearing, Profainness, and Lewd Application of Scripture*; Their *Abuse* of the *Clergy*; Their *making their Top Characters Libertines*, and giving them *Success* in their *Debauchery*. This Charge, with some other Irregularities, I shall make good against the *Stage*, and shew both the *Novelty* and *Scandal* of the *Practise*. And first, I shall begin with the *Rankness, and Indecency* of their *Language*.

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CHAP. I.

{3}

The Immodesty of the Stage.

In treating this Head, I hope the Reader does not expect that I should set down Chapter and Page, and give him the Citations at Length. To do this would be a very unacceptable and Foreign Employment. Indeed the Passages, many of them, are in no Condition to be handled: He that is desirous to see these Flowers let him do it in their own Soil: 'Tis my business rather to kill the *Root* than *Transplant* it. But that the Poets may not complain of Injustice; I shall point to the Infection at a Distance, and refer in General to *Play* and *Person*.

Now among the Curiosities of this kind we may reckon Mrs. *Pinchwife, Horner*, and Lady *Fidget* in the *Country Wife*; Widdow *Blackacre* and *Olivia* in the *Plain Dealer*. These, tho' not all the exceptionable *Characters*, are the most remarkable. I'm sorry the Author should stoop his Wit thus Low, and use his Understanding so unkindly. Some People appear Coarse, and Slovenly out of Poverty: They can't well go to the Charge of Sense. They are Offensive like Beggars for want of Necessaries. But this is none of the *Plain Dealer's* case; He can afford his Muse a better Dress when he pleases. But then the Rule is, where the Motive is the less, the Fault is the greater. To proceed. *Jacinta, Elvira, Dalinda, and Lady Plyant*, in the *Mock Astrologer, Spanish Friar, Love Triumphant* and *Double Dealer*, forget themselves extreamly: And almost all the *Characters* in the *Old Batchelour*, are foul and nauseous. *Love for Love*, and the *Relapse*, strike sometimes upon this *Sand*, and so likewise does *Don Sebastian*.

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I don't pretend to have read the *Stage* Through, neither am I Particular to my Utmost. Here is quoting enough unless 'twere better: Besides, I may have occasion to mention somewhat of this kind afterwards. But from what has been hinted already, the Reader may be over furnish'd. Here is a large Collection of Debauchery; such *Pieces* are rarely to be met with: 'Tis Sometimes painted at Length too, and appears in great Variety of Progress and Practise. It wears almost all sorts of Dresses to engage the Fancy, and fasten upon the Memory, and keep up the Charm from Languishing. Sometimes you have it in Image and Description; sometimes by way of Allusion; sometimes in Disguise; and sometimes without it. And what can be the Meaning of such a Representation, unless it be to Tincture the Audience, to extinguish Shame, and make Lewdness a Diversion? This is the natural Consequence, and therefore one would think 'twas the Intention too. Such Licentious Discourse tends to no point but to stain the Imagination, to awaken Folly, and to weaken the Defences of Virtue: It was upon the account of these Disorders that *Plato* banish'd Poets his *Common Wealth*: And one of the *Fathers* calls *Poetry, Vinum Dæmonum* an intoxicating *Draught*, made up by the Devils *Dispensatory*.

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I grant the Abuse of a Thing is no Argument against the use of it. However Young people particularly, should not entertain themselves with a Lewd Picture; especially when 'tis drawn by a Masterly Hand. For such a Liberty may probably raise those Passions which can neither be discharged without Trouble, nor satisfied without a Crime: 'Tis not safe for a Man to trust his Virtue too far, for fear it should give him the slip! But the danger of such an Entertainment is but part of the Objection: 'Tis all Scandal and meanness into the bargain: it does in effect degrade Human Nature, sinks Reason into Appetite, and breaks down the Distinctions between Man and Beast. Goats and Monkeys if they could speak,

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would express their Brutality in such Language as This.

To argue the Matter more at large.

Smuttiness is a Fault in Behaviour as well as in Religion. 'Tis a very Coarse Diversion, the Entertainment of those who are generally least both in Sense, and Station. The looser part of the *Mob*, have no true relish of Decency and Honour, and want Education, and Thought, to furnish out a gentile Conversation. Barrenness of Fancy makes them often take up with those Scandalous Liberties. A Vitious Imagination may blot a great deal of Paper at this rate with ease enough: And 'tis possible Convenience may sometimes invite to the Expedient. The Modern Poets seem to use *Smut* as the Old Ones did *Machines*, to relieve a fainting Invention. When *Pegasus* is jaded, and would stand still, he is apt like other *Tits* to run into every Puddle.

Obscenity in any Company is a rustick uncreditable Talent; but among Women 'tis particularly rude. Such Talk would be very affrontive in Conversation, and not endur'd by any Lady of Reputation. Whence then comes it to Pass that those Liberties which disoblige so much in Conversation, should entertain upon the *Stage*. Do the Women leave all the regards to Decency and Conscience behind them when they come to the *Play-House*? Or does the Place transform their Inclinations, and turn their former Aversions into Pleasure? Or were Their pretences to Sobriety elsewhere nothing but Hypocrisy and Grimace? Such Suppositions as these are all Satyr and Invective: They are rude Imputations upon the whole Sex. To treat the Ladys with such stuff is no better than taking their Money to abuse them. It supposes their Imagination vitious, and their Memories ill furnish'd: That they are practised in the Language of the Stews, and pleas'd with the Scenes of Brutishness. When at the same time the Customs of Education, and the Laws of Decency, are so very cautious, and reserv'd in regard to Women: I say so very reserv'd, that 'tis almost a Fault for them to Understand they are ill Used. They can't discover their Disgust without disadvantage, nor Blush without disservice to their Modesty. To appear with any skill in such Cant, looks as if they had fallen upon ill Conversation; or Managed their Curiosity amiss. In a word, He that treats the Ladys with such Discourse, must conclude either that they like it, or they do not. To suppose the first, is a gross Reflection upon their Virtue. And as for the latter case, it entertains them with their own Aversion; which is ill Nature, and ill Manners enough in all Conscience. And in this Particular, Custom and Conscience, the Forms of Breeding, and the Maxims of Religion are on the same side. In other Instances Vice is often too fashionable; But here a Man can't be a Sinner, without being a Clown.

In this respect the *Stage* is faulty to a Scandalous degree of Nauseousness and Aggravation. For

1st. The *Poets* make *Women* speak Smuttily. Of This the Places before mention'd are sufficient Evidence: And if there was occasion they might be Multiplied to a much greater Number: Indeed the *Comedies* are seldom clear of these Blemishes: And sometimes you have them in *Tragedy*. For Instance. The *Orphans Monimia* makes a very improper Description; And the Royal *Leonora* in the *Spanish Friar*, runs a strange Length in the History of Love *p.* 50. And, do Princesses use to make their Reports with such fulsom Freedoms? Certainly this *Leonora* was the first Queen of her Family. Such raptures are too Lascivious for *Joan of Naples*. Are these the *Tender Things* Mr. *Dryden* says the Ladys call on him for? I suppose he means the *Ladys* that are too Modest to show their Faces in the *Pit*. This Entertainment can be fairly design'd for none but such. Indeed it hits their Palate exactly. It regales their Lewdness, graces their Character, and keeps up their Spirits for their Vocation: Now to bring Women under such Misbehaviour is Violence to their Native Modesty, and a Misrepresentation of their Sex. For Modesty as Mr. *Rapin* observes, is the *Character* of Women. To represent them without this Quality, is to make Monsters of them, and throw them out of their Kind. *Euripides*, who was no negligent Observer of Humane Nature, is always careful of this Decorum. Thus *Phædra* when possess'd with an infamous Passion, takes all imaginable pains to conceal it. She is as regular and reserv'd in her Language as the most virtuous Matron. 'Tis true, the force of Shame and Desire; The Scandal of Satisfying, and the difficulty of parting with her Inclinations, disorder her to Distraction. However, her Frensy is not Lewd; She keeps her Modesty even after She has lost her Wits. Had *Shakespear* secur'd this point for his young Virgin *Ophelia*, the *Play* had been better contriv'd. Since he was resolv'd to drown the Lady like a Kitten, he should have set her a swimming a little sooner. To keep her alive only to sully her Reputation, and discover the Rankness of her Breath, was very Cruel. But it may be said the Freedoms of Distraction go for nothing, a Feavour has no Faults, and a Man *non Compos*, may kill without Murther. It may be so: But then such People ought to be kept in dark Rooms and without Company. To shew them, or let them loose, is somewhat unreasonable. But after all, the Modern *Stage* seems to depend upon this Expedient. Women are sometimes represented *Silly*, and sometimes *Mad*, to enlarge their Liberty, and screen their Impudence from Censure: This Politick Contrivance we have in *Marcella*, *Hoyden*, and Miss *Prue*. However it amounts to this Confession; that Women when they have their Understandings about them ought to converse otherwise. In fine; Modesty is the

Reflect upon
Aristot. &c.
Eurip. Hippolit.

Hamlet.

Don Quixot.
Relapse. Love for
Love.

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distinguishing Vertue of that Sex, and serves both for Ornament and Defence: Modesty was design'd by Providence as a Guard to Virtue; And that it might be always at Hand, 'tis wrought into the Mechanism of the Body. 'Tis likewise proportioned to the occasions of Life, and strongest in Youth when Passion is so too. 'Tis a Quality as true to Innocence, as the Sences are to Health; whatever is ungrateful to the first, is prejudicial to the latter. The Enemy no sooner approaches, but the Blood rises in Opposition, and looks Defiance to an Indecency. It supplants the room of Reasoning, and Collection: Intuitive Knowledge can scarcely make a quicker Impression; And what then can be a surer Guide to the Unexperienced? It teaches by suddain Instinct and Aversion; This is both a ready and a powerful Method of instruction. The Tumult of the Blood and Spirits, and the Uneasiness of the Sensation, are of singular Use. They serve to awaken Reason, and prevent surprize. Thus the Distinctions of Good and Evil are refresh'd, and the Temptation kept at proper Distance.

2ly. They Represent their single Ladys, and Persons of Condition, under these Disorders of Liberty, This makes the Irregularity still more Monstrous and a greater Contradiction to Nature, and Probability: But rather than not be Vitious, they will venture to spoil a Character. This mismanagement we have partly seen already. *Jacinta*, and *Belinda* are farther proof. And the *Double Dealer* is particularly remarkable. There are but *Four* Ladys in this *Play*, and *Three* of the biggest of them are Whores. A Great Compliment to Quality to tell them there is not above a quarter of them Honest! This was not the Roman Breeding, *Terence* and *Plautus* his Strumpets were Little people; but of this more hereafter. {12}

Mock Astrologer.
Old Batchelour.

3dly. They have oftentimes not so much as the poor refuge of a Double Meaning to fly to. So that you are under a necessity either of taking Ribaldry or Nonsense. And when the Sentence has two Handles, the worst is generally turn'd to the Audience. The Matter is so Contrived that the Smut and Scum of the Thought rises uppermost; And like a Picture drawn to *Sight*, looks always upon the Company.

4ly. And which is still more extraordinary: the *Prologues*, and *Epilogues* are sometimes Scandalous to the last degree. I shall discover them for once, and let them stand like Rocks in the Margin. Now here properly speaking the *Actors* quit the *Stage*, and remove from Fiction, into Life. Here they converse with the *Boxes*, and *Pit*, and address directly to the Audience. These Preliminarie and concluding Parts, are design'd to justify the Conduct of the *Play*, and bespeak the Favour of the Company. Upon such Occasions one would imagine if ever, the Ladys should be used with Respect, and the Measures of Decency observ'd, But here we have Lewdness without Shame or Example: Here the *Poet* exceeds himself. Here are such Strains as would turn the Stomach, of an ordinary Debauchee, and be almost nauseous in the *Stews*. And to make it the more agreeable, Women are Commonly pick'd out for this Service. Thus the *Poet* Courts the good opinion of the Audience. This is the Desert he regales the Ladys with at the Close of the Entertainment: It seems He thinks They have admirable Palats! Nothing can be a greater Breach of Manners then such Liberties as these. If a Man would study to outrage *Quality* and Vertue, he could not do it more Effectually. But {13}

Mock Astrologer.
Country Wife.
Cleomenes. Old
Batchelour.

5thly. Smut is still more insufferable with respect to Religion. The Heathen Religion was in a great Measure a *Mystery of Iniquity*. Lewdness was Consecrated in the Temples, as well as practised in the *Stews*. Their Deitys were great Examples of Vice, and worship'd with their own Inclination. 'Tis no wonder therefore their Poetry should be tinctured with their Belief, and that the *Stage* should borrow some of the Liberties of their Theology. This made *Mercurys* Procurring, and *Jupiters* Adultery the more passable in *Amphitryon*: Upon this Score *Gymnasium* is less Monstrous in Praying the Gods to send her store of Gallants. And thus *Chærea* defends his Adventure by the Precedent of *Jupiter* and *Danæ*. But the Christian Religion is quite of an other Complexion. Both its Precepts, and Authorities, are the highest discouragement to Licentiousness. It forbids the remotest Tendencies to Evil, Banishes the Follies of Conversation, and Obliges up to Sobriety of Thought. That which might pass for Raillery, and Entertainment in Heathenism, is detestable in Christianity. The Restraint of the Precept, and the Quality of the Deity, and the Expectations of Futurity quite alter the Case. {14}

Plaut.
Cistellar.
Terent. Eunuch.

But notwithstanding the Latitudes of Paganism, the Roman and Greek *Theatres* were much more inoffensive than ours. To begin with *Plautus*. This Comedian, tho' the most exceptionable, is modest upon the Comparison. For

1st. He rarely gives any of the above mention'd Liberties to Women; And when there are any Instances of the contrary, 'tis only in prostituted and Vulgar People; And even these, don't come up to the Grossness of the *Modern Stage*.

Asinar.
Cistellar.
Bacchid.
Casin.

For the Purpose. *Cleæreta* the Procuris borders a little upon Rudeness: *Lena* and *Bacchis* the Strumpet are Airy and somewhat over-merry, but not *A l'Anglois* obscene. *Chalinus* in *Womans Cloaths* is the most remarkable. *Pasicompa Charinus* his Wench talks too freely to *Lysimachus*; And so does *Sophroclidisca* Slave to *Lemnoselene*. And lastly: *Phronesiam* a

Mercat. Act. 3. Woman of the *Town* uses a double *entendre* to *Stratophanes*. These are the most censurable Passages, and I think all of them with relation to Women; which considering how the World goes is very moderate. Several of *our* Single *Plays* shall far out-do all This put together. And yet *Plautus* has upon the matter left us 20 entire *Comedies*. So that in short, these Roman Lasses are meer *Vestal Virgins*, comparatively speaking. {16}

Persa. 2ly. The *Men* who talk intemperately are generally *Slaves*; I believe *Dordalus* the Pandar, and *Lusiteles* will be found the only exception: And this latter young Gentleman; drops but one over airy expression: And for this Freedom, the Poet seems to make him give Satisfaction in the rest of his Character. He disputes very handsomly by himself against irregular Love; The Discourse between him and *Pholto* is instructive and well managed. And afterwards he gives *Lesbonicus* a great deal of sober advice, and declaims heartily against Luxury and Lewdness! Now by confining his Rudeness to little People, the Fault is much extenuated. For First, the representation is more Naturally this way; And which is still better, 'tis not so likely to pass into Imitation: Slaves and Clowns are not big enough to spread Infection; and set up an ill Fashion. 'Tis possible the *Poet* might contrive these *Pesants Offensive* to discountenance the Practise. Thus the *Heilots* in *Sparta* were made drunk to keep Intemperance out of Credit. I don't mention this as if I approv'd the Expedient, but only to show it a circumstance of Mitigation and Excuse. {17}

Casin. Farther, These *Slaves* and Pandars, Seldom run over, and play their Gambols before Women. There are but Four Instances of this Kind as I remember, *Olympio*, *Palæstrio*, *Mil. Glor.* *Dordalus*, and *Stratilax* are the Persons. And the Women they discourse with, are two of them *Slaves*, and the third a Wench. But with our *Dramatists*, the case is otherwise. With us *Smuttiness* is absolute and unconfin'd. 'Tis under no restraint, of Company, nor has any regard to Quality or Sex. Gentlemen talk it to Ladies, and Ladies to Gentlemen with all the Freedom, and Frequency imaginable. This is in earnest to be very hearty in the cause! To give Title and Figure to Ill Manners is the utmost that can be done. If Lewdness will not thrive under such encouragement it must e'en Miscarry!

4ly. *Plautus* his *Prologues* and *Epilogues* are inoffensive. 'Tis true, *Lambinus* pretends to fetch a double *entendre* out of that to *Pœnulus*, but I think there is a Strain in the Construction. His *Prologue* to the *Captivi* is worth the observing.

Fabulæ huic operam date. {18}

Pray mind the Play. The next words give the reason why it deserves regarding.

*Non enim pertractate facta est
Neque spurcidici insunt versus immemorabiles.*

We see here the Poet confesses Smut a scandalous Entertainment. That such Liberties ought to fall under Neglect, to lie unmention'd, and be blotted out of Memory.

And that this was not a Copy of his Countenance we may learn from his Compositions. His best *Plays* are almost alwaies Modest and clean Complexion'd. His *Amphitrio* excepting the ungenue Addition is such. His *Epidicus* the Master-Piece of his whole Collection is inoffensive Throughout: And so are his *Menechmi*, *Rudens*, and *Trinummus*, which may be reckon'd amongst some of his next Best. His *Truculentus* another fine *Play* (tho' not entire) with a Heathen Allowance, is pretty Passable. To be short: Where he is most a Poet, he is generally least a Buffoon. And where the Entertainment is Smut, there is rarely any other Dish well dress'd: The Contrivance is commonly wretched, the Sence lean and full of Quibbles. So that his Understanding seems to have left him when he began to abuse it. {19}

To conclude, *Plautus* does not dilate upon the Progress, Successes, and Disappointments of *Love*, in the *Modern* way. This is nice Ground, and therefore He either stands off, or walks gravely over it, He has some regard to the Retirements of Modesty, and the Dignity of Humane Nature, and does not seem to make Lewdness his Business. To give an Instance.

Cistellar. A. 1. *Silenium* is much gone in Love, but Modest withall, tho' formerly debauch'd.

Ibid. A. 2. She is sorry her Spark was forced from her, and in Danger of being lost. But then she keeps within compass and never flies out into Indecency. *Alcesimarchus* is strangely smitten with this *Silenium*, and almost distracted to recover her. He is uneasy and blusters, and threatens, but his Passion goes off in Generals. He Paints no Images of his Extravagance, nor descends to any nauseous particulars.

And yet after all, *Plautus* wrote in an Age not perfectly refin'd, and often seems to design his *Plays* for a Vulgar Capacity. 'Twas upon this view I suppose his *Characters* exceed Nature, and his ill Features are drawn too large: His old Men over credulous, his Misers Romantick, and his Coxcombs improbably singular. And 'tis likely for this reason his *Slaves* {20}

might have too much Liberty.

Heauton. *Terence* appear'd when Breeding was more exact, and the *Town* better polish'd; And he manages accordingly: He has but one faulty bordering Expression, which is that of *Chremes* to *Clitipho*. This single Sentence apart, the rest of his Book is (I think) unsullied and fit for the nicest Conversation. I mean only in referrence to the Argument in Hand, for there are things in Him, which I have no intention to warrant. He is Extreemly careful in the Behaviour of his Women. Neither *Glycerium* in *Andria*, *Pamphila* in *Eunuchus*, or *Pamphila* in *Adelphi*, *Phanium* in *Phormio*, or *Philumena* in *Hecyra*, have any share of Conversation upon the *Stage*. such Freedom was then thought too much for the Reservedness of a Maiden-Character. 'Tis true in *Heautontimoroumenos* the *Poets* Plot obliged *Antiphila*, to go under the Disguise of *Bacchis* her Maid. Upon this Occasion they hold a little Discourse together. But then *Bacchis* tho' she was a Woman of the *Town*, behaves her self with all the Decency imaginable. She does not talk in the Language of her Profession. But commends *Antiphila* for her Virtue: *Antiphila* only says how constant she has been to *Chinia*, seems surpris'd at his Arrival, and salutes him civilly upon't, and we hear no more from her. Mr. *Dryden* seems to refer to this Conduct in his Dramatick *Poesie*. He censures the *Romans* for making *Mutes* of their single Women. This He calls the *Breeding of the Old Elizabeth way, which was for Maids to be seen and not to be heard*. Under Favour the old Discipline would be very serviceable upon the *Stage*. As matters go, the *Mutes* are much to few. For certainly 'tis better to say nothing, than talk out of Character, and to ill purpose. {21}

Eunuch. To return. The Virgin injured by *Chærea* does nothing but weep, and won't so much as speak her misfortune to the Women. But Comedy is strangly improved since that time; For *Love Triump.* *Dalinda* has a great deal more Courage, tho' the loss of her Virtue was her own Fault.

But *Terence* has that regard for Women, that he won't so much as touch upon an ill Subject before them. Thus *Chremes* was ashamed to mention any thing about his Sons Lewdness when his Wife was present. {22}

Heauton. A. 5. 4. *Pudet dicere hac præsentē verbum turpe.*

Eunuch A. 5. 4.5. The Slaves in this Comedian are kept in order and civilly bred. They Guard and Fence when occasion requires, and step handsomly over a dirty place. The Poet did not think Littleness and low Education a good Excuse for Ribaldry. He knew Infection at the weakest, might seize on some Constitutions: Besides, the Audience was a Superior Presence, and ought to be considered. For how Negligent soever People may be at Home, yet when they come before their Betters 'tis Manners to look wholsom. *Adelph. A. 2. 3.*

Now tho' *Plautus* might have the richer Invention; *Terence* was always thought the more judicious Comedian. His Raillery is not only finer, and his stile better polish'd; but his *Characters* are more just, and he seems to have reach'd farther into Life than the other. To take Leave of this Author, even his Strumpets are better behaved than our honest Women, than our Women of Quality of the English *Stage*. *Bacchis* in *Heautontimoroumenos* and *Bacchis* in *Hecyra*, may serve for example. They are both modest, and converse not unbecoming their Sex. *Thais* the most accomplish'd in her way, has a great deal of Spirit and wheadling in her Character, but talks no Smut. {23}

Thus we see with what Caution and Sobriety of Language *Terence* manages. 'Tis possible this Conduct might be his own Modesty, and result from judgment and Inclination. But however his Fancy stood, he was sensible the Coarse way would not do. The *Stage* was then under Discipline, the publick *Censors* formidable, and the Office of the *Choragus* was originally to prevent the Excesses of Liberty.

Casaub. Annot. in To this we may add the *Nobless* had no Relish for Obscenity; 'twas the ready way to Disoblige them. And therefore 'tis *Horaces* Rule. *Curcul. Plauti.*

De A te Poet. *Nec immunda crepent ignominiosaque dicta.*
Offenduntur enim quibus est Equus & Pater, & res.

Var. apud. Nonium. The Old *Romans* were particularly carefull their Women might not be affronted in Conversation: For this reason the Unmarried kept off from Entertainments for fear of learning new Language. And in *Greece* no Woman above the degree of a *Slave* was treated abroad by any but Relations. 'Tis probable the old Comedy was silenced at *Athens* upon this Score, as well as for Defamation. For as *Aristotle* observes the new Set of Comedians were much more modest than the former. In this celebrated Republick, if the *Poets* wrote any thing against Religion or Good Manners, They were tryed for their Misbehaviour, and lyable to the highest Forfeitures. {24}

Corn. Nep.
Arist. Lib. 4. de
Mor. cap. 14.
Vit. Eurip. ed
Cantab. 1694.

It may not be amiss to observe that there are no Instances of debauching Married Women, in *Plautus*, nor *Terence*, nor yet in *Aristophanes*. But on our *Stage* how common is it to make a Lord, a Knight, or an Alderman a Cuckold? The Schemes of Success are beaten out with great Variety, and almost drawn up into a Science. How many Snares are laid for the undermining of Virtue, and with what Triumph is the Victory proclaim'd? The Finess of the *Plot*, and the Life of the Entertainment often lies in these Contrivances. But the *Romans* had a different sence of these Matters, and saw thro' the consequences of them. The Government was awake upon the Theatre, and would not suffer the Abuses of Honour, and Family, to pass into Diversion. And before we part with these *Comedians* we may take notice that there are no Smutty Songs in their *Plays*; in which the *English* are extremely Scandalous. Now to work up their Lewdness with Verse, and Musick, doubles the Force of the Mischief. It makes it more portable and at Hand, and drives it Stronger upon Fancy and Practice.

Love for Love.
Love Triump. &c.

{25}

p. 14. Ed. Scriv.

Hippol.

To dispatch the *Latins* all together. *Seneca* is clean throughout the Piece, and stands generally off from the point of Love. He has no Courting unless in his *Hercules Furens*; And here the Tyrant *Lycus* addresses *Megara* very briefly, and in Modest and remote Language. In his *Thebais*, *Oedipus's* Incest is reported at large, but without any choaking Description. 'Tis granted *Phædra* speaks her Passion plainly out, and owns the strength of the Impression, and is far less prudent than in *Euripides*. But tho' her Thoughts appear too freely, her Language is under Discipline.

Aristoph. Ran.

Let us now Travel from *Italy* into *Greece*, and take a view of the Theatre at *Athens*. In this City the *Stage* had both its beginning and highest Improvement. *Æschylus* was the first who appear'd with any Reputation. His Genius seems noble, and his Mind generous, willing to transfuse it self into the Audience, and inspire them with a Spirit of Bravery. To this purpose his Stile is Pompous, Martial, and Enterprizing. There is Drum and Trumpet in his Verse. 'Tis apt to excite an Heroick Ardour, to awaken, warm, and push forward to Action. But his Mettal is not always under Management. His Inclination for the *Sublime*; carrys him too far: He is sometimes Embarrass'd with *Epithites*. His Metaphors are too stiff, and far fetch'd; and he rises rather in Sound, than in Sence. However generally speaking, his Materials are both shining and solid, and his Thoughts lofty, and uncommon. This Tragedian had always a nice regard to Good Manners. He knew corrupting the People was the greatest disservice to the Commonwealth; And that Publick Ruine was the effect of general Debauchery. For this reason he declines the Business of Amours, and declares expressly against it. Now here we can't expect any length of Testimony. His aversion to the subject makes him touch very sparingly upon it. But in this case there is no need of much citation. His very Omissions are Arguments, and his Evidence is the stronger for being short. That little I meet with shall be produced.

Χοηφορ. 253, Ed.
Steph.
Orest. 48. Ed.
Cantab.
Ευμην. 305.

1st. Orestes was obliged by the Oracle to revenge his Fathers Death in the Murther of his Mother. When he was going to kill her, he Mentions her Cruelty, but waves her Adultery. *Euripides* approv'd this Reservedness and makes his *Electra* practise it upon the same occasion. *Æschylus* in his next Play complements his Country with a great deal of Address in the Persons of the *Eumenides*. They are very Gentile and Poetical in their Civilities: Among other things They wish the Virgins may all Marry and make the Country Populous: Here the *Poet* do's but just glance upon the Subject of Love; and yet he governs the Expression with such care, that the wishes contain a Hint to Sobriety, and carry a Face of Virtue along with them.

p. 79.

The *Double Dealer* runs Riot upon such an Occasion as this; and gives Lord *Touchwood* a mixture of Smut and Pedantry to conclude with, and yet this Lord was one of his best Characters: But *Poets* are now grown Absolute within themselves, and may put Sence and Quality upon what Drudgeries they please. To return. *Danaus* cautions his Daughters very handsomly in point of Behaviour. They were in a strange Country, and had Poverty and Dependance to struggle with: These were circumstances of Danger, and might make him the more pressing. He leaves therefore a solemn Charge with them for their Security, bids them never to subsist upon Infamy, but to prefer their Virtue to their Life.

Ἰκέτ. 340.

Μόνον φύλαξαι τὰς δ' ἐπιστολὰς πατρὸς
Τὸ σωφρονεῖν τιμῶσα τοῦ βίου πλέον.

Our *Poets* I suppose would call this Preaching, and think it a dull Business. However I can't forbear saying an honest Heathen is none of the worst Men: A very indifferent Religion well Believed, will go a great way.

To proceed. *Sophocles* appear'd next upon the *Stage*, and was in earnest an Extraordinary Person. His Conduct is more Artificial, and his Stile more just, than that of *Æschylus*. His Characters are well drawn, and Uniform with themselves: His *Incidents*, are often surprising, and his *Plots* unprecipitated. There is nothing but what is Great, and Solemn Throughout. The Reasoning is well Coloured. The Figures are sometimes Bold, but not Extravagant. There are no Flights of Bombast, no Towing above Nature and Possibility: In

{28}

This Tragedian like *Æschylus* does not often concern himself with *Amours*, and when he does, nothing can be more temperate, and decent. For example where the Incest of *Oedipus* is described, the Offensiveness of the Idea is screen'd off and broken by Metaphorical and distant Expressions. In another *Play Creon* resolves to put *Antigone* to Death for presuming to bury *Polynices*. This Lady and *Hæmon Creons* Son were very far engaged; *Hæmon* endeavours to dissuade his Father from *Antigones* Execution: He tells him the burying her Brother tho' against his Order, was a popular Action. And that the People would resent her being punish'd: But never so much as mentions his own Concern unless in one Line; which was so obscure that *Creon* misunderstood him. *Antigone* amongst her other Misfortunes laments her dying Young and Single, but says not one word about *Hæmon*. The *Poet* takes care not to bring these two Lovers upon the *Stage* together, for fear they might prove unmanagable? Had They been with us, they had met with kinder treatment. They might have had Interviews and Time and Freedom enough. Enough to mud their Fancy, to tarnish their Quality, and make their Passion Scandalous. In the Relation of *Hæmons* Death, his Love is related too, and that with all the Life and *Pathos* imaginable. But the Description is within the Terms of Honour: The tendernesses are Solemn, as well as Soft: They move to Pity and Concern, and go no farther. In his *Trachiniæ* the *Chorus* owns the Force of Love next to irresistible; gently hints the Intrigues of the Gods, and then passes on to a handsome Image of the Combat between *Achelous* and *Hercules*. We see how lightly the *Poet* touches upon an amorous Theme: He glides along like a Swallow upon the Water, and skims the Surface, without dipping a Feather.

Sophocles will afford us no more, let us therefore take a view of *Euripides*. 'Tis the Method of this Author to decline the Singularities of the *Stage*, and to appear with an Air of Conversation. He delivers great Thoughts in Common Language, and is dress'd more like a Gentleman than a *Player*. His Distinction lies in the perspicuity of his Stile; In Maxim, and Moral Reflection; In his peculiar Happiness for touching the Passions, especially that of Pity; And lastly, in exhausting the Cause, and arguing *pro* and *con*, upon the stretch of Reason. So much by way of Character. And as for the Matter before us He is entirely Ours. We have had an Instance or two already in *Electra* and *Phædra*: To go on to the rest. In his *Hippolitus* He calls *Whoring*, stupidity and playing the Fool. And to be Chast and regular, is with him, as well as with *Æschylus*, Σωφρονεῖν. As much as to say 'tis the Consequence of Sence, and right Thinking. *Phædra* when her Thoughts were embarrass'd with *Hippolitus*, endeavours to disentangle her self by Argument. She declaims with a great deal of Satyr against intemperate Women; she concluded rather to die then dishonour her Husband and Stain her Family. The Blemishes of Parents, as she goes on, often stuck upon their Children, and made them appear with Disadvantage. Upon this, the *Chorus* is transported with the Virtue of her Resolution and cries out

Μωρία τὸ Μῶρον
Ed. Cant. 241. 250.
252.

Ibid. 232. 233.

Φεῦ Φεῦ. Τὸ σῶφρον ὡς ἀπανταχοῦ καλὸν
καὶ δόξαν ἐσθλὴν ἐνβροτοῖς κομίζεται.

*How becoming a Quality is Modesty in all Places.
How strangely does it burnish a Character, and oblige ones
Reputation?*

The Scholiast upon these verses of *Hippolitus*.

Σοὶ τὸν δε πλεκτὸν Στεφανον ἐξ ἀκηρά
Λειμῶνος, &c.

Makes this Paraphrase, 'Tha[.....] Mind should be clean and unsulli[.....] that the Muses being Virgins their Performances should agree with their Condition.'

Androm. p. 303.
Iphig. in Aulid. p.
51.
Helen. 277, 278.
Mourning Bride. p.
36.

To proceed. *Hermione* complains against *Andromache* because she was entertain'd by her Husband: For this *Andromache* tells her she talk'd too much for a Young Woman, and discover'd her Opinion too far. *Achilles* at the first Sight of *Clytemnestra*, lets her understand he was as much taken with the Sobriety of her Air, as with the rest of her fine Face and Person. She receives the Complement kindly, and commends him for commending Modesty. *Menelaus* and *Helen* after a long Absence manage the surprize of their good Fortune handsomly. The Most tender Expression stands clear of ill Meaning. Had *Osmín* parted with *Almeria* as civilly as these Two met, it had been much better. That Rant of smut and profainness might have been spared. The *Reader* shall have some of it.

*O my Almeria;
What do that Damn'd endure but to despair,
But knowing Heaven, to know it lost for ever.*

Were it not for the *Creed*, these *Poets* would be cramped in their Courtship, and Mightily at

a loss for a Simile! But *Osmín* is in a wonderful Passion. And truly I think his Wits, are in some danger, as well as his Patience. You shall hear. {33}

*What are Wracks, and, Whips, and Wheels to this;
Are they not soothing softness, sinking Ease,
And wasting Air to this?*

Sinking Ease, and Wasting Air, I confess are strange comforts; This Comparison is somewhat oddly equip'd, but Lovers like sick People may say what they please! *Almeria* takes this Speech for a Pattern, and suits it exactly in her return.

*O I am struck, thy words are Bolts of Ice?
Which shot into my Breast now melt and chill me.*

Bolts of Ice? Yes most certainly! For the Cold is struck up into her Head, as you may perceive by what follows.

I chatter, shake, and faint with thrilling Fears.

By the way 'tis a mighty wonder to hear a Woman Chatter! But there is no jesting, for the Lady is very bad. She won't be held up by any Means, but Crys out:

—lower yet, down down;

{34}

One would think she was learning a Spanel to *Sett*. But there's something behind.

—no more we'll lift our Eyes,
But prone and dumb, Rot the firm Face of Earth,
With Rivers of incessant scalding Rain.

These Figures are some of them as stiff as Statues, and put me in mind of *Sylvesters Dubartas*.

*Now when the Winters keener breath began
To Crystallize, the Baltick Ocean,
To glaze the Lakes, to bridle up the Floods,
And periwig with Snow the bald pate woods.*

I take it, the other Verses are somewhat of Kin to These, and shall leave them to Mr. *Dryden's* Reflection. But then as for *Soothing Softness, Sinking Ease, Wasting Air, thrilling Fears, and incessant scalding Rain*; It puts me to another stand. For to talk a little in the way of the *Stage*. This Litter of *Epithetes* makes the *Poem* look like a Bitch overstock'd with Puppies, and sucks the Sence almost to skin and Bone. But all this may pass in a *Playhouse*: False Rhetorick and false Jewells, do well together. To return to *Euripides*. *Cassandra* in reporting the Misfortunes of the *Greeks* stops at the Adulteries of *Clytemnestra* and *Ægiala* And gives this handsome reason for making a Halt. {35}

Spanish Fryar. Ep. Ded.

Troad. p. 146.

Σιγᾶν ἄμεινον τάισχρὰ, μηδέ μοῦσα μοῖ
Γένοιτ' αἰοῖδος ἥτις ὑμνήσει κακᾶ.

*Foul Things are best unsaid, I am for no Muse,
That loves to flourish on Debauchery.*

Plain Dealer. p. 21.

Provok'd Wife. p. 41.

Some Things are dangerous in report, as well as practise, and many times a Disease in the Description. This *Euripides* was aware of and manag'd accordingly, and was remarkably regular both in stile, and Manners. How wretchedly do we fall short of the Decencies of Heathenism! There's nothing more ridiculous than Modesty on our *Stage*. 'Tis counted an ill bred Quality, and almost sham'd out of Use. One would think Mankind were not the same, that Reason was to be read Backward, and Vertue and Vice had changed Place.

What then? Must Life be huddled over, Nature left imperfect, and the Humour of the Town not shown? And pray where lies the Grievance of all This? Must we relate whatever is done, and is every Thing fit for Representation? is a Man that has the Plague proper to make a Sight of? And must he needs come Abroad when he breaths Infection, and leaves the *Tokens* upon the Company? What then must we know nothing? Look you! All Experiments are not worth the making. 'Tis much better to be ignorant of a Disease then to catch it. Who would wound himself for Information about Pain, or smell a Stench for the sake of the Discovery? But I shall have occasion to encounter this Objection afterwards,* and therefore

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* Remarks upon

Quixot. shall dismiss it at present.

The *Play-house* at *Athens* has been hitherto in Order, but are there no Instances to the contrary? Do's not *Aristophanes* take great Liberties and make Women speak extraordinary Sentences? He do's so. But his Precedent signifies nothing in the case. For

1st. We have both the Reason of the Thing, and all the Advantage of Authority on the other side. We have the Practise and Opinion of Men of much greater Sence, and Learning then Himself. The best Philosophers and Poets, Criticks and Orators, both Greek and Latin, both Antient and Modern, give the Cause against him. But *Aristophanes* his own *Plays* are sufficient to ruin his Authority. For

1st, He discovers himself a downright Atheist. This Charge will be easily Made good {37} against him by Comparing his *Nubes* with his other *Plays*. The Design of his *Nubes* was to expose *Socrates*, and make a Town jest of him. Now this Philosopher was not only a Person of great Sence and Probity, but was likewise suppos'd to refine upon the Heathen Theology, to throw off the Fabulous part of it, and to endeavour to bring it back to the Standard of Natural Religion. And therefore *Justin Martyr* and some others of the *Fathers*, look'd on him as a Person of no Pagan Belief, and thought he suffer'd for the Unity of the God-Head. This Man *Aristophanes* makes fine sport with as he fancies: He puts him in a Fools Coat, and then points at him. He makes *Socrates* instruct his Disciple *Strepsiades* in a new Religion, and tell him that *he did not own the Gods in the vulgar Notion*. He brings him in elsewhere affirming that the *Clouds are the only Deities*. Which is the same Lash which *Juvenal* gives the *Jews*, because they worship'd but one single Sovereign Being.

Nub. Act. 1. Sc. 3.
p. 104. Ed. Amstel.

Sat. 14. *Nil præter Nubes & Cœli numen adorant.*

Socrates goes on with his Lecture of Divinity and declares very roundly that there is no {38} such thing as *Jupiter*. Afterwards he advances farther, and endeavours to get *Strepsiades* under Articles to acknowledge no other Gods, but *Chaos*, the *Clouds*, and the *Tongue*. At last the *Poet* brings the Philosopher to publick Pennance for his Singularities. He sets fire to his *School* for teaching Young People (as he pretends) to dispute against Law and Justice; for advancing Atheistick Notions, and burlesquing the Religion of the Country.

p. 106.
Nub. p. 110.

Act. 5. p. 176.

That *Socrates* was no Atheist is clear from Instances enough. To mention but one. The Confidence he had in his *Dæmon*, or *Genius* by which he governed his Affairs puts it beyond all dispute. However 'tis plain *Aristophanes* was not of his Religion. The *Comedian* was by no means for correcting the Common Perswasion. So that he must either be an Orthodox Heathen or nothing at all. Let us see then with what Respect he treats the Receiv'd *Divinities*. This *Play*, where one would not expect it, discovers somewhat of his Devotion. In the beginning of it *Phidippides*, who was a sort or *New-Market* Spark, swears by *Jocky Neptune*, that he had a strange Kindness for his Father *Strepsiades*. upon this the old Man replies; *No Jocky, if you love me; that Deity has almost undone me*. This was making somewhat bold with *Neptune* who was *Jupiters* Brother, *Sovereign* of a whole {39} *Element*, and had no less than the Third Share of the Universe! Certainly *Aristophanes* had no Venture at Sea, or else must think the *Trident* signified but very little. But this is meer Ceremony to what follows. In his first *Play Plutus* pretends he had a mind to oblige only Men of Probity, but *Jupiter* had made him blind on purpose that he might not distinguish Honest men from Knaves: For to be plain *Jupiter* had a Pique against Good people. Towards the end of this *Comedy Mercury* is abused by *Cario*, and acts a ridiculous, and lessening part himself. Afterwards he complains heavily that since *Plutus* was cured of his Blindness, the business of Sacrifing fell off, and the Gods were ready to starve. This *Mercury* has the same ill Usage with the *Poets* Knaves, Informers, and Lewd Women; From all this stuff put together, his meaning is pretty plain, *viz.* That Religion was no better than an Imposture supported by Art, and Ignorance: And that when Men's Understandings were awake, and their Eyes a little open, they would have more discretion than to be at any expence about the Gods.

Plat. Apol. Socrat.

Nub. p. 86.

Plut. A. 1. Sc. 2.

This I take to be part of the Moral of his Fable. If we look farther into him we shall see more of his Mind. His *Ranæ* makes Merry with the Heathen Scheme of Heaven and Hell. {40} Here *Charon* and the *Stygian Frogs* are brought in Comically enough. And that you may understand his opinion more perfectly we are told, that He that Bilks his *Catamite* after a *Sodomitical* Abuse, is thrown into the Common shore of *Hades*. And what Company do you think he is lodg'd with? Why with those who Perjure themselves, with those who Kick their Fathers and Mothers? It seems in the *Poets* Justice a Man might as good be false to his Oath, as to his Lewdness. To disappoint the *Stews*, is every jot as great a Crime; as to fly in the Face of Nature, and outrage our Parents. His Quartering his Malefactors thus critically, was without question on purpose to Banter the perswasion of future Punishment. In the same *Play Xanthias* bids *Æacus* answer him by *Jove*, Ὅς ἡμῖν ἐστὶν ὁμοαστιγίας. This little Scoundrel of a Slave has the Manners to make *Jupiters* Quality no better than his own. To go on with him: In his *Aves* he speaks out to purpose. Here *Pisthetærus* tells *Epops* that if the *Birds* would build a Castle in the Air, they might intercept the Fumes of the

Ran. p. 188.

Sacrifices, and starve the Gods unless they would come too, and be Tributary. It seems the *Birds* had very good Pretences to execute this project; for they were ancients than *Jupiter* and *Saturn*, and Govern'd before the Gods. And to speak truth were more capable of the Function. Their Adviser goes on to inform them, that after they had built their pensile City, and fortified the Air, their next business was to demand their ancient Sovereignty: If *Jupiter* refused to quit, they were to declare a Holy War against Him, and the rest of the Confederate Gods, and to cut off the Communication between Heaven and Earth. {41}

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542. *Pisthæterus* grows very warm in his new Interest, and swears by *Jove* that Men ought to Sacrifice to the *Birds*, and not to *Jupiter*. And if things came to a Rupture, and *Jupiter* grew Troublesome, he undertakes to send a Detachment of Eagles against Him; with Orders to storm his Palace with Flambeaux, and fire it about his Ears. At last to prevent the Calamities of a War, *Hercules* proposes an Accomodation, and is willing *Jupiter* should Resign. *Neptune* calls him a Block-head for his pains, because he was Heir at Law, and after *Jupiter's* Decease was of Course to succeed in his Dominions: Once more, and I have done: In *Eirene*, *Trygæus* speaks in a menacing way. That unless *Jupiter* gave him Satisfaction in his business, he would inform against Him as a disaffected Person, and a betrayer of the Liberties of *Greece*. I might add many other Instances, and some more Scandalous than any I have mentioned; But these are sufficient to shew the Authors Sentiment: And is it any wonder an Atheist should misbehave himself in point of Modesty? What can we expect less from those who laugh at the Being of a God, at the Doctrines of Providence, and the Distinctions of Good and Evil? A *Sceptick* has no notion of Conscience, no Relish for Virtue, nor is under any Moral restraints from Hope or Fear. Such a one has nothing to do but to consult his Ease, and gratifie his Vanity, and fill his Pocket. But how these Ends are compassed, he has no squeamishness, or Scruples about it. 'Tis true when the Methods of Lewdness will Take, they are generally most agreeable. This way suits their Talent, and screens their practise, and obliges their Malice. For nothing is a greater Eyesore to these Men, then Virtue and Regularity. What a pleasure is it then to be admired for Mischeif, to be reveng'd on Religion, and to see Vice prosper and improve under our Hands! To return: Beside *Aristophanes* Atheisme, I have a Second objection to his Authority, and that is want of Judgment. If we examine his *Plays* we shall find his Characters improper, or ununiform; either wrong at first, or unsteady in the Right. For the purpose. In his *Nubes*. A. 3. S. 3. p. 146. 150. He puts dirty expressions in the Mouth of his Man of Probity, makes him declaim vitiously against Vice, and Corrects scurrility with Impudence; Now what can be more idle and senceless, than such Conduct as this? Epecially when this *Justus* as he calls him had told them in the beginning of his speech, that People used to be well slash'd for such Fooling, when Government and Discipline were in their due Force. The *Chorus* of his *Ranæ* slides into the same Inconsistency of Precept, and Practise. Farther, in the Progress of this *Play*; *Æschylus* falls a rallying contrary to his Humour, and jests away his own Arguments at a very unseasonable Juncture, when he was disputing for no less prize than the Laureatship. This *Tragedian* after he had play'd a little with the Story of *Bellerophon*, goes on in the same strain; And charges *Euripides* that he had furnish'd all sorts of People with Sawciness and Prattle. The *Schools* and *Academies* were spoil'd by this means; So that the Boys were often whip'd, and the Boatswains drubb'd, for their Chattering. These Comical Levities come with an ill Grace from *Æschylus*. His Character was quite different both in Reality, and in the *Play* before us. He is all along represented as a Person of a serious Temper, of a reserv'd Loftiness, Cholerick, and tender of his Honour to an Excess, and almost in a rage at the Affront of a Rival, and being forc'd to enter the Lists with *Euripides*. The case standing thus, neither the Man, nor the Business, would admit of Drolling. Another Instance of his want of Conduct we have in his *Concionatores*. Here *Blepyrus* and some others of his Legislative Assembly, talk at a very dirty insipid rate. The Lowest of the *Mob*, can hardly jest with less Wit, and more Lewdness. And to make their Discourse more remarkable; These douty Members were just going to the *House*, and had their Heads full of the Good of the Nation, when they entertain'd themselves thus decently. And are these little Buffoons fit to consult *de Arduis Regni*, &c. to give Authority to Law, and Rules for publick Life? Do's Ribaldry and Nonsense become the Dignity of their Station, and the Solemnity of their Office? To make his *Parliament-Men* play the Fool thus egregiously, must needs have a great deal of Decorum, and State-Policy in the Contrivance; And is just as wise as if a *Painter* should have Drawn them in the Habit of *Jack-Puddings*, and *Merry-Andrews*. But *Aristophanes* has still higher Flights of Absurdity. He won't so much as spare the Gods but makes them act these little Parts of Clownishness and Infamy. *Bacchus* and *Hercules* in his *Ranæ* are forced to talk Smut and rally like *Link-boys*, and do almost all the Tricks of *Bartholomew-Fair*. To mention something that will bear the quoting. *Bacchus* enquires of *Hercules* the readiest way to *Hades*, or the other World. He bids him either Hang, or Poyson himself, and he can't miss the Road. This is *Hercules's* Humour to a Tittle! And represents him as much to the Life, as an *Ape* would do the *Grand Signior* at a publick Audience! This with a short Sentence or two of Lewdness, is the hardest of *Hercules* his Usage: And 'tis well he escaped so; for *Bacchus* is treated much worse. He appears under the disadvantages of a Clownish Debauchee, and a Coward. And is terribly afraid of a *Spectre*. When he comes before *Æacus*, this Judge is very rough with him; and tries his pretences to a Deity by Bastinado: *Bacchus* howls in the drubbing and had almost spoil'd all. Now do's this paultry Behaviour agree with the Heathen Theology, with the Common Opinion concerning *Bacchus* and *Hercules*? Do's a *Blew-Cap* and a *Ladle*, become the Sons of *Jupiter* and the Objects of Religious Worship? Those who at the lowest, were counted the Conquerors of the World, and more than Men both by Birth and Enterprize? *Sophocles* and *Euripides* {46}

make these two Persons manage at a quite different rate of Decency. 'Tis no defence to say *Aristophanes* wrot Comedy, and so was obliged to make his Scenes more diverting. This excuse I say is defective; for a Comedian ought to imitate Life and Probability, no less than a Tragedian. To Metomorphose *Characters*, and present Contradictions to Common Belief, is to write, *Farce* instead of *Plays*. Such Comedians like *Thespis* ought to have a travelling *Stage*, and take the Air with *Porcupines* and *Dromedaries*. If 'tis said that Gravity and greatness do's not suit the Complection and Entertainment of Comedy. To this I answer, that therefore the *Persons* should be chosen accordingly. They should have nothing in their known Humour, and Condition too Noble, and solemn for Trifling. 'Tis *Horaces* advice.

Aut famam sequere, aut convenientia finge Scriptor. De. Art. Poet.

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Ranæ p. 242. Let us remember that Operations always resemble the Nature from whence they flow. Great Persons should therefore have a correspondent Behaviour assign'd them. To make *Beings* much Superior to the Biggest of Mankind, talk below the Least, is absurd and ridiculous. This *Aristophanes* seems sensible of in his defence of *Æschylus*. Here *Euripides* objects to *Æschylus*, that he was too rumbling, noisy, and bombastick, over affecting that which *Horace* calls

Ampulla, & sesquipedalia Verba.

Ranæ A. 1. Sc. 1. Concionat. To this *Æschylus* Answers, that the Thoughts, and Designs of *Heroes* must be deliver'd in Expressions proportioned to their Greatness. It being likely that the Demi-Gods spoke up to their Dignity and Stature: And as they were distinguish'd by the richness of their Habit, so they had a more Magnificent Language than other Mortals. To this *Euripides* replys nothing; from whence you may conclude the *Poet* thought the Apology not unreasonable. In short *Aristophanes* had Sense but he does not always use it. He is not equal, and uniforme. Sometimes you have him flat and foolish a good while together. And where he has Spirit, 'tis oftentimes lavished away to little purpose. His Buffoonery is commonly too strong for his Judgment. This makes him let fly his jests without regard to Person or occasion: And thus by Springing the *Game* too soon, the Diversion is lost. I could make several other Material Objections against the Conduct of his *Plays*; But this being not necessary I shall observe in the

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Ranæ p. 238. 3d. Place. That notwithstanding the scandalous Liberty for which *Aristophanes* is so remarkable; yet in his Lucid Intervalls, when Sence and Sobriety return upon him, he pronounces against his own Practise. In the contest between *Æschylus* and *Euripides*, *Bacchus* is made the Umpire of the Controversie. *Æschylus* begins with a Question, and asks *Euripides* what 'tis which makes a *Poet* admired? He answers. 'Tis for the address of his Conduct, and the handsome Turns of Morality in his Poems. 'Tis because his performance has a tendency to form the Audience to Virtue, and Improvement, *Æschylus* demands of him farther; But suppose you debauched the Age, and made an Honest and a brave People Lewd, and good for nothing, what do you deserve then? Here *Bacchus* interposes, and crys out, what does he deserve? A Halter! pray don't ask so plain a question. And afterwards we are told, that *Poets* are valuable only for describing Things useful, in Life and Religion, for polishing Inventions, and setting off great Examples with Lustre, and Advantage. In the progress of the Dispute, *Æschylus* taxes *Euripides* with being too uncautious in his Representations; And tells him that Poets ought to conceal that which is vicious in Story; And entertain with nothing but Virtue, and Sobriety: He goes on reprimanding *Euripides* for his Dramatick incests, Strumpets, and Amours: And as for himself, to his best remembrance, He never brought any Love-Intrigues upon the Stage.

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255. 267. This is very significant expostulation: and contains very good Rules for the Trial of the *Muses*: But if the English *Stage*, should be obliged to this Test; *Aristophanes* must set fire to it, and that with much more reason than to *Socrates* his *School*. Now that *Æschylus* spoke *Aristophanes's* Sense is pretty plain: For first; As to the Business of Love, *Aristophanes* always declines it; He never patches up a *Play* with *Courtship*, and *Whining*, tho' he wrote nothing but *Comedy*. In the next place the *Chorus* which is usually the *Poets* Interpreter, speaks honourably of *Æschylus* even to a Preference; And at last Judge *Bacchus* gives Sentence for him.

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Thus we see *Aristophanes* Confutes his own Lewdness, and comes in Evidence against himself. This with the other two Exceptions I have made good against him, are sufficient to take off the Force of the *Precedent*, and make him an insignificant Authority.

To what I have observ'd from the *Stage* of the Antients, I could add the Authorities of *Aristotle*, and *Quintilian*, both extraordinary Persons, but I shall reserve their Testimony till Afterwards.

To come Home, and near our own Times: The English Theatre from Queen *Elizabeth* to King *Charles* II. will afford us something not inconsiderable to our purpose.

As for *Shakespear*, he is too guilty to make an Evidence: But I think he gains not much by his Misbehaviour; He has commonly *Plautus's Fate*, where there is most Smut, there is least Sense.

Ben. Johnson is much more reserv'd in his *Plays*, and declares plainly for Modesty in his *Discoveries*, some of his Words are these. {51}

A just Writer whom he calls a *True Artificer*, will avoid *Obscene* and *Effeminate Phrase*.
Discov. p. 700. Where *Manners and Fashions* are Corrupted, *Language* is so too. The excess of *Feasts and*
p. 701. *Apparel*, are the Notes of A Sick State, and the Wantonness of *Language* of a sick Mind. A little after he returns to the Argument, and applies his Reasoning more particularly to the Stage. *Poetry*, (says he) and *Picture*, both behold *Pleasure*, and profit, as their common Object, but should abstain from all base Pleasures, least they should wholly Err from their End; And while they seek to better Men's Minds, Destroy their Manners, Insolent and obscene Speeches, and Jest upon the best Men, are most likely to excite Laughter. But this is truly leaping from the Stage to the Tumbrill again, reducing all Wit to the Original *Dung-*
p. 706. 717. *Cart*. More might be cited to this purpose, but that may serve for an other Occasion: In the mean time I shall go on to *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*.

Fletcher's Faithfull Shephardess is remarkably Moral, and a sort of Exhortation to Chastity. This *Play* met with ill Judges, 'twas Hiss'd before half Acted, and seems to have suffer'd on the account of its Innocence. Soon after *Ben. Johnson* and *Beaumont* appear and justify the Author in a Copy of Verses. And as *Beaumont* commends Modesty in *Fletcher*, so he is commended himself by Mr. *Earl* for the same Quality. {52}

*Such Passions, Such Expressions meet my Eye,
Such Wit untainted with Obscenity.*

Ibid. And as I remember *Jasper Main* has some stroaks to the same purpose. *Fletcher* is still more full for the Cause. Indeed nothing can be more express. He delivers himself by way of *Prologue*; where the *Poet* speaks in his own Person. The *Prologue* to the *Woman-Hater*, very frankly lets the Audience know what they are to expect. *If there be any amongst you, (says he) that come to hear Lascivious Scenes, let them depart; For I do pronounce this, to the utter discomfort of all two-penny Gallery Men, you shall no Bawdry in it.* We find in those days Smut was the expectation of a Coarse Palate, and relish'd by none but two-penny Customers. In the *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, part of the *Prologue* runs thus. *They were banish'd the Theatre at Athens, and from Rome hiss'd, that brought Parasites on the Stage with Apish Actions, or Fools with uncivil Habits, or Courtezans with immodest words.* Afterwards *Prologue*, who represents a Person, gives us more to the same purpose.

— Fly far from hence.
*All private taxes, immodest phrases,
Whatever way but look like Vitious.
For wicked mirth, never true Pleasure brings;
For honest Minds, are pleas'd with honest things.*

I have quoted nothing but Comedy in this Author. The *Coronation* is another. And the *Prologue* tells you there is

*No Undermirth such as does lard the Scene,
For Coarse Delight, the Language here is clean.
And confident our Poet bad me say,
He'll bate you but the Folly of a Play.
For which altho' dull Souls his Pen despise;
Who think it yet too early to be wise.
The Nobles yet will thank his Muse, at least
Excuse him, cause his Thought aim'd at the Best.*

Thus these *Poets* are in their Judgments clearly ours. 'Tis true their Hand was not always steady. But thus much may be aver'd, that *Fletcher's* later *Plays* are the most inoffensive. This is either a sign of the *Poets* Reformation; or that the exceptionable Passages belonged to *Beaumont*, who dyed first.

To these Authorities of our own Nation, I shall add a considerable Testimony out of Mr. *Corneille*. This Author was sensible that tho' the Expression of his *Theodore* was altogether unsmutty, 'Yet the bare Idea of Prostitution uneffected, shock'd the Audience, and made the Play miscarry. The *Poet* protests he took great care to alter the natural Complexion of the Image, and to convey it decently to the Fancy; and delivered only some part of the History as inoffensively as possible. And after all his Screening and Conduct, the Modesty of the Audience would not endure that little, the Subject forced him upon. He is positive {54}

'the Comedies St. *Augustine* declaim'd against, were not such as the *French*. For theirs are not spectacles of Turpitude, as that Father justly calls those of his Time. The *French* generally speaking, containing nothing but examples of Innocence, Piety and Virtue.'

In this Citation we have the Opinion of the *Poet*, the Practise of the *French* Theatre, and the Sense of that *Nation*, and all very full to our purpose.

To conclude this *Chapter*. By what has been offer'd, it appears that the *Present English Stage* is superlatively Scandalous. It exceeds the Liberties of all Times and Countries: It has not so much as the poor plea of a *Precedent*, to which most other ill Things may claim a pretence. 'Tis mostly meer Discovery and Invention: A new World of Vice found out, and planted with all the Industry imaginable. *Aristophanes* himself, how bad soever in other respects, does not amplyfie, and flourish, and run through all the Topicks of Lewdness like these Men. The *Miscellany Poems* are likewise horribly Licentious. They are sometimes Collections from Antiquity, and often, the worst parts of the worst *Poets*. And to mend the Matter, the Christian *Translation*, is more nauseous than the *Pagan* Original. Such stuff I believe was never seen, and suffer'd before. In a word, If Poverty and Diseases, the Dishonour of Families, and the Debauching of Kingdoms, are such valuable Advantages, then I confess these Books deserve encouragement. But if the Case is otherwise, I humbly conceive the Proceeding should be so too. {55}

CHAP. II.

The Profaness of the Stage.

An other Instance of the Disorders of the *Stage* is their *Profaness*: This Charge may come under these two particulars.

1st. Their Cursing and Swearing.

2dly. Their Abuse of Religion and Holy Scripture.

1st Their Cursing and Swearing.

What is more frequent then their wishes of Hell, and Confusion, Devils, and Diseases, all the Plagues of this World, and the next, to each other? And as for Swearing; 'tis used by all Persons, and upon all Occasions: By Heroes, and Paltroons; by Gentlemen, and Clowns: Love, and Quarrels, Success, and Disappointment, Temper, and Passion, must be varnish'd, and set off with *Oaths*. At some times, and with some *Poets* Swearing is no ordinary Relief. It stands up in the room of Sense, gives Spirit to a flat Expression, and makes a Period Musical and Round. In short, 'tis almost all the Rhetorick, and Reason some People are Masters of: The manner of performance is different. Some times they mince the matter; change the Letter, and keep the Sense, as if they had a mind to steal a Swearing, and break the Commandment without Sin. At another time the Oaths are clipt, but not so much within the Ring, but that the *Image and Superscription* are visible. These expedients, I conceive are more for variety, then Conscience: For when the fit comes on them, they make no difficulty of Swearing at Length. Instances of all these kinds may be met with in the *Old Batchelour*, *Double Dealer*, and *Love for Love*. And to mention no more, *Don Quixot*, the *Provok'd Wife*, and the *Relapse*, are particularly rampant and scandalous. The *English Stage* exceed their predecessors in this, as well as other Branches of immorality. *Shakespear* is comparatively sober, *Ben Jonson* is still more regular; And as for *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, In their *Plays* they are commonly Profligate Persons that Swear, and even those are reprov'd for't. Besides, the Oaths are not so full of Hell and Defiance, as in the Moderns. {57}

Gad for God.

So much for matter of Fact: And as for point of Law, I hope there needs not many words to prove Swearing a Sin: For what is more provoking than contempt, and what Sin more contemptuous than common Swearing? what can be more Insolent and Irreligious, than to bring in God to attest our Trifles, to give Security for our Follies, and to make part of our Diversion? To Play with Majesty and Omnipotence in this manner, is to render it cheap and despicable. How can such Customes as these consist with the belief of Providence or Revelation? The *Poets* are of all People most to blame. They want even the Plea of *Bullies* and *Sharpers*. There's no Rencounters, no starts of Passion, no suddain Accidents to discompose them. They swear in Solitude and cool Blood, under Thought and Deliberation, for Business, and for Exercise: This is a terrible Circumstance; It makes all *Malice Prepence*, and enflames the Guilt, and the Reckoning. {58}

And if Religion signifies nothing, (as I am afraid it does with some People) there is Law, as well as Gospel against *Swearing*. *3d Jac. 1 cap. 21.* is expresly against the *Playhouse*. It

runs thus.

For the preventing and avoiding of the great abuse of the holy Name of God, in Stage Plays, Enterludes &c. Be it enacted by our Sovereign Lord &c. That if at any time, or times, after the End of this present Session of Parliament; any Person or Persons do, or shall in any Stage Play, Enterlude, Show, &c. Jeastingly or Profanly, speak or use the Holy Name of God, or of Christ Jesus, or of the Holy Ghost, or of the Trinity, which are not to be spoken, but with Fear and Reverence; shall forfeit for every such offence, by him or them committed, ten pounds: The one Moity thereof to the King's Majesty, his Heirs; and Successors, the other Moity thereof to him, or them, that will sue for the same in any Court of Record at Westminster, wherein no essoin, protection, or wager of Law shall be allow'd. {59}

By this *Act* not only direct Swearing, but all vain Invocation of the Name of God is forbidden. This *Statute* well executed would mend the *Poets*, or sweep the *Box*: And the *Stage* must either reform, or not thrive upon Profaness.

3dly Swearing in the *Playhouse* is an ungentlemanly, as well as an unchristian Practice. The *Ladies* make a considerable part of the *Audience*. Now Swearing before Women is reckon'd a Breach of good Behaviour, and therefore a civil Atheist will forbear it. The custom seems to go upon this Presumption; that the Impressions of Religion are strongest in Women, and more generally spread. And that it must be very disagreeable to them, to hear the Majesty of God treated with so little respect. Besides: Oaths are a boistrous and tempestuous sort of Conversation; Generally the effects of Passion, and spoken with Noise, and Heat. Swearing looks like the beginning of a Quarrel, to which Women have an aversion: As being neither armed by Nature, nor disciplin'd by Custome for such rough Disputes. A Woman will start at a Soldiers Oath, almost as much as at the Report of his Pistol: And therefore a well Bred Man will no more Swear, than Fight in the Company of Ladies. {60}

A *Second* Branch of the Profaness of the *Stage* is their Abuse of Religion, and *Holy Scripture*. And here sometimes they don't stop short of Blasphemy. To cite all that might be Collected of this kind would be tedious. I shall give the *Reader* enough to justifie the Charge, and I hope to abhor the Practice.

To begin with the *Mock-Astrologer*. In the First *Act* the *Scene* is a *Chappel*; And that the Use of such Consecrated places may be the better understood, the time is taken up in Courtship, Raillery, and ridiculing Devotion. *Jacinta* takes her turn among the rest. She Interrupts *Theodosia*, and cries out: *why Sister, Sister—will you pray? what injury have I ever done you that you should pray in my Company?*

Wildblood Swears by *Mahomet*, rallies smuttily upon the other World, and gives the preference to the Turkish Paradise! This Gentleman to incourage *Jacinta* to a Compliance in Debauchery, tells her *Heaven is all Eyes and no Tongue*. That is, it sees Wickedness but conceals it. He Courts much at the same rate a little before. *When a Man comes to a great Lady, he is fain to approach her with Fear, and Reverence, methinks there's something of Godliness in't*. Here you have the Scripture burlesqu'd, and the Pulpit Admonition apply'd to Whoring. Afterwards *Jacinta* out of her great Breeding and Christianity, swears by *Alla*, and *Mahomet*, and makes a Jest upon Hell. *Wildblood* tells his Man that *such undesigning Rogues as he, make a Drudge of poor Providence*. And *Maskall* to show his proficiency under his Masters, replies to *Bellamy*, who would have had him told a Lie. *Sir upon the Faith of a Sinner you have had my last Lie already. I have not one more to do me Credit, as I hope to be saved Sir*. {61}

In the close of the *Play*, They make sport with Apparitions and Fiends. One of the Devils sneezes, upon this they give him the Blessing of the Occasion, and conclude *he has got cold by being too long out of the Fire*. {59}

The *Orphan* lays the *Scene* in Christendom, and takes the same care of Religion. *Castalio* Complements his Mistress to Adoration. {62}

Orph. p. 20. *No Tongue my Pleasure and my Pain can tell:
'Tis Heaven to have thee, and without thee Hell.*

Polydor when upon the attempt to debauch *Monimia*, puts up this ejaculation.

p. 31. *Blessed Heaven assist me but in this dear Hour:*

Thus the *Stage* worships the true God in Blasphemy, as the *Lindians* did *Hercules* by *Lactan.* Cursing and throwing stones. This *Polydor* has another Flight of Profaness, but that has got a certain *Protection*, and therefore must not be disturb'd.

In the *Old Batchelour*, *Vain-love* asks *Belmour*, could you be content to go to Heaven?

- p. 19. *Bell. Hum, not immediatly in my Conscience, not heartily.*—This is playing I take it with Edge-Tools. To go to Heaven in jeast, is the way to go to Hell in earnest. In the Fourth Act, Lewdness is represented with that Gaiety, as if the Crime was purely imaginary, and lay only in ignorance and preciseness. *Have you throughly consider'd (says Fondlewife) how detestable, how Heinous, and how crying a Sin the Sin of Adultery is? have you weighed I say? For it is a very weighty Sin: and, altho' it may lie—yet thy Husband must also bear* {63}
- p. 28. *his part; For thy iniquity will fall on his Head.* I suppose this fit of Buffoonry and profaness, was to settle the Conscience of young Beginners, and to make the Terrors of Religion insignificant. *Bellmour* desires *Lætitia* to give him leave to swear by her Eyes and her Lips:
- p. 31. He kisses the Strumpet, and tells her, *Eternity was in that Moment.* *Lætitia* is horribly
38. profane in her Apology to her Husband; but having the *Stage-Protection* of Smut for her
- p. 39. Guard, we must let her alone. *Fondlewife* stalks under the same shelter, and abuses a plain
- p. 39. Text of Scripture to an impudent Meaning. A little before, *Lætitia* when her Intrigue with *Bellmour* was almost discover'd, supports her self with this Consideration. *All my comfort lies in his impudence, and Heaven be prais'd, he has a Considerable Portion.* This is the *Play-house* Grace, and thus Lewdness is made a part of Devotion! Ther's another Instance still behind: 'Tis that of *Sharper* to *Vain-Love*, and lies thus.

I have been a kind of God Father to you, yonder: I have promis'd and vow'd something in {64}

Id. 49. your Name, which I think you are bound to Perform. For Christians to droll upon their Baptism is somewhat extraordinary; But since the *Bible* can't escape, 'tis the less wonder to make bold with the *Catechisme*.

- Double Dealer. 34.* In the *Double Dealer*, Lady *Plyant* cries out *Jesu* and talks Smut in the same Sentence. Sr. *Paul Plyant* whom the Poet dub'd a Fool when he made him a Knight, talks very Piously!
36. *Blessed be Providence, a Poor unworthy Sinner, I am mightily beholden to Providence:* And
55. the same word is thrice repeated upon an odd occasion. The meaning must be that *Providence* is a ridiculous supposition, and that none but Blockheads pretend to Religion. But the Poet can discover himself farther if need be. Lady *Froth* is pleas'd to call *Jehu a*
- p. 40. *Hackney Coachman.* Upon this, *Brisk* replies, *If Jehu was a Hackney Coachman, I am answer'd—you may put that into the Marginal Notes tho', to prevent Criticisms—only mark it with a small Asterisme and say—Jehu was formerly a Hackney Coachman.* This for a heavy Piece of Profaness, is no doubt thought a lucky one, because it burlesques the Text, and the Comment, all under one. I could go on with the *Double Dealer* but he'll come in my way afterwards, and so I shall part with him at present. Let us now take a veiw of *Don Sebastian.* And here the *Reader* can't be long unfurnish'd. *Dorax* shall speak first. {65}

*Shall I trust Heaven
With my revenge? then where's my satisfaction?
No, it must be my own, I scorn a Proxy.*

Sebast. p. 9.

But *Dorax* was a Renegado, what then? He had renounc'd Christianity, but not Providence. Besides; such hideous Sentences ought not to be put in the Mouth of the Devil. For that which is not fit to be heard, is not fit to be spoken. But to some people an Atheistical Rant is as good as a Flourish of Trumpets. To proceed. *Antonio* tho' a profess'd Christian, mends the matter very little. He is looking on a Lot which he had drawn for his Life: This proving unlucky, after the preamble of a Curse or two, he calls it,

*As black as Hell, an other lucky saying!
I think the Devils in me:—good again,
I cannot speak one syllable but tends
To Death or to Damnation.*

Id. p. 10.

Thus the Poet prepares his Bullies for the other World! Hell and Damnation are strange entertaining words upon the *Stage*! Were it otherwise, the Sense in these Lines, would be almost as bad as the Conscience. The *Poem* warms and rises in the working: And the next Flight is extreamly remarkable: {66}

*Not the last sounding could surprize me more,
That summons drowsy Mortals to their doom,
When call'd in hast they fumble for their Limbs:*

p. 47.

Very Solemnly and Religiously express'd! *Lucian* and *Celsus* could not have ridiculed the Resurrection better! Certainly the Poet never expects to be there. Such a light Turn would

have agreed much better to a Man who was in the Dark, and was feeling for his Stockings. But let those who talk of *Fumbling* for their Limbs, take care they don't find them too fast. In the Fourth Act *Mustapha* dates his *Exaltation to Tumult, from the second Night of the Month Abib*. Thus you have the Holy Text abused by Captain *Tom*; And the Bible torn by the Rabble! The Design of this Liberty I can't understand, unless it be to make *Mustapha* as considerable as *Moses*; and the prevalence of a Tumult, as such a Miracle as the Deliverance out of *Aegypt*. We have heard this Author hitherto in his *Characters*, let us hear him now in his own Person. In his *Dedication of Aurenge Zebe* he is so hardy as to affirm that *he who is too lightly reconciled after high Provocation, may Recommend himself to the World for a Christian, but I should hardly trust him for a Friend*. And why is a Christian not fit to make a Friend of? Are the Principles of Christianity defective, and the Laws of it ill contriv'd? Are the Interests and Capacities of Mankind overlook'd? Did our Great Master bind us to Disadvantage, and make our Duty our Misfortune? And did he grudge us all the Pleasures and Securities of Friendship? Are not all these horrid Suppositions? Are they not a flat Contradiction to the *Bible*, and a Satyr on the Attributes of the Deity? Our Saviour tells us we must *forgive until Seventy times Seven*; That is, we must never be tired out of Clemency and Good Nature. He has taught us to pray for the Forgiveness of our own Sins, only upon the Condition of forgiving others. Here is no exception upon the Repetition of the Fault, or the Quality of the Provocation. Mr. *Dryden* to do him right, do's not dispute the Precept. He confesses this is the way to be a Christian: But for all that he *should hardly trust him for a Friend*. And why so? Because the Italian Proverb says, *He that forgives the second time is a Fool*. This Lewd Proverb comes in for Authority, and is a piece of very pertinent Blasphemy! Thus in some Peoples *Logick* one proof from Atheism, is worth Ten from the *New Testament*. But here the *Poet* argues no better than he Believes. For most certainly, a Christian of all others is best qualified for Friendship. For He that loves his Neighbour as himself, and carries Benevolence and Good Nature beyond the Heights of Philosophy: He that is not govern'd by Vanity, or Design; He that prefers his Conscience to his Life, and has Courage to Maintain his Reason; He that is thus qualified must be a good Friend; And he that falls short, is no good Christian. And since the *Poet* is pleas'd to find fault with Christianity, let us examine his own Scheme. *Our Minds (says he) are perpetually wrought on by the Temperament of our Bodies, which makes me suspect they are nearer Allied than either our Philosophers, or School Divines will allow them to be*. The meaning is, he suspects our Souls are nothing but Organiz'd Matter. Or in plain English, our Souls are nothing but our Bodies. And then when the Body dies you may guess what becomes of them! Thus the Authorities of Religion are weaken'd, and the prospect of the other World almost shut up. And is this a likely Supposition for Sincerity and good Nature? Do's Honour use to rise upon the Ruines of Conscience? And are People the best Friends where they have the least Reason to be so? But not only the Inclinations to Friendship must Languish upon this Scheme, but the very Powers of it are as it were destroy'd. By this System no Man can say his Soul is his own. He can't be assured the same Colours of Reason and Desire will last. Any little Accident from *without* may metamorphose his Fancy, and push him upon a new set of Thoughts. *Matter* and *Motion* are the most Humorsom Capricious Things in Nature; and withall, the most Arbitrary and uncontroll'd. And can Constancy proceed from Chance, Choice from Fate, and Virtue from Necessity? In short a Man at this rate must be a Friend or an Enemy in spite of his Teeth, and just as long as the *Atoms* please and no longer. Every Change in *Figure* and *Impulse*, must alter the Idea, and wear off the former Impression. So that by these Principles, Friendship will depend on the *Seasons*, and we must look in the *Weather Glass* for our Inclinations. But this 'tis to Refine upon Revelation, and grow wiser than Wisdom! The same Author in his *Dedication of Juvenal and Persius*, has these words: *My Lord, I am come to the last Petition of Abraham; If there be ten Righteous Lines in this vast Preface, spare it for their sake; and also spare the next City because it is but a little one*. Here the Poet stands for *Abraham*; and the Patron for God Almighty: And where lies the Wit of all this? In the Decency of the Comparison? I doubt not. And for the *next City* he would have spared, he is out in the Allusion. 'Tis no *Zoar*, but much rather *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, Let them take care the Fire and Brimstone does not follow: And that those who are so bold with *Abraham's* Petition, are not forced to that of *Dives*. To beg Protection for a Lewd Book in *Scripture Phrase*, is very extraordinary! 'Tis in effect to prostitute the Holy Rhetorick, and send the *Bible* to the *Brothell*! I can hardly imagin why these Tombs of Antiquity were raked in, and disturb'd? Unless it were to conjure up a departed Vice, and revive the Pagan Impurities: Unless it were to raise the Stench of the Vault, and Poyson the Living with the Dead. Indeed *Juvenal* has a very untoward way with him in some of his Satyrs. His Pen has such a Libertine stroak that 'tis a Question whether the Practise, or the Reproof, the Age, or the Author, were the more Licentious. He teaches those Vices he would correct, and writes more like a Pimp, than a *Poet*. And truly I think there is but little of Lewdness lost in the *Translation*. The Sixth and Eleventh *Satyrs* are Particularly remarkable. Such nauseous stuff is almost enough to debauch the *Alphabet*, and make the Language scandalous. One would almost be sorry for the privilege of *Speech*, and the Invention of *Letters*, to see them thus wretchedly abused. And since the Business must be undertaken, why was not the Thought Blanched, the Expression made remote, and the ill Features cast into shadows? I'm mistaken if we have not Lewdness enough of our own Growth, without Importing from our Neighbours. No. This can't be. An Author must have Right done him, and be shown in his own shape, and Complexion. Yes by all means! Vice must be disrobed, and People poyson'd, and all for the sake of Justice! To do Right to such an Author is to burn him. I hope Modesty is much better than Resemblance. The Imitation of an ill Thing is the worse for being exact: And

sometimes to report a Fault is to repeat it.

To return to his *Plays*. In *Love Triumphant*, *Garcia* makes *Veramond* this Compliment:

Love Triumph. p. 3.

May Heaven and your brave Son, and above all,
Your own prevailing Genius guard your Age.

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What is meant by his Genius, in this place, is not easy to Discover, only that 'tis something which is a better Guard than Heaven. But 'tis no Matter for the Sense, as long as the Profaness is clear. In this *Act*, Colonel *Sancho* lets *Carlos* know the old Jew is dead, which he calls good news.

Carl. *What Jew?*

Sanch. *Why the rich Jew my Father. He is gone to the Bosom, of Abraham his Father, and I*
Id. p. 11. his Christian Son am left sole Heir. A very mannerly Story! But why does the Poet acquaint us with *Sanchos* Religion? The case is pretty plain: 'tis to give a lustre to his Profaness, and make him burlesque St. *Luke* with the better Grace. *Alphonso* complains to *Victoria* that
Id. p. 11. Nature doats with Age. His reason is, because Brother and Sister can't Marry as they did at first: 'Tis very well! We know what *Nature* means in the Language of Christianity, and especially under the Notion of a Law-giver. *Alphonso* goes on, and compares the Possession of Incestuous Love to Heaven. Yes, 'tis *Eternity in Little.*
p. 34.

It seems Lovers must be distracted or there's no diversion. A Flight of Madness like a Faulcons *Lessening*, makes them the more gaz'd at! I am now coming to some of the Poets Divinity. And here *Vengeance is said to be so sweet a Morsel,*

{73}

58. *That Heaven reserves it for its proper Tast.*

This belike is the meaning of those Texts, *that God is good and Gracious, and slow to anger, and does not willingly afflict the Children of Men!* From expounding the Bible he goes to the *Common Prayer*. And as *Carlos* interprets the *Office of Matrimony*, **For Better, for Worse**, is *for Virgin for Whore*; And that the Reference might not be mistaken, the Poet is careful to put the Words in *Italick*, and great Letters. And by the way, He falls under the
1st. Eliz. cap. 2. Penalty of the Statute for Depraving the *Common Prayer*.

p. 63. Sancho upon reading a Letter which he did not like, cries *Damn it, it must be all Orthodox.* *Damn* and *Orthodox* clapt together, make a lively Rant, because it looks like Cursing the *Creeds*. The most extraordinary passage is behind; *Sancho* was unhappily Married: *Carlos* tells him, *For your Comfort, Marriage they say is Holy.* *Sancho* replies: *Ay, and so is Martyrdom as they say, but both of them are good for just nothing, but to make an end of a*

p. 72. Mans Life. I shall make no Reflections upon This: There needs no Reading upon a Monster: 'Tis shown enough by its own Deformity. *Love for Love* has a Strain like this, and therefore

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Love for Love. p. 42. I shall put them together: *Scandal* solicits Mrs. *Foresight*; She threatens to tell her Husband. He replys, *He will die a Martyr rather then disclaim his Passion.* Here we have

Adultery dignified with the stile of Martyrdom: As if 'twas as Honourable to perish in Defence of Whoring, as to dye for the Faith of Christianity. But these *Martyrs* will be a great while in burning, And therefore let no body strive to grace the Adventure, or encrease the Number. And now I am in this *Play* the Reader shall have more. *Jeremy* who was bred at the University, calls the Natural Inclinations to Eating and Drinking, *Whoreson Appetites*. This is strange Language! The *Manicheans* who made Creation the work of the

26. Devil, could scarcely have been thus Coarse. But the *Poet* was *Jeremy's* Tutor, and so that Mystery is at an end. Sr. *Samson* carries on the Expostulation, rails at the Structure of

p. 27. Human Bodies, and says, *Nature has been Provident only to Bears, and Spiders*; This is the Authors Paraphrase on the 139 *Psalm*; And thus he gives God thanks for the Advantage of his Being! The *Play* advances from one wickedness to another, from the *Works* of God, to

{75}

p. 47. the Abuse of his Word. *Foresight* confesses *'tis Natural for Men to mistake.* *Scandal* replies, *You say true, Man will err, meer Man will err—but you are something more—There have been wise Men; but they were such as you—Men who consulted the Stars, and, were observers of Omens—Solomon was wise but how?—by his judgment in Astrology.*

'Tis very well! *Solomon* and *Foresight* had their Understandings qualified alike. And pray what was *Foresight*? Why an *Illiterate Fellow.* A pretender to *Dreams, Astrology, Palmistry*

Vid. Person. Dram.

&c. This is the *Poets* account of *Solomon's* Supernatural Knowledge! Thus the wisest Prince is dwindled into a Gypsie! And the Glorious Miracle resolved into Dotage, and Figure-flinging! *Scandal* continues his Banter, and says, the *wise Men of the East* owed their Instruction to a Star; which is rightly observ'd by *Gregory the Great* in favour of *Astrology*. This was the Star which shone at our Saviour's Birth. Now who could imagine by the Levity of the occasion, that the Author thought it any better than an *Ignis Fatuus*, or *Sydrophel's* Kite in *Hudibras*? Sr. *Sampson* and the fine *Angelica*, after some lewd raillery continue the Allegory, and drive it up into Profaness. For this reason the Citation must be imperfect.

{76}

Sr. Samps. Sampson's a very good Name for—your Sampsons were strong Dogs from the
p. 80. *Beginning.*

Angel. *Have a care—If you remember the strongest Sampson of your Name, pull'd an old House over his Head at last.* Here you have the Sacred History burlesqu'd, and *Sampson* once more brought into the House of *Dagon*, to make sport for the *Philistines!* To draw towards an end of this *Play.* *Tattle* would have carried off *Valentine's* Mistress. This later, expresses his Resentment in a most Divine manner! *Tattle* *I thank you, you would have*
p. 91. *interposed between me and Heaven, but Providence has laid Purgatory in your way.* Thus Heaven is debas'd into an Amour, and Providence brought in to direct the Paultry concerns of the *Stage!* *Angelica* concludes much in the same strain: *Men are generally Hypocrites And Infidels, they pretend to Worship, but have neither Zeal, nor Faith; How few like*
p. 92. *Valentine would persevere unto Martyrdom?* &c. Here you have the Language of the *Scriptures,* and the most solemn Instances of Religion, prostituted to Courtship and Romance! Here you have a Mistress made God Almighty, Ador'd with Zeal and Faith, and {77} Worship'd up to Martyrdom! This if 'twere only for the Modesty, is strange stuff for a Lady to say of her self. And had it not been for the profane Allusion, would have been cold enough in all Conscience.

The *Provok'd Wife* furnishes the Audience with a Drunken Atheistical Catch: 'Tis true this Song is afterwards said to be *Full of Sin and Impudence.* But why then was it made? This Confession is a miserable *Salvo;* And the Antidote is much weaker than the Poyson: 'Tis just as if a Man should set a House in a Flame, and think to make amends by crying *Fire* in the Streets. In the last *Act* *Razor* makes his Discovery of the Plot against *Belinda* in *Scripture* phrase. I'll give it the *Reader* in the Authors Dialogue.

Id. p. 77. *Belind. I must know who put you upon all this Mischief.*

Razor. Sathan And his Equipage. Woman tempted me, Lust weaken'd,—And so the Devil overcame me: As fell Adam so fell I.

Belind. Then pray Mr. Adam will you make us acquainted with your Eve?

Razor unmasks *Madamoselle* and says, *This is the Woman that tempted me: But this is the Serpent* (meaning *Lady Fanciful*) *that tempted the Woman; And if my Prayers might be heard, her punishment for so doing should be like the Serpents of old, &c.* This *Razor* in what we hear of him before, is all Roguery, and Debauch: But now he enters in *Sackcloth;* and talks like *Tribulation* in the *Alchemist.* His Character is chang'd to make him the more profane; And his Habit, as well as Discourse, is a Jest upon Religion. I am forced to omit one Line of his Confession. The Design of it is to make the *Bible* deliver an obscene Thought: And because the Text would not bend into a Lewd Application; He alters the words for his purpose, but passes it for *Scripture* still. This sort of Entertainment is frequent in the *Relapse.* Lord *Foplington* laughs at the publick Solemnities of Religion, as if 'twas a ridiculous piece of Ignorance, to pretend to the Worship of a God. He discourses with *Berinthia* and *Amanda* in this manner: *Why Faith Madam,—Sunday is a vile Day, I must confess. A man must have very little to do at Church that can give an account of the Sermon.* And a little after: *is to mind what one should not do.* *Lory* tells young *Fashion,* *I have been in a lamentable Fright ever since that Conscience had the Impudence to intrude into your Company.* His Master makes him this Comfortable Answer. *Be at peace, it will* {78} *come no more:—I have kick'd it down stairs.* A little before he breaks out into this
p. 44, 45. *Rapture.* Now Conscience I defie thee! By the way we may observe, that this young *Fashion* is the *Poets* Favorite. *Berinthia* and *Worthy,* two *Characters* of Figure, determine the point thus in defence of Pimping. {79}

Berinth. Well, I would be glad to have no Bodies Sins to answer for but my own. But where
p. 51. *there is a necessity—*

Worth. Right as you say, where there is a Necessity; A Christian is bound to help his Neighbour.

Nurse, after a great deal of Profane Stuff concludes her expostulation in these words: *But his Worship* (*Young Fashion*) *over-flows with his Mercy and his Bounty; He is not only pleas'd to forgive us our Sins—*—*but which is more than all, has prevail'd with me to*
p. 96, 97. *become the Wife of thy Bosom:* This is very heavy, and ill dress'd. And an Atheist must be sharp set to relish it. The Vertuous *Amanda,* makes no scruple to charge the *Bible* with untruths.

Ibid. —What Slippery stuff are Men compos'd of?
Sure the Account of their Creation's false,
And 'twas the Womans Rib that they were form'd of.

Berinthia, after she has given in a Scheme for the debauching *Amanda*, is thus accosted by p.91. *Worthy*: *Thou Angel of Light, let me fall down and, adore thee!* A most Seraphick Compliment to a Procuress! And 'tis possible some Angel or other, may thank him for't in due time.

I am quite tired with these wretched Sentences. The sight indeed is horrible, and I am almost unwilling to shew it. However they shall be Produced like Malefactors, not for Pomp, but Execution. Snakes and Vipers, must sometimes be look'd on, to destroy them. I can't forbear expressing my self with some warmth under these Provocations. What Christian can be unconcern'd at such intolerable Abuses? What can be a juster Reason for indignation than Insolence and Atheism? Resentment can never be better shown, nor Aversion more seasonably exerted! Nature made the Ferment and Rising of the Blood, for such occasions as This. On what unhappy Times are we fallen! The Oracles of Truth, the Laws of Omnipotence, and the Fate of Eternity are Laught at and despis'd! That the *Poets* should be suffer'd to play upon the *Bible*, and Christianity be Hooted off the *Stage!* Christianity that from such feeble beginings made so stupendious a progress! That overbore all the Oppositions of Power, and Learning; and with Twelve poor Men, outstretch'd the Roman Empire. That this glorious Religion so reasonable in its Doctrine, so well attested by Miracles, by Martyrs, by all the Evidence that *Fact* is capable of, should become the Diversion of the Town, and the Scorn of Buffoons! And where, and by whom is all this Out-rage committed? why not by *Julian*, or *Porphirie*, not among Turks or Heathens, but in a Christian Country, in a Reform'd Church, and in the Face of Authority! Well! I perceive the Devil was a Saint in his *Oracles*, to what he is in his *Plays*. His Blasphemies are as much improv'd as his *Stile*, and one would think the Muse was *Legion!* I suppose the *Reader* may be satisfied already: But if he desires farther proof, there's something more flamingly impious behind. {81}

The Christian *Almeida* when *Sebastian* was in danger, Raves and Foames like one Possess'd,

Don. Sebastian. p. 51.

*But is there Heaven, for I begin to doubt?
Now take your swing ye impious Sin unpunish'd,
Eternal Providence seems over watch'd,
And with a slumbring Nod assents to Murther.*

In the next *page*, she bellows again much after the same manner. The *Double Dealer* to say the least of him, follows his Master in this Road, *Passibus æquis*. Sr. *Paul Plyant* one would think had done his part: But the ridiculing *Providence* won't satisfie all People: And therefore the next attempt is somewhat bolder. {82}

*Sr. Paul. Hold your self contented my Lady Plyant,—I find Passion coming upon me by
Inspiration. In Love Triumphant, Carlos is by the Constitution of the Play a Christian; and
therefore must be construed in the sense of his Religion. This Man blunders out this
horrible expression. Nature has given me my Portion in Sense with a P—to her. &c. The
Reader may see the Hellish Syllable at Length if he pleases. This Curse is borrow'd for
Young Fashion in the Relapse. The Double Dealer is not yet exhausted. Cynthia the Top
Lady grows Thoughtful. Upon the question she relates her Contemplation. Cynth. I am
thinking (says she) that tho' Marriage makes Man and Wife one Flesh, it leaves them two
Fools. This Jest is made upon a Text in Genesis, and afterwards applyed by our Saviour
in the case of Divorse. Love for Love will give us a farther account of this Authors Proficiency
in the Scriptures. Our Blessed Saviour affirms himself to be the Way, the Truth, and the
Light, that he came to bear witness to the Truth, and that his Word is Truth. These
expressions were remembred to good purpose. For Valentine in his pretended Madness
tells Buckram the Lawyer; I am Truth,—I am Truth—Who's that, that's out of his way, I
am Truth, and can set him right. Now a Poet that had not been smitten with the pleasure of
Blasphemy, would never have furnish'd Frensy with Inspiration; nor put our Saviours
Words in the Mouth of a Madman. Lady Brute, after some struggle between Conscience
and Lewdness, declares in Favour of the later. She says the part of a downright Wife is to
Cuckold her Husband. And tho' this is against the strict Statute Law of Religion, yet if there
was a Court of Chancery in Heaven, she should be sure to cast him.*

Double Dealer. p. 19.
p. 17.
p. 44.
Double Dealer. p. 18.
Gen. 2.
St. Math. 9.
Love, &c. p. 59, 61.
Provok'd Wife. p. 3.
p. 4.

This Brass is double guilt. *First*, It supposes no Equity in Heaven. And *Secondly*, If there was, *Adultery* would not be punish'd! The *Poet* afterwards acquaints us by this Lady, that Blasphemy is no Womans Sin. Why then does she fall into it? Why in the mid'st of Temper and Reasoning? What makes him break in upon his own Rules? Is Blasphemy never unseasonable upon the Stage, And does it always bring its excuse along with it? The *Relapse* goes on in the same strain. When *Young Fashion* had a prospect of cheating his Elder Brother, he tells *Lory*, *Providence thou see'st at last takes care of Men of Merit.* *Berinthia* who has engag'd to corrupt *Amanda* for *Worthy*; attacks her with this Speech, {84}

Relapse. p. 19.

p. 96. *Mr. Worthy used you like A Text, he took you all to peices, and it seems was particular in her Commendation, Thus she runs on for several Lines, in a Lewd, and Profane Allegory. In the Application she speaks out the Design, and concludes with this pious Exhortation! Now consider what has been said, and Heaven give you Grace to put it in practise; that is to play the Whore. There are few of these last Quotations, but what are plain Blasphemy, and within the Law. They look reeking as it were from Pandæmonium, and almost smell of Fire and Brimstone. This is an Eruption of Hell with a witness! I almost wonder the smoak of it has not darken'd the Sun, and turn'd the Air to Plague and Poyson! These are outrageous Provocations; Enough to arm all Nature in Revenge; To exhaust the Judgments, of Heaven, and sink the Island in the Sea! What a spite have these Men to the God that made them. How do They Rebell upon his Bounty, and attack him with his own Reason? These Giants in Wickedness, how would they ravage with a Stature Proportionable? They that can Swagger in Impotence, and Blaspheme upon a Mole-Hill, what would they do if they had Strength to their Good-Will? And what can be the Ground of this Confidence, and the Reason of such horrid Presumption? Why the Scripture will best satisfie the question. Because sentence against An Evil work is not excuted speedily, therefore the heart of the Sons of Men, is fully* {85}

Eccles. 8. 11. set in them to do Evil.

Clemency is weakness with some People; And the Goodness of God which should lead them to Repentance, does but harden them the more. They conclude he wants Power to punish, because he has patience to forbear. Because there is a Space between Blasphemy and Vengeance; and they don't perish in the Act of Defiance; Because they are not blasted with Lightning, transfixt with Thunder, and Guarded off with Devils, they think there's no such matter as a day of Reckoning. But let no Man be Deceiv'd, God is not mock'd; not without danger they may be assur'd. Let them retreat in time, before the Floods run over them: Before they come to that place, where Madness will have no Musick, nor Blasphemy any Diversion. {86}

Gal. 6.

And here it may not be amiss to look a little into the Behaviour of the Heathens. Now 'tis no wonder to find them run riot upon this Subject. The Characters of their Gods were not unblemish'd. Their prospect of the other World, was but dim; neither were they under the Terrors of Revelation. However, they are few of them so bad as the Moderns.

Terence does not run often upon this rock. 'Tis true *Chærea* falls into an ill Rapture after his Success. *Chremes* bids his Wife not tire the Gods with Thanks: And *Æschinus* is quite sick of the Religious part of the Weding. These Instances; excepting his Swearing, are the most, (and I think near all the) exceptionable Passages of this Author.

Eunuch. Heauton. A. 5. 1. Adelp. A. 5. 7.

Plautus is much more bold. But then his sally's are generally made by *Slaves* and *Pandars*.

This makes the Example less dangerous, and is some sort of extenuation. I grant this imperfect excuse wont serve him always. There are some Instances where his Persons of better Figure are guilty of lewd Defences, Profane Flights, and Sawcy Expostulation. But the Roman Deities were Beings of ill Fame, 'tis the less wonder therefore if the Poets were familiar with them. However, *Plautus* has something good in him, and enough to condemn the Practise. *Pleusides* would gladly have had the Gods changed the method of Things, in some Particulars. He would have had frank good Humour'd People long live'd, and close-fisted Knaves die Young. To this *Periplectimenes* Gravely answers, That 'tis great Ignorance, and Misbehaviour to Censure the Conduct of the Gods, or speak dishonorably of them. In his *Pseudolus* the Procurer *Ballio* talks Profanely. Upon which *Pseudolus* makes this Reflection. This Fellow makes nothing of Religion, how can we trust him in other matters? For the Gods whom all People have the greatest reason to fear, are most slighted by him. {87}

Lycnides. Aulular. A. 2. 4. Palæstra. Rud. A. 1. 3. Dinarchus. Trucul. A. 2. 4. Mil. Glor. Pseud. A. 1. 3.

The Greek Tragedians are more staunch, and write nearer the Scheme of Natural Religion. 'Tis true, they have some bold expressions: But then they generally reprove the Liberty, and punish the Men. *Prometheus* in *Æschylus* blusters with a great deal of Noise, and Stubbornness. He is not for changing Conditions with *Mercury*: And chuses rather to be miserable, than to submit even to *Jupiter* himself. The *Chorus* rebuke him for his Pride, and threaten him with greater Punishment. And the Poet to make all sure brings him to Execution before the end of the Play. He discharges Thunder and Lightning at his Head; shakes his Rock with an Earthquake, turns the Air into Whirl-wind, and draws up all the Terrors of Nature to make him an example. In his *Expedition against Thebes*, *Eteocles* expects *Capaneus* would be destroy'd for his Blasphemies. Which happen'd accordingly. On the other hand; *Amphiaraus* being a person of Virtue, and Piety, they are afraid least he should succeed. For a Religious Enemy is almost invincible. *Darius's* Ghost lays *Xerxes's* ruin upon the excess of his Ambition, 'Twas, because he made a Bridge over the Hellespont, used Neptune contumeliously, and, thought himself Superiour to Heaven. This Ghost tells the *Chorus* that the Persian Army miscarried for the out-rages they did to Religion, for breaking down the Altars, and plundering the Gods. {88}

Prom. vinct. 57. p. 92. p. 101. Περσ. 161. 164.

Ajax's Distraction is represented as judicial in *Sophocles*. 'Twas inflicted for his Pride and

Ajax. Flagell. Atheism. 'When his Father bid him be brave but Religious withall, he haughtily replied that 'twas, for Cowards to beg the Assistance of the Gods; as for his part, he hoped to Conquer without them. And when *Minerva* encouraged him to charge the Enemy,

Το τ' ἀντιφωνεῖ δεινὸν ἀρρητον τ' ἔπος,

{89}

'He made her this Lewd and insufferable Answer. Pray withdraw, and give your Countenance elsewhere, I want no Goddesses to help me do my Business. This Insolence made *Minerva* hate him; and was the cause of his Madness and self Murther.' To proceed. The *Chorus* condemns the Liberty of *Jocasta*, who obliquely charged a Practise upon the

Oedip. Tyran. p. Oracle: Tho' after all, she did not tax *Apollo*, but his Ministers.
187.

The same *Chorus* recommends Piety, and Relyance upon the Gods, and threatens Pride and Irreligion with Destruction. In *Antigone*, *Tiresias* advises *Creon* to wave the Rigour of his *Edict*, And not let the Body of *Polynices* lie unburied, and expos'd. He tells him the Altars were already polluted with Humane Flesh. This had made the Language of the Birds

Antig. p. 256.

unintelligible, and confounded the marks of *Augury*. *Creon* replies in a rage, and says he would not consent to the Burial of *Polynices*: No, tho' 'twere to prevent the Eagle's throwing part of the Carkass in *Jove's Chair of State*. This was a bold Flight; but 'tis not long before he pays for't. Soon after, his Son, and Queen, kill themselves. And in the close the Poet who speaks in the *Chorus*, explains the Misfortune, and points upon the Cause, and affirms that *Creon* was punish'd for his Haughtiness and Impiety. To go on to his *Trachiniæ*. *Hercules* in all the extremity of his Torture does not fall foul upon Religion. 'Tis true, He shows as much Impatience as 'tis possible. His Person, his pain, and the Occasion of it, were very extraordinary. These circumstances make it somewhat natural for him to complain above the common rate. The Greatness of his Spirit, the Feavour of his Blood, and the Rage of his Passion, could hardly fail of putting Force, and Vehemence into his Expressions. Tho' to deal clearly he seems better furnish'd with Rhetorick, than true

{90}

Trach. p. [.....]. Fortitude. But after all, his Disorders are not altogether ungovern'd. He is uneasy, but not impious, and profane.

I grant *Hercules Oeteus* in *Seneca*, swaggers at a strange Rhodomontading rate. But the Conduct of this Author is very indifferent. He makes a meer *Salamander* of his *Hero*, and lets him declaim with too much of Length, Curiosity and Affectation, for one in his Condition: He harangues it with great plenty of Points, and Sentences in the Fire, and lies frying, and Philosophizing for near a hundred Lines together. In fine, this Play is so injudiciously manag'd, that *Heinsius* is confident 'twas written by neither of the *Seneca's*, but by some later Author of a lower *Class*. To return to *Sophocle's Trachiniæ*. *Hyllus* reproaches the Gods with Neglect, because they gave *Hercules* no Assistance, and glances upon *Jupiter* himself. This sally is not so thoroughly corrected as formerly. 'Tis true the *Chorus* make some little satisfaction immediately after. They resolve all surprizes of Misfortune, all Revolutions of States or Families, into the will and Permission of *Jupitur*. This by implication, They make an argument for acquiescence. Besides, the Poet had laid in a sort of caution against Misconstruction before. For the *Messenger* tells *Dejaneira* that we ought not to Murmur at the Conduct of *Jupiter*.

{91}

Trach. p. 375.

Trach. p. 340.

—Τοῦ λόγου δ' ὄυ χρὴ Φθόνου
Γόνοι προσεῖναι Ζεὺς ὅτου πράκτωρ φανῆ.

This for a Heathen is something tho' not enough, *Cleomenes's* Rant seems an imitation of *Hyllus*, Only 'tis bolder, and has nothing of the rashness of Youth to excuse it. Besides *Sophocles* throws in somewhat by way of Preservative. Whereas in *Cleomenes* the Boy *Cleonidas* has the better on the wrong side, and seems to carry the cause of Atheism against his Father. This *Scene* of a *Famine* Mr. *Dryden* calls a Beauty; and yet Methinks *Cleora* is not very Charming! Her part is to tell you the Child suck'd to no purpose.

{92}

Id. p. 55.

p. 54.

*It pull'd and pull'd but now but nothing came,
At last it drew so hard that the Blood follow'd.
And that Red Milk I found upon its Lips,
Which made me swoon for Fear.*

There's a Description of Sucking for you! And truly one would think the Muse on't were scarcely wean'd. This Lady's fancy is just *Slip-Stocking-high*; and she seems to want Sense, more than her Breakfast. If this Passage would not shine, the Poet should have let it alone. 'Tis *Horace's* advice.

—*et quæ*

De Art. Poet.

Desperes tractata nitescere posse relinquo.

The greatest part of the Life of this *Scene* is spent in impious Rants, and Atheistical

Disputes. To do the Author right, his *Characters* never want Spirits for such Service, either full or Fasting. Some people love to say the worst Things in the best manner; To perfume their Poysons, and give an Air to Deformity. {93}

Philoct. 402. There is one ill Sentence in *Sophocles* behind. *Philoctetes* calls the Gods Κακòι, and Libells their Administration. This Officer we must understand was left upon a Solitary Island, ill used by his Friends, and harrass'd with Poverty and Ulcers, for Ten years together. These, under the Ignorance of Paganism, were trying Circumstances, and take off somewhat of the
419. Malignity of the Complaint. Afterwards He seems to repent, and declares his Assurance that the Gods will do Justice, and prays frequently to them. The Conclusion of this Play is remarkably Moral. Here *Hercules* appears in *Machine*; acquaints *Philoctetes* with his own glorious Condition; That his Happiness was the Reward of Virtue, and the Purchase of Merit. He charges him to pay a due regard to Religion; For Piety would recommend him to *Jupiter* more than any other Qualification. It went into the other World with People and
p. 431. they found their Account in't both Living and Dead.

Upon the whole; The *Plays* of *Æschylus* and *Sophocles* are formed upon Models of Virtue: They joyn Innocence with Pleasure, and design the Improvement, of the *Audience*. {94}

Act. 2.
p. 295. In *Euripides's Bacchæ*, *Pentheus* is pull'd in pieces for using *Bacchus* with Disrespect. And the *Chorus* observes that God never fails to punish Impiety, and Contempt of Religion. *Polyphemus* blusters Atheistically, and pretends to be as great as *Jupiter*: But then his Eye is burnt out in the fifth Act. And the *Chorus* in *Heraclidæ* affirm it next to Madness not to worship the Gods. I grant he has some profane Passages stand uncorrected, and what wonder is it to see a *Pagan* Miscarry? *Seneca*, as he was inferiour in Judgment to the *Greeks*, so he is more frequent, and uncautious, in his Flights of extravagance. His Hero's and Heroines, are excessively bold with the Superior Beings. They rave to Distraction, and he does not often call them to an account for't. 'Tis true *Ajax Oileus* is made an Example for
Agam. Act. 3. Blaspheming in a Storm. He is first struck with Thunder, and then carried to the Bottom. The Modern *Poets*, proceed upon the Liberties of *Seneca*, Their Madmen are very seldom reckon'd with. They are profane without Censure, and defie the *Living God* with success. Nay, in some respect they exceed even *Seneca* himself. He flies out only under Impatience; And never falls into these Fits without Torture, and hard Usage. But the *English Stage* are unprovok'd in their Irreligion, and Blaspheme for their Pleasure. But supposing the *Theatres* of *Rome*, and *Athens* as bad as possible, what Defence is all This? Can we argue from *Heathenism* to *Christianity*? How can the *practise* be the same, where the *Rule* is so very different? Have we not a clearer Light to direct us, and greater Punishments to make us afraid. Is there no Distinction between Truth and Fiction, between Majesty and a Pageant? Must God be treated like an Idol, and the *Scriptures* banter'd like *Homers Elysium*, and *Hesiods Theogonia*? Are these the Returns we make Him for his Supernatural Assistance? For the more perfect Discovery of Himself, the stooping of his Greatness, and the Wonders of his Love. Can't we refuse the Happiness without affronting the Offer? Must we add Contempt to Disobedience, and Out-rage to Ingratitude? Is there no Diversion without Insulting the God that made us, the Goodness that would save us, and the Power that can damn us? Let us not flatter our selves, *Words* won't go for Nothing. Profaness is a most Provoking Contempt, and a Crime of the deepest dye. To break through the Laws of a Kingdom is bad enough; But to make *Ballads* upon the *Statute-Book*, and a Jest of Authority, is much worse. Atheists may fancy what they please, but God will *Arise and Maintain his own Cause*, and Vindicate his Honour in due time. {95}

To conclude. Profaness tho' never so well corrected is not to be endured. It ought to be Banish'd without *Proviso*, or Limitation. No pretence of *Character* or Punishment, can excuse it; or any *Stage-Discipline* make it tolerable. 'Tis grating to *Christian Ears*, dishonourable to the Majesty of God, and dangerous in the Example. And in a Word, It tends to no point, unless it be to wear off the horror of the Practise, to weaken the force of Conscience, and teach the Language of the Damn'd. {96}

CHAP. III. {97}

The Clergy abused by the Stage.

The Satyr of the *Stage* upon the *Clergy* is extreamly Particular. In other cases, They level at a single Mark, and confine themselves to Persons. But here their Buffoonry takes an unusual Compass; They shoot Chain'd-shot, and strike at Universals. They play upon the *Character*, and endeavour to expose not only the Men, but the Business. 'Tis true, the Clergy are no small Rub in the *Poets* way. 'Tis by their Ministrations that Religion is perpetuated, the other World Refresh'd, and the Interest of Virtue kept up. Vice will never have an unlimited Range, nor Conscience be totally subdued, as long as People are so easy as to be Priest-ridden! As long as these Men are look'd on as the Messengers of Heaven,

and the Supports of Government, and enjoy their old Pretensions in Credit and Authority; as long as this Grievance continues, the *Stage* must decline of Course, and Atheism give Ground, and Lewdness lie under Censure, and Discouragement. Therefore that Liberty may not be embarrass'd, nor Principles make Head against Pleasure, the *Clergy* must be attack'd, and rendred Ridiculous. {98}

To represent a Person fairly and without disservice to his Reputation, two Things are to be observ'd. First He must not be ill used by others: Nor Secondly be made to Play the Fool Himself. This latter way of Abuse is rather the worst, because here a Man is a sort of *Felo de se*; and appears Ridiculous by his own fault. The Contradiction of both these Methods is practised by the *Stage*. To make sure work on't, they leave no stone unturn'd, The whole *Common place* of Rudeness is run through. They strain their Invention and their Malice: And overlook nothing in ill Nature, or ill Manners, to gain their point.

20. To give some Instances of their Civility! In the *Spanish Fryer*, *Dominick* is made a Pimp for *Lorenzo*; He is call'd a *parcel of Holy Guts and Garbage*, and said to have room in his Belly for his Church steeple.

Dominick has a great many of these Compliments bestow'd upon him. And to make the Railing more effectual, you have a general stroke or two upon the Profession. Would you know what are the *Infallible Church Remedies*. Why 'tis to *Lie Impudently*, and *Swear* {99}
p. 37. *Devoutly*. A little before this *Dominick* Counterfits himself sick, retires, and leaves *Lorenzo* and *Elvira* together; And then the Remark upon the Intrigue follows. 'You see Madam (says
p. 23. *Lorenzo*) 'tis Interest governs all the World. He Preaches against Sin, why? Because he gets by't: He holds his Tongue; why? because so much more is bidden for his Silence. 'Tis but giving a Man his Price, and Principles of *Church* are bought off as easily as they are in *State*: No man will be a Rogue for nothing; but Compensation must be made, so much Gold for so much Honesty; and then a Church-man will break the Rules of Chess. For the Black Bishop, will skip into the White, and the White into the Black, without Considering whether the remove be Lawful.

At last *Dominick* is discover'd to the Company, makes a dishonourable *Exit*, and is push'd off the *Stage* by the Rabble. This is great Justice! The Poet takes care to make him first a Knave, and then an Example: But his hand is not even. For Lewd *Lorenzo* comes off with *Flying Colours*. 'Tis not the Fault which is corrected but the Priest. The Authors Discipline {100} is seldom without a Biass. He commonly gives the *Laity* the Pleasure of an ill Action, and the *Clergy* the Punishment.

To proceed. *Horner* in his general Remarks upon Men, delivers it as a sort of Maxim, *that your Church-man is the greatest Atheist*. In this Play *Harcourt* puts on the Habit of a Divine. *Alitheia* does not think him what he appears; but *Sparkish* who could not see so far, endeavours to divert her Suspicion. *I tell you (says he) this is Ned Harcourt of Cambridge,*
Country Wife p. 6. *you see he has a sneaking Colledge look*. Afterwards his Character is sufficiently abused by
p. 35. *Sparkish* and *Lucy*; but not so much as by Himself. He tells you in an *Aside* he must suit his
Ibid. *Stile to his Coat*. Upon this wise Recollection, He talks like a servile, impertinent Fop,

In the *Orphan*, The Young Soldier *Chamont* calls the Chaplain Sr. *Gravity*, and treats him with the Language of *Thee*, and *Thou*. The Chaplain instead of returning the Contempt; Flatters *Chamont* in his Folly, and pays a Respect to his Pride. The Cavalier encouraged I suppose by this Sneaking, proceeds to all the Excesses of Rudeness,

—*is there not one* {101}
Of all thy Tribe that's Honest in your School?
The Pride of your Superiours makes ye Slaves:
Ye all live Loathsome, Sneaking, Servile lives:
Not free enough to Practise generous Truth,
p. 25. *'Tho ye pretend to teach it to the World.*

After a little Pause for Breath, the Railing improves.

If thou wouldst have me not contemn thy Office,
And Character, think all thy Brethren Knaves,
Thy Trade a Cheat, and thou its worst Professour
p. 26. *Inform me; for I tell thee Priest I'll know.*

The Bottom of the Page is down-right Porters Rhetoric.

Art thou then
So far concern'd in't?—
Curse on that formal steady Villains Face!

Ibid.

*Just so do all Bawds look; Nay Bawds they say;
Can Pray upon Occasion; talk of Heaven;
Turn up their Gogling Eye-balls, rail at Vice;
Dissemble, Lye, and Preach like any Priest,
Art thou a Bawd?*

The *Old Batchelour* has a Throw at the *Dissenting Ministers*. The *Pimp Setter* provides {102} their Habit for *Bellmour* to Debauch *Lætitia*. The Dialogue runs thus.

Bell. *And hast thou Provided Necessaries?*

Setter. *All, all Sir, the large Sanctified Hat, and the little precise Band, with a Swingeing long Spiritual Cloak, to cover Carnal Knavery,—not forgetting the black Patch which Tribulation Spintext wears as I'm inform'd upon one Eye, as a penal Mourning for the—*

*Old Batch. p. 19,
20.*

Offences of his Youth &c.

Barnaby calls another of that Character Mr. *Prig*, and *Fondlewife* carries on the Humour lewdly in *Play-house Cant*; And to hook the *Church of England* into the Abuse, he tacks a

p. 27. Chaplain to the End of the Description.

Lucy gives an other Proof of the *Poets* good Will, but all little Scurilities are not worth

p. 41. repeating.

In the *Double Dealer* the discourse between *Maskwell* and *Saygrace* is very notable. *Maskwell* had a design to cheat *Mellifont* of his Mistress, and engages the Chaplain in the Intrigue: There must be a *Levite* in the cafe; *For without one of them have a finger in't, no*

p. 71. Plot publick, or private, can expect to prosper.

To go on in the order of the *Play*.

Maskwell calls out at *Saygraces* door, Mr. *Saygrace* Mr. *Saygrace*.

The other answers, *Sweet sir I will but pen the last line of an Acrostick, and be with you in* {103} *the twingling of an Ejaculation, in the pronouncing of an Amen. &c.*

Mask. *Nay good Mr. Saygrace do not prolong the time, &c.*

Saygrace. *You shall prevail, I would break off in the middle of a Sermon to do you Pleasure.*

Mask. *You could not do me a greater—except—the business in hand—have you provided a Habit for Mellifont?*

Saygr. *I have, &c.*

Mask. *have you stich'd the Gownsleeve, that he may be puzled and wast time in putting it on?*

Saygr. *I have; the Gown will not be indued without Perplexity.* There is a little more profane, and abusive stuff behind, but let that pass.

The Author of *Don Sebastian* strikes at the *Bishops* through the sides of the *Mufti*, and borrows the Name of the *Turk*, to make the *Christian* ridiculous. He knows the transition from one Religion to the other is natural, the Application easy, and the Audience but too well prepar'd. And should they be at a loss he has elsewhere given them a *Key* to understand him.

Absal. and Achi.

For Priests of all Religions are the same.

However that the Sense may be perfectly intelligible, he makes the *Invective General*, {104} changes the Language, and rails in the stile of *Christendom*.

Benducar speaks,

*—Churchmen tho' they itch to govern all,
Are silly, woful, awkward Polititians,
They make lame Mischief tho' they mean it well.*

So much the better, for 'tis a sign they are not beaten to the Trade. The next Lines are an Illustration taken from a *Taylor*.

p. 24. *Their Intrest is not finely drawn and hid,
But seams are coarsly bungled up and seen.*

This *Benducar* was a rare Spokesman for a first *Minister*; And would have fitted *John* of *Leyden* most exactly!

In the Fourth *Act* the *Mufti* is *Depos'd* and *Captain Tom* reads him a shrewd Lecture at parting. But let that pass:

To go on, *Mustapha* threatens his great Patriark to put him to the Rack. Now you shall hear what an answer of Fortitude and Discretion is made for the *Mufti*.

p. 96. *Mufti. I hope you will not be so barbarous to torture me. We may Preach Suffering to others, but alas holy Flesh is too well pamp'rd to endure Martyrdom.* By the way, if {105} flinching from *Suffering* is a proof of *Holy Flesh*, the *Poet* is much a Saint in his Constitution, witness his *Dedication* of *King Arthur*.

In *Cleomenes*, *Cassandra* rails against Religion at the Altar, and in the midst of a publick Solemnity.

p. 32. *Accurs'd be thou Grass-eating fodderd God!
Accurs'd thy Temple! more accurs'd thy Priests!*

She goes on in a mighty Huff, and charges the Gods and Priesthood with Confederacy, and Imposture, This Rant is very unlikely at *Alexandria*. No People are more bigotted in their Superstition than the *Ægyptians*; Nor any more resenting of such an Affront. This Satyr then must be strangely out of Fashion, and probability. No matter for that; it may work by way of Inference, and be serviceable at Home. And 'tis a handsom Compliment to Libertines and Atheists.

We have much such another swaggering against Priests in *Oedipus*.

*Oedip. p. 38. Why seek I Truth from thee?
The smiles of Courtiers and the Harlots tears,
The Tradesmens Oaths, and Mourning of an Heir,
Are Truths to what Priests tell.
O why has Priesthood privilege to Lie,
And yet to be believ'd!*

And since They are thus Lively, I have one word or two to say to the *Play*. {106}

When *Ægeon* brought the News of King *Polybus's* Death, *Oedipus* was wonderfully surpriz'd at the Relation.

p. 43. *O all ye Powers is't possible? what, Dead!*

And why not? was the Man invulnerable or immortal? Nothing of that: He was only Fourscore and Ten years old, that was his main security. And if you will believe the *Poet* he

*Ibid. Fell like Autumn Fruit that mellow'd long,
Ev'n wondred at because he dropt no sooner.*

And which is more, *Oedipus* must be acquainted with his Age, having spent the greatest part of his time with him at *Corinth*. So that in short, the pith of the Story lies in this Circumstance. A Prince of Ninety years was dead, and one who was wondred at for dying no sooner. And now why so much Exclamation upon this occasion? Why must all the *Powers* in Being be Summon'd in to make the News Credible? This *Posse* of *Interjections* {107} would have been more seasonably raised if the Man had been alive; for that by the *Poets* Confession had been much the stranger Thing. However *Oedipus* is almost out of his Wits about the Matter, and is Urgent for an account of Particulars.

*Ibid. That so the Tempest of my joys may rise
By just degrees, and hit at last the Stars.*

This is an empty ill proportion'd Rant, and without warrant in Nature or Antiquity. *Sophocles* does not represent *Oedipus*. in such Raptures of Extravagant surprize. In the next page there's another Flight about *Polybus* his Death somewhat like This. It begins with a *Noverint Universi*. You would think *Oedipus* was going to make a *Bond*.

Know, be it known to the limits of the World;

This is scarce Sence, be it known.

*Yet farther, let it pass yon dazling roof
The Mansion of the Gods, and strike them deaf
With Everlasting peals of Thundring joy.*

This Fustian puts me in mind of a *Couplet* of *Taylor's* the *Water Poet*, which for the Beauty {108} of the Thought are not very unlike.

*What if A Humble Bee should chance to strike,
With the But-End of an Antartick Pole.*

I grant Mr. *Dryden* clears himself of this *Act* in his *Vindication* of the *Duke of Guise*. But then why did he let these crude Fancies pass uncorrected in his Friend? Such fluttering ungovern'd Transports, are fitter for a Boys *Declamation* than a *Tragedy*. But I shall trouble my self no farther with this *Play*. To return therefore to the Argument in Hand. In the *Provok'd Wife* Sir *John Brute* puts on the Habit of a Clergyman, counterfeits himself drunk; quarrels with the *Constable*, and is knock'd down and seiz'd. He rails, swears, curses, is lewd and profane, to all the Heights of Madness and Debauchery: The *Officers* and *Justice* break jests upon him, and make him a sort of Representative of his *Order*.

Provok'd Wife. p.
45, 46, 52, 52.

This is rare *Protestant* Diversion, and very much for the Credit of the *Reformation!* The Church of *England*, I mean the Men of Her, is the only Communion in the World, that will endure such Insolences as these: The *Relapse* is if possible more singularly abusive. *Bull* the Chaplain wishes the Married couple joy, in Language horribly Smutty and Profane. To transcribe it would blot the Paper to much. In the next *Page* *Young Fashion* desires *Bull* to make hast to Sr. *Tun-belly*. He answers very decently, *I fly my good Lord*. At the end of this *Act* *Bull* speaks to the Case of *Bigamy*, and determines it thus. *I do confess to take two Husbands for the Satisfaction of — is to commit the Sin of Exorbitancy, but to do it for the peace of the Spirit, is no more then to be Drunk by way of Physick; besides to prevent a Parents wrath is to avoid the Sin of Disobedience, for when the Parent is Angry, the Child is froward:* The Conclusion is insolently Profane, and let it lie: The spirit of this Thought is borrow'd from Ben *Johnsons Bartholomew-Fair*, only the Profaness is mightily improved, and the Abuse thrown off the *Meeting House*, upon the *Church*. The Wit of the *Parents* *being angry*, and the *Child froward*, is all his own. *Bull* has more of this Heavy stuff upon his Hands. He tells *Young Fashion* *Your Worships goodness is unspeakable, yet there is one thing seems a point of Conscience; And Conscience is a tender Babe. &c.*

Relapse. p. 74.

p. 75.

p. 86.

p. 97.

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These *Poets* I observe when They grow lazy, and are inclined to Nonsense, they commonly get a Clergy-man to speak it. Thus they pass their own Dulness for Humour, and gratifie their Ease, and their Malice at once. *Coupler* instructs *Young Fashion* which way *Bull* was to be managed. He tells him as *Chaplains go now, he must be brib'd high, he wants Money, Preferment, Wine, and a Whore. Let this be procured for him, and I'll warrant thee he* *speaks Truth like an Oracle.*

89.

{110}

A few Lines forward, the Rudeness is still more gross, and dash'd with Smut, the common *Play-house* Ingredient. 'Tis not long before *Coupler* falls into his old Civilities. He tells *Young Fashion, Last Night the Devil run away with the Parson of Fatgoose Living.* Afterwards *Bull* is plentifully rail'd on in down right *Billings-gate:* made to appear Silly, Servile, and Profane; and treated both in Posture and Language, with the utmost Contempt.

p. 94.

p. 95, 97, 105.

I could cite more *Plays* to this purpose; But these are sufficient to show the Temper of the *Stage*.

Thus we see how hearty these People are in their Ill Will! How they attack Religion under every Form, and pursue the Priesthood through all the Subdivisions of Opinion. Neither *Jews* nor *Heathens, Turks* nor *Christians, Rome* nor *Geneva, Church* nor *Conventicle*, can escape them. They are afraid least Virtue should have any Quarters undisturbed, Conscience any Corner to retire to, or God be Worship'd in any Place. 'Tis true their Force seldom carries up to their Malice: They are too eager in the Combat to be happy in the the Execution. The Abuse is often both gross and clumsy, and the Wit as wretched as the Manners. Nay Talking won't always satisfy them. They must ridicule the *Habit* as well as

{111}

the Function, of the Clergy. 'Tis not enough for them to play the Fool unless they do it in *Pontificalibus*. The Farce must be play'd in a Religious Figure, and under the Distinctions of their Office! Thus the Abuse strikes stronger upon the sense; The contempt is better spread, and the little *Idea* is apt to return upon the same Appearance.

And now does this Rudeness go upon any Authorities? Was the Priesthood alwaies thought thus insignificant, and do the Antient Poets palt it in this Manner? This Point shall be tried, I shall run through the most considerable Authors that the Reader may see how they treat the Argument. *Homer* stands highest upon the Roll, and is the first Poet both in Time, and Quality; I shall therefore begin with him. 'Tis true he wrote no *Plays*; but for Decency, {112} Practise, and general Opinion, his Judgment may well be taken, Let us see then how the *Priests* are treated in his *Poem*, and what sort of Rank they hold.

Chryses Apollo's Priest appears at a Council of War with his Crown and guilt Scepter. He offers a valuable Ransom for his Daughter; and presses his Relation to *Apollo*. All the Army excepting *Agamemnon* are willing to consider his Character, and comply with his Proposals. But this *General* refuses to part with the Lady, and sends away her Father with disrespect. *Apollo* thought himself affronted with this Usage, and revenges the Indignity in a Plague.

om. II. α. p. 3. & dein.
Ed. Screvel.

οὔνεκα τὸν Χρῦσην ἠτίμησ' ἀρητῆρα
Ἄτρείδης.

Adrastus and *Amphius* the Sons of *Merops* a *Prophet*, commanded a considerable extent of Country in *Troas*, and brought a Body of Men to King *Priam's* Assistance. And *Ennomus* the Augur commanded the Troops of *Mysia* for the Besieged.

II. B. p. 91.
Ibid. p. 92.

II. E. p. 154, 155. *Phegeus* and *Idæus* were the Sons of *Dares* the Priest of *Vulcan*. They appear in an Equipage of Quality, and charge *Diomedes* the third Hero in the *Grecian Army*. *Idæus* after {113} the Misfortune of the Combat, is brought off by *Vulcan*. *Dolopion* was Priest to *Scamander*, and regarded like the God he *Belong'd* to,

II. E. p. 154, 155.

Ibid. p. 158.

Θεὸς δ' ὥς τίετο δῆμῳ.

Ulysses in his return from *Troy*, took *Ismarus* by Storm, and makes Prize of the whole Town, excepting *Maron*, and his Family. This *Maron* was *Apollo's* Priest, and preserv'd out of respect to his Function: He presents *Ulysses* nobly in Gold, Plate, and Wine; And this Hero makes an honourable Mention of him, both as to his Quality, and way of Living.

Odys. I p. 174,
181.

These are all the *Priests* I find Mentioned in *Homer*; And we see how fairly the Poet treats them, and what sort of Figure they made in the World.

To the Testimony of *Homer*, I shall joyn that of *Virgil*, who tho' He follows at a great distance of Time, was an Author of the first Rank, and wrote the same kind of Poetry with the other. Now *Virgil* tho' he is very extraordinary in his Genius, in the Compass of his Learning, in the Musick and Majesty of his Stile; yet the exactness of his Judgment seems to be his peculiar, and most distinguishing Talent. He had the truest Relish imaginable, and {114} always described Things according to *Nature*, *Custom*, and *Decency*. He wrote with the greatest Command of *Temper*, and *Superiority* of good *Sense*. He is never lost in smock and Rapture, nor overborn with Poetick Fury; but keeps his Fancy warm and his Reason Cool at the same time. Now this great Master of Propriety never Mentions any *Priests* without some *Marks of Advantage*. To give some Instances as they lie in Order.

When the *Trojans* were consulting what was to be done with the *Wooden-Horse*, and some were for lodging it within the Walls; *Laocoon* appears against this Opinion at the Head of a numerous Party, harangues with a great deal of Sense, and Resolution, and examines the *Machine* with his Lance. In fine, He advised so well, and went so far in the Discovery of the Stratagem; that if the *Trojans* had not been ungovernable, and as it were stupified by Fate and Folly, he had saved the Town.

Ænid. 2.

Trojaque nunc staret Priamique arx alta maneres.

This *Laocoon* was *Neptunes* Priest, and either Son to *Priam*, or Brother to *Anchises*, who {115} was of the Royal Family. The next we meet with is *Pantheus Apollo's* Priest. He is call'd *Pantheus Otrides*, which is an argument his Father was well known. His acquaintance with *Æneas* to whose House he was carrying his little Grandson, argues him to be a Person of Condition. *Pantheus* after a short relation of the Posture of Affairs, joyns *Æneas's* little Handful of Men, charges in with him when the Town was seiz'd, and fired, and at last dies Handsomly in the Action.

Æneid 2.

Ibid.

The next is *Anius* King of *Delos*, Prince and *Priest* in one Person.

Aeneid. 3. *Rex Anius, rex idem hominum Phœbique Sacerdos.*

When *Aeneas* was outed at *Troy*, and in quest of a new Country, he came to an Anchor at *Delos*; *Anius* meets him in a Religious Habit, receives him civilly, and obliges him with his

Ibid. Oracle. In the Book now Mention'd we have another of *Apollo's* Priests, his name is *Helenus*, Son of *Priam* and King of *Chaonia*. He entertains *Aeneas* with a great deal of Friendship, and Magnificence, gives him many material Directions, and makes him a rich Present at parting. To this Prince if you Please we may joyn a Princess of the same {116}

Aenead. 1st. Profession; and that is *Rhea Silvia* Daughter to *Numitor* King of *Alba*, and Mother to *Romulus*, and *Remus*. This Lady *Virgil* calls—*regina Sacerdos* a Royal Priestess. Farther.

Æn. 6. When *Aeneas* made a Visit upon Business to the *shades Below*, He had for his Guide, the famous *Sibylla Cumæa*, who Belong'd to *Apollo*. When he came thither amongst the rest of his Acquaintance he saw *Polybætes* a Priest of *Ceres*. This *Polybætes* is mention'd with the three Sons of *Antenor*, with *Glaucus*, and *Thersilochus*, who Commanded in Cheif in the *Trojan Auxiliaries*: So that you may know his Quality by his Company. When *Aeneas* had passed on farther, he saw *Orpheus* in *Elysium*: The Poet calls him the *Thracian Priest*.

Ibid. There needs not be much said of *Orpheus*; He is famous for his skill in Musick, Poetry, and Religious Ceremonies, He was one of the Hero's of Antiquity, and a principal Adventurer in the Expedition for the *Golden-Fleece*.

In the Seventh *Aeneid* the Poet gives in a List of the Princes, and General Officers who came into the Assistance of *Turnus*; Amongst the rest he tells you,

Quin & Marrubia venit de gente Sacerdos, {117}
Archippi regis missu fortissimus Umbro.

This *Priest* he commends both for his Courage and his skill in Physick, Natural Magick, and Philosophy. He understood the Virtue of *Plants*, and could lay Passions and Poysons asleep. His death was extreamly regretted by his Country, who made a Pompous and Solemn Mourning for him.

Aeneid. 7. *Te nemus Angitiæ, vitrea te Fucinus unda,*
Te liquidi flevere lacus.

Lib. 1. The *Potitij*, and the *Pinarij* Mention'd *Aeneid 8.* were as *Livy* observes, chosen out of the first Quality of the Country, and had the *Priesthood* hereditary to their Family. To go on, *Aemonides*, and *Chloreus* make a glittering Figure in the *Feild*, and are very remarkable for the Curiosity of their Armour, and Habit. *Aemonides's Finery* is passed over in general.

Aeneid. 10. *Totus collucens veste atque insignibus armis.*

But the Equipage of *Chloreus* is flourish'd out at Length, and as I remember admired by *Macrobius* as one of the Master peices of *Virgil* in Description. In short; He is all Gold, {118}

Aeneid. 11. Purple, Scarlet, and Embroydery; and as rich as Nature, Art, and Rhetorick can make him. To these I might add *Rhamnes*, *Asylas*, and *Tolumnius*, who were all Persons of Condition,

Aeneid. 9. 10. 11. and had Considerable Posts in the Army.

It may be these last were not strictly *Priests*. Their Function was rather *Prophetick*. They interpreted the Resolutions of the Gods, by the voice of Birds, the Inspection of Sacrifices, and their Observations of Thunder. This made their Character counted Sacred, and their Relation to the Deity particular. And therefore the *Romans* ranged them in the *Order* of the

Guther. de jure veter. pontif. *Priests.*

Thus we see the admired *Homer*, and *Virgil*, always treat the *Priests* fairly, and describe them in Circumstances of Credit: If 'tis said that the Instances I have given are mostly in Names of *Fiction*, and in Persons who had no Being, unless in the Poets fancy. I answer, I am not concern'd in the History of the Relation. Whether the Muster is true or false, 'tis all one to my purpose. This is certain, had the *Priests* been People of such slender Consideration as our *Stage Poets* endeavour to make them; they must have appear'd in a different Figure; or rather have been left out as too little for that sort of *Poem*. But *Homer* and *Virgil* had other Sentiments of Matters: They were governed by the Reason of Things, and the common usage of the World. They knew the *Priesthood* a very reputable Employment, and always esteem'd as such. To have used the *Priests* ill, They must have call'd their own Discretion in question: They must have run into impropriety, and fallen foul upon Custom, Manners, and Religion. Now 'twas not their way to play the Knave and the Fool together: They had more Sense than to do a silly Thing, only for the Satisfaction of doing an ill one. {119}

I shall now go on to enquire what the Greek *Tragedians* will afford us upon the present Subject. There are but two *Plays* in *Æschylus* where the *Ministers* of the Gods are represented. The one is in his *Eumenides*, and here *Apollo's Priestess* only opens the *Play* and appears no more. The other is in his *Seige of Thebes*. In this Tragedy the *Prophet Amphiaraus* is one of the Seven Commanders against the *Town*. He has the Character of a Modest, Brave Officer, and of one who rather affected to be great in Action, than Noise.

In *Sophocle's Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Jupiter's Priest* has a short part. He appears at the Head {120} of an *Address*, and delivers the Harangue by the King's Order. *Oedipus* in his Passion treats *Tiresias* ruggedly; *Tiresias* replies with Spirit and Freedom; and plainly tell him he was none of his *Servant* but *Apollo's*.
Oedip. Tyr. p. 148.

Ibid. 169. Ου γάρ τί σοι ζῶ δοῦλος ἀλλά λοξία

And here we may observe that all *Oedipus* his reproaches relate to *Tiresias's* person, there is no such Thing as a general Imputation upon his Function: But the *English Oedipus* p. 38. makes the *Priesthood* an Imposturous Profession; and rails at the whole *Order*. In the next Tragedy, *Creon* charges *Tiresias* with subornation; and that he intended to make a Penny of his Prince. The *Priest* holds up his Character, speaks to the ill Usage with an Air of Gravity, *Antig. p. 250, 258.* calls the King *Son*, and foretells him his Misfortune.

To go on to *Euripides*, for *Sophocles* has nothing more. This Poet in his *Phænissæ* brings in *Tiresias* with a very unacceptable report from the *Oracle*. He tells *Creon* that either his Son must die, or the City be lost. *Creon* keeps himself within Temper, and gives no ill Language. And even when *Mœnecius* had kill'd himself, he neither complains of the Gods, {121} nor reproaches the *Prophet*.
Eurip. Phœniss. p. 158, 159.

In his *Bacchæ*, *Tiresias* is honourably used by *Cadmus*; And *Pentheus* who threatned him, is afterwards punish'd for his Impiety. In another *Play Apollo's Priestess* comes in upon a creditable account, and is respectfully treated. *Iphigenia Agamemnon's* Daughter is made *Priestess* to *Diana*; and her Father thought himself happy in her Employment. These are all the *Priests* I remember represented in *Euripides*. To conclude the antient *Tragedians* together: *Seneca* seems to follow the Conduct of *Euripides*, and secures *Tiresias* from being outraged. *Oedipus* carries it smoothly with him and only desires him to out with the Oracle, and declare the Guilty Person. This *Tiresias* excuses, and afterwards the Heat of the expostulation falls upon *Creon*. *Calchas* if not strictly a *Priest*, was an *Augur*, and had a Religious Relation. Upon this account *Agamemnon* calls him *interpres Deorum*; The Reporter of Fate, and the God's *Nuntio*; And gives him an honourable Character.
Bacch. Act. 1. Act. Jon. Act 4. Iphig. in Aulid. & in Taur. Oedip. Troad. A. 2. p. 193.

This Author is done; I shall therefore pass on to the *Comedians*. And here, *Aristophanes* is so declared an Atheist, that I think him not worth the citing. Besides, he has but little upon the Argument: And where he does engage it, the *Priests* have every jot as good Quarter as the Gods. As for *Terence*, he neither represents any *Priests*, nor so much as mentions them. *Chrysalus* in *Plautus* describes *Theotimus Diana's Priest*, as a Person of Quality, and Figure. In his *Rudens* we have a *Priestess* upon the *Stage*, which is the only Instance in this *Poet*. She entertains the two Women who were wrecked, and is commended for her hospitable Temper. The Procurer *Labrax* swaggers that he will force the Temple, and begins the Attack. *Demades* a Gentleman, is surprized at his Insolence, and threatens him with Revenge. The report of so bold an attempt made him cry out. *Quis homo est tanta Confidentia; qui sacerdotem andeat Violare?* It seems in those Days 'twas very infamous to affront a *Holy Character*, and break in upon the *Guards* of Religion! Thus we see how the Antient Poets behaved themselves in the Argument. *Priests* seldom appear in their *Plays*. And when they come 'tis Business of Credit that brings them. They are treated like Persons of Condition. They Act up to their Relation; neither sneak, nor prevaricate, nor do any thing unbecoming their Office.
Plut. Ran. Aves. Bacchid. Act. 2. 5. Rud. A. 1. 5. A. 3. Act [.....]

And now a word or two of the *Moderns*. {123}

The famous *Corneille* and *Moliere*, bring no *Priests* of any kind upon the *Stage*. The former leaves out *Tiresias* in his *Oedipus*: Tho' this Omission balks his Thought, and maims the *Fable*. What therefore but the regard to Religion could keep him from the use of this Liberty? As I am informed the same Reservedness is practis'd in *Spain*, and *Italy*: And that there is no Theatre in *Europe* excepting the *English*, that entertains the *Audience* with *Priests*.

This is certainly the right method, and best secures the Outworks of Piety. The Holy Function is much too Solemn to be play'd with. Christianity is for no Fooling, neither the *Place*, the *Occasion* nor the *Actors* are fit for such a Representation. To bring the *Church* into the *Playhouse*, is the way to bring the *Playhouse* into the *Church*. 'Tis apt to turn Religion into *Romance*, and make unthinking People conclude that all Serious Matters are nothing but *Farce*, *Fiction*, and *Design*. 'Tis true the *Tragedies* at *Athens* were a sort of

Rud. A. 4. S. 7. *Homilies*, and design'd for the Instruction of the People: To this purpose they are all Clean, Solemn, and Sententious. *Plautus* likewise informs us that the *Comedians* used to teach the People Morality. The case standing thus 'tis less surprizing to find the *Priests* sometimes {124} Appear. The Play had grave Argument, and Pagan Indulgence, to plead in its behalf. But our *Poets* steer by an other *Compass*. Their Aim is to *destroy* Religion, their *Preaching* is against *Sermons*; and their Business, but Diversion at the best. In short, Let the Character be never so well managed no Christian *Priest* (especially,) ought to come upon the *Stage*. For where the Business is an Abuse, and the place a Profanation; the demureness of the Manner, is but a poor excuse. Monsieur *Racine* is an Exception to what I have observ'd in *France*. In his *Athalia*, *Joida* the *High-Priest* has a large part. But then the Poet does him Justice in his Station; he makes him Honest and Brave, and gives him a shining Character throughout. *Mathan* is another *Priest* in the same Tragedy. He turns Renegado, and revolts from God to *Baal*. He is a very ill Man but makes a considerable Appearance, and is one of the Top of *Athaliahs* Faction. And as for the *Blemishes* of his Life, they all stick upon his own Honour, and reach no farther than his Person: In fine the *Play* is a very Religious Poem; 'Tis upon the Matter all *Sermon* and *Anthem*. And if it were not designed for the *Theatre*, I have nothing to object.

Let us now just look over our own Country-men till King *Charles* the Second. *Shakespear* {125} takes the Freedom to represent the *Clergy* in several of his *Plays*: But for the most part he holds up the *Function*, and makes them neither Act, nor Suffer any thing unhandsom. In one Play or two He is much bolder with the *Order*. *Sr. *Hugh Evans* a *Priest* is too Comical and Secular in his Humour. However he understands his Post, and converses with the Freedom of a Gentleman. I grant in *Loves Labour lost* the *Curate* plays the Fool egregiously; And so does the *Poet* too, for the whole *Play* is a very silly one. In the History of Sr. *John Old-Castle*, Sr. *John, Parson* of *Wrotham* Swears, Games, Wenches, Pads, Tilts, and Drinks: This is extremely bad, and like the Author of the *Relapse* &c. Only with this difference; *Shakespears*, Sr. *John* has some Advantage in his Character. He appears Loyal, and Stout; He brings in Sr. *John Acton*, and other Rebels Prisoners. He is rewarded by the King, and the Judge uses him Civilly and with Respect. In short He is represented Lewd, but not Little; And the Disgrace falls rather on the Person, then the Office. But the *Relapsers* business, is to sink the Notion, and Murder the Character, and make the Function despicable: So that upon the whole, *Shakespear* is by much the gentiler Enemy. {126}

Measure for Measure.
Much a do about Nothing.
Twelf-Night.
Henry 4th pt. 1st.
Hen. 6. pt. 3d.
Romeo and Juliet.
 * *Merry Wives of Windsor.*

Towards the End of the *Silent Woman*, *Ben Johnson* brings in a *Clergy-man*, and a *Civilian* in their *Habits*. But then he premises a handsom Excuse, acquaints the *Audience*, that the *Persons* are but borrowed, and throws in a *Salvo* for the Honour of either profession. In the Third *Act*, we have another *Clergy-man*; He is abused by *Cutberd*, and a little by *Morose*. But his Lady checks him for the ill Breeding of the Usage. In his *Magnetick Lady*, *Tale of a Tub*, and *Sad Sheapherd*, there are *Priests* which manage but untowardly. But these *Plays* were his *last Works*, which Mr. *Dryden* calls *his Dotages*. This Author has no more *Priests*, and therefore we'll take Leave. {127}

Essay of Dramat. &c.

Beaumont and *Fletcher* in the *Faithful Shepheardess*, *The False one*, *A Wife for a Month*, and the *Knight of Malta*, give, us both *Priests* and *Bishops*, part Heathen and part Christian: But all of them save their Reputation and make a creditable Appearance. The *Priests* in the *Scornful Lady*, and *Spanish Curate* are ill used. The first is made a Fool, and the other a Knave. Indeed they seem to be brought in on purpose to make sport, and disserve Religion. And so much for *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*. {127}

Thus we see the English *Stage* has always been out of Order, but never to the Degree 'tis at present.

I shall now take Leave of the *Poets*, and touch a little upon History and Argument.

And here I shall briefly shew the Right the *Clergy* have to Regard, and fair Usage, upon these Three following Accounts.

I. *Because of their Relation to the Deity.*

II. *Because of the Importance of their Office.*

III. *They have prescription for their Privilege. Their function has been in Possession of Esteem in all Ages, and Countries.*

I. *Upon the account of their Relation to the Deity.*

The Holy *Order* is appropriated to the Divine Worship: And a *Priest* has the peculiar Honour to *Belong* to nothing less then God Almighty. Now the Credit of the *Service* always

risers in proportion to the Quality and Greatness of the Master. And for this Reason 'tis more Honourable to serve a Prince, than a private Person. To apply this. Christian *Priests* are the Principal Ministers of Gods Kingdom. They Represent his Person, Publish his Laws, Pass his Pardons, and Preside in his Worship. To expose a *Priest* much more to burlesque his Function, is an Affront to the Diety. All indignities done to Ambassadors, are interpreted upon their Masters, and reveng'd as such. To outrage the *Ministers* of Religion, is in effect to deny the Being, or Providence of God; And to treat the *Bible* like a *Romance*. As much as to say the Stories of an other World are nothing but a little *Priest-craft*, and therefore I am resolv'd to Lash the Profession. But to droll upon the Institutions of God; To make his Ministers cheap, and his Authority contemptible; To do this is little less than open defiance. 'Tis a sort of Challenge to awaken his Vengeance, to exert his Omnipotence; and do Right to his Honour. If the Profession of a Courtier was unfashionable, a Princes Commission thought a Scandal, and the *Magistracy* laugh'd at for their Business; the Monarch had need look to himself in time; He may conclude his Person is despis'd, his Authority but a Jest, and the People ready either to change their Master, or set up for themselves. Government and Religion, no less than *Trade* Subsist upon Reputation. 'Tis true God can't be Deposed, neither does his Happiness depend upon Homage; But since he does not Govern by Omnipotence, since he leaves Men to their Liberty, Acknowledgment must sink, and Obedience decline, in proportion to the Lessenings of Authority. How provoking an Indignity of this kind must be, is easy to imagine. {128}

II. The Functions and Authorities of Religion have a great Influence on *Society*. The Interest of this Life lies very much in the Belief of another. So that if our Hopes were bounded with *Sight*, and *Sense*, if *Eternity* was out of the Case, General Advantage, and Publick Reason, and Secular Policy, would oblige us to be just to the *Priesthood*. For *Priests*, and Religion always stand and fall together; Now Religion is the Basis of Government, and Man is a wretched Companion without it. When Conscience takes its Leave, Good Faith, and Good Nature goes with it. *Atheism* is all Self, Mean and Mercenary. The *Atheist* has no *Hereafter*, and therefore will be sure to make the most of this World. Interest, and Pleasure, are the Gods he Worships, and to these he'll Sacrifice every Thing else. {129}

III. The *Priest-hood* ought to be fairly treated, because it has prescription for this Privilege. This is so evident a Truth, that there is hardly any Age or Country, but affords sufficient Proof. A just Discourse upon this Subject would be a large Book, but I shall just skim it over and pass on. and {130}

1st. For the Jews. *Josephus* tells us the Line of *Aaron* made some of the best Pedigrees, and that the *Priests* were reckon'd among the Principal Nobility. *De Bell. Judaic.*

By the Old *Testament* we are inform'd that the *High-Priest* was the Second Person in the Kingdom. The Body of that *Order* had Civil Jurisdiction. And the *Priests* continued Part of the Magistracy in the time of our Saviour. *Jehoiada* the *High-Priest* was thought an Alliance big enough for the Royal Family. He Married the Kings Daughter; His Interest and Authority was so great that he broke the Usurpation under *Athalia*; and was at the Head of the Restauration. And lastly the *Assamonean* Race were both Kings and Priests. *Deut. 17. 9. 20. 2.*
Chron. 19. 8.
Math. 27. Act. 4.
Vid. seldon de Josephh.

To Proceed. The *Ægyptian* Monarchy was one of the most antient and best polish'd upon Record. Here Arts and Sciences, the Improvement of Reason, and the Splendor of Life had its first Rise. Hither 'twas that *Plato* and most of the Celebrated Philosophers travel'd for their Learning. Now in this Kingdom the *Priests* made no vulgar Figure. These with the Military Men were the Body of the Nobility, and Gentry. Besides the Business of Religion, the *Priests* were the Publick *Annalists* and kept the Records of *History*, and *Government*. They were many of them bred in Courts, formed the Education of their Princes, and assisted at their Councils. When *Joseph* was Viceroy of *Ægypt*, and in all the height of his Pomp, and Power, the King Married him to the Daughter of *Potipherah* *Priest* of *On*. The Text says *Pharaoh gave him her to Wife*. This shows the Match was deliberate Choice, and Royal Favour, no stooping of Quality, or Condescensions of Love, on *Joseph's* Side. {131}

Diod. Sic.
Gen. 41.

To pass on. The *Persian Magi*, and the *Druids*, of *Gaul* were of a Religious Profession, and consign'd to the Service of the Gods. Now all these were at the upper End of the Government, and had a great share of Regard and Authority. The Body of the *Indians* as *Diodorus Siculus* reports is divided into Seven parts. The first is the *Clan* of the *Bramines*, the *Priests*, and Philosophers of that Country. 'This Division is the least in Number, but the first in Degree. Their Privileges are extraordinary. They are exempted from Taxes, and Live Independent of Authority. They are called to the Sacrifices, and take care of Funerals; They are look'd on as the Favourites of the Gods, and thought skillful in the Doctrins of an other Life: And upon these accounts are largely consider'd in Presents, and Acknowledgment. The *Priestesses* of *Argos* were so Considerable, that *Time* is dated from them, and they stand for a Reign in *Chronology*. The Brave *Romans* are commended by *Polybius* for their Devotion to the Gods; Indeed they gave great Proof of their being in earnest; For when thier Cheif Magistrates, their Consuls themselves, met any of the *Vestals*, they held down {132}

Porph. deAbst. Lib. 4.
Cæsar de Bell. Gall. Lib. 6.
Lib. 6.

The *Priest-hood* was for sometime confin'd to the *Patrician* Order, that is to the Upper Nobility. And afterwards the *Emperours* were generally *High-Priests* themselves. The Romans in distress endeavour'd to make Friends with *Coriolanus* whom they had banish'd before. To this purpose they furnish'd out several *Solemn* Embasayes. Now the Regulation of the Ceremony, and the Remarks of the Historian; plainly discover that the *Body* of the *Priests* were thought not inferior to any other. One Testimony from *Tully* and I have done. {133}

Dion. Halic.

Pro Dom. ad Pontif.

'Tis in his Harangue to the College of the *Priests*. *Cum multa divinitus, Pontifices, a majoribus nostris inventa atque instituta sunt; tum nihil preclarior quam quòd vos eosdem et Religionibus Deorum immortalium, & summe Rei publicæ præesse voluerunt.* &c. i. e. *Amongst the many laudable Instances of our Ancestors Prudence, and Capacity, I know nothing better contrived then their placing your Order at the Helm, and setting the same Persons at the Head both of Religion, and Government.* Thus we see what *Rank* the *Priest-hood* held among the *Jews*, and how Nature taught the *Heathen* to regard it. And is it not now possess'd of as fair pretences as formerly? Is Christianity any disadvantage to the Holy Office. And does the Dignity of a Religion lessen the Publick Administrations in't? The *Priests of the most High God* and of *Idolatry*, can't be compared without Injury. To argue for the Preference is a Reflection upon the *Creed*. 'Tis true the *Jewish Priest-hood* was instituted by God: But every Thing Divine is not of Equal Consideration. *Realities* are more valuable than *Types*; And as the Apostle argues, the *Order of Melchizedeck* is greater than that of *Aaron*. The Author, (I mean the immediate one,) the Authorities, the Business, and the End, of the *Christian Priest-hood*, are more Noble than those of the *Jewish*. For is not *Christ* greater than *Moses*, *Heaven* better than the Land of *Canaan*, and the *Eucharist* to be prefer'd to all the *Sacrifices*, and *Expiations* of the *Law*? Thus the Right, and the Reason of Things stands. And as for *Fact*, the *Christian World* have not been backward in their Acknowledgments. Ever since the first Conversion of Princes, the *Priest-hood* has had no small share of Temporal Advantage. The *Codes*, *Novels*, and *Church History*, are Sufficient Evidence what Sense *Constantine* and his Successors had of these Matters. But I shall not detain the *Reader* in remote Instances. {134}

Hebr. 7.

To proceed then to Times and Countries more generally known. The People of *France* are branched into three Divisions, of these the *Clergy*, are the First. And in consequence of this Privilege, at the Assembly of the *States*, they are first admitted to Harangue before the King.

Davila Filmers
Freeholders Grand

Inq.
Miræus De Statu
Relig. Christ.
Fletchers Embassy.

In *Hungary* the *Bishops* are very Considerable, and some of them great Officers of *State*. In *Poland* they are *Senators* that is part of the Upper *Nobless*. In *Muscovy* the *Bishops* have an Honourable Station; and the Present Czar is descended from the *Patriarchal* Line. I suppose I need say nothing of *Italy*. In *Spain* the *Sees* generally are better endowed than elsewhere, and Wealth alwaies draws Consideration. The *Bishops* hold their Lands by a Military Noble *Tenure*, and are excused from Personal Attendance. And to come toward an end; They are Earls and Dukes in *France*, and Sovereign Princes, in *Germany*. In *England* the *Bishops* are Lords of Parliament: And the *Law* in plain words distinguishes the *Upper House* into the *Spiritual* and *Temporal Nobility*. And several *Statutes* call the *Bishops Nobles* by direct Implication. To mention nothing more, their *Heraldry* is regulated by *Garter*, and *Blazon'd* by *Stones*, which none under the *Nobility* can pretend to. In this Country of ours, Persons of the First Quality have been in *Orders*; To give an Instance of some few. *Odo* Brother to *William* the *Conquerour* was *Bishop* of *Baieux*, and Earl of *Kent*. King *Stephens* Brother was *Bishop* of *Winchester*. *Nevill Arch-Bishop* of *York* was Brother to the Great Earl of *Warwick*, and *Cardinal Pool* was of the Royal Family. To come a little lower, and to our own Times. And here we may reckon not a few Persons of Noble Descent in Holy *Orders*. Witness the *Berklyes*, *Comptons*, *Montagues*, *Crews*, and *Norths*; The *Annesleys*, *Finches*, *Grayhams* &c. And as for the Gentry, there are not many good Families in *England*, but either have, or have had a *Clergy-man* in them, {135}

Puffendor
Introduction à
l'Histoire.
Heylins Cosgmog.

2, Hen. 8. cap. 22.
26, Hen. 8 cap 2.
1. Edw. 6. cap. 12.
&c. Preamb.

In short; The *Priest-hood* is the profession of a Gentleman. A *Parson* notwithstanding the ignorant Pride of some People, is a Name of Credit, and Authority, both in Religion, and *Law*. The *Addition* of *Clerk* is at least equal to that of Gentleman. Were it otherwise the *Profession* would in many cases be a kind of Punishment. But the *Law* is far from being so singular as to make *Orders* a Disadvantage to *Degree*. No, The Honour of the Family continues, and the *Heraldry* is every jot as safe in the *Church*, as 'twas in the *State*. And yet when the *Laity* are taken leave of, not *Gentleman* but *Clerk* is usually written. This Custom is an argument the Change is not made for the worse, that the *Spiritual Distinction* is as valuable as the other; And to speak Modestly, that the first *Addition* is not lost, but Cover'd. Did the Subject require it, this Point might be farther made good. For the stile of a higher *Secular Honour* is continued as well with *Priest-hood* as without it. A *Church-man* who is either *Baronet*, or *Baron*, writes himself so, notwithstanding His *Clerkship*. Indeed we can't well imagine the *Clergy* degraded from Paternal Honour without a strange Reflection on the Country; without supposing *Julian* at the Helm, the *Laws* Antichristian, and *Infidelity* in the very *Constitution*. To make the Ministers of Religion less upon the score of their Function, would be a Penalty on the *Gospel*, and a contempt of the God of Christianity. 'Tis our Saviours reasoning; *He that despises you, despises Me, and he that Despises Me,* {137}

I hope what I have offer'd on this Subject will not be misunderstood. There is no Vanity in necessary Defence. To wipe off Aspersions, and rescue Things from Mistake, is but bare Justice: Besides, where the Honour of God, and the Publick Interest are concern'd, a Man is bound to speak. To argue from a resembling Instance. He that has the Kings Commission ought to Maintain it. To let it suffer under Rudeness is to betray it. To be tame and silent in such cases, is not Modesty but Meanness, Humility obliges no Man to desert his Trust; To throw up his Privilege, and prove false to his Character. And is our Saviours Authority inferiour to that of Princes? Are the Kingdoms of this World more Glorious than that of the next? And can the Concerns of Time be greater than those of Eternity? If not, the reasoning above mention'd must hold in the Application. {138}

And now by this time I conceive the ill Manners of the *Stage* may be in some measure apparent; And that the *Clergy* deserve none of that Coarse Usage which it puts upon them. I confess I know no *Profession* that has made a more creditable Figure, that has better Customs for their Privileges, and better Reasons to maintain them. And here setting aside the point of Conscience, where lies the Decency of falling foul upon this *Order*? What Propriety is there in Misrepresentation? In confounding Respects, disguising Features, and painting Things out of all Colour and Complexion? This crossing upon Nature and Reason, is great Ignorance, and out of Rule. And now what Pleasure is there in Misbehaviour and Abuse? Is it such an Entertainment to see Religion worried by Atheism, and Things the most Solemn and Significant tumbled and tost by Buffoons? A Man may laugh at a Puppy's tearing a Wardrobe, but I think 'twere altogether as discreet to beat him off. Well! but the *Clergy* mismanage sometimes, and they must be told of their Faults. What then? Are the *Poets* their *Ordinaries*? Is the *Pulpit* under the Discipline of the *Stage*? And are those fit to correct the Church, that are not fit to come into it? Besides, What makes them fly out upon the *Function*; and rail by wholesale? Is the *Priesthood* a crime, and the service of God a disadvantage? I grant Persons and Things are not always suited. A good *Post* may be ill kept, but then the Censure should keep close to the Fault, and the Office not suffer for the Manager. The *Clergy* may have their Failings sometimes like others, but what then? The *Character* is still untarnish'd. The *Men* may be Little, but the *Priests* are not so. And therefore like other People, they ought to be treated by their best Distinction. {139}

If 'tis Objected that the *Clergy* in *Plays* are commonly *Chaplains*, And that these *Belonging* to Persons of Quality they were obliged to represent them servile and submissive. To this I Answer

1st. In my former remark, that the *Stage* often outrages the whole *Order*, without regard to any particular Office. But were it not so in the

2d. Place, They quite overlook the Character, and mistake the Business of *Chaplains*. They are no *Servants*, neither do they *Belong* to any *Body*, but God Almighty. This Point I have fully proved in another, *Treatise*, and thither I refer the *Reader*.

Moral Essays.

CHAP. IV.

{140}

The Stage-Poets make their Principal Persons Vitious, and reward them at the End of the Play.

The Lines of Virtue and Vice are Struck out by Nature in very Legible Distinctions; They tend to a different Point, and in the greater Instances the Space between them is easily perceiv'd. Nothing can be more unlike than the Original Forms of these Qualities: The First has all the sweetness, Charms, and Graces imaginable; The other has the Air of a *Post* ill Carved into a *Monster*, and looks both foolish and Frightful together. These are the Native Appearances of good and Evil: And they that endeavour to blot the Distinctions, to rub out the Colours, or change the Marks, are extreamly to blame. 'Tis confessed as long as the Mind is awake, and Conscience goes true, there's no fear of being imposed on. But when Vice is varnish'd over with Pleasure, and comes in the Shape of Convenience, the case grows somewhat dangerous; for then the Fancy may be gain'd, and the Guards corrupted, and Reason suborn'd against it self. And thus a *Disguise* often passes when the Person would otherwise be stopt. To put *Lewdness* into a Thriving condition, to give it an Equipage of Quality, and to treat it with Ceremony and Respect, is the way to confound the Understanding, to fortifie the Charm, and to make the Mischief invincible. Innocence is often owing to Fear, and Appetite is kept under by Shame; But when these Restraints are once taken off, when Profit and Liberty lie on the same side, and a Man can Debauch himself into Credit, what can be expected in such a case, but that Pleasure should grow Absolute, and Madness carry all before it? The *Stage* seem eager to bring Matters to this Issue; They have made a considerable progress, and are still pushing their Point with all {141}

the Vigour imaginable. If this be not their Aim why is *Lewdness* so much consider'd in Character and Success? Why are their Favourites Atheistical, and their fine Gentleman debauched? To what purpose is *Vice* thus prefer'd, thus ornamented, and caress'd, unless for Imitation? That matter of Fact stands thus, I shall make good by several Instances: To begin then with their Men of Breeding and Figure. *Wild-blood* sets up for *Debauchery*, {142}

Mock Astrol. p. 3
&c. *Ridicules* Marriage, and Swears by *Mahomet*. *Bellamy* makes sport with the Devil, and
Mock Astrol. p. 57, *Lorenzo* is vitious and calls his Father *Bawdy Magistrate*. *Horner* is horridly Smutty, and
59. *Harcourt* false to his Friend who used him kindly. In the *Plain Dealer* *Freeman* talks
Spanish Fryar. p. coarsely, cheats the Widdow, debauches her Son, and makes him undutiful. *Bellmour* is
61. Lewd and Profane, And *Mellefont* puts *Careless* in the best way he can to debauch *Lady*
Country Wife. p. *Plyant*. These *Sparks* generally Marry up the Top Ladys, and those that do not, are brought
25. to no Pennance, but go off with the Character of Fine Gentlemen: In *Don-Sebastian*,
Old Batch. *Antonio* an Atheistical Bully is rewarded with the Lady *Moraima*, and half the *Muffty's*
Double Dealer. p. Estate. *Valentine* in *Love for Love* is (if I may so call him) the Hero of the *Play*; This Spark
34. the *Poet* would pass for a Person of Virtue, but he speaks to late. 'Tis true, He was hearty in
Love for Love p. his Affection to *Angelica*. Now without question, to be in Love with a fine Lady of 30000
90. Pounds is a great Virtue! But then abating this single Commendation, *Valentine* is
Love for Love. p. 6. altogether compounded of Vice. He is a prodigal Debauchee, unnatural, and Profane,
7. 25. 61. 89. 91. Obscene, Sawcy, and undutiful, And yet this Libertine is crown'd for the Man of Merit, has {143}
his Wishes thrown into his Lap, and makes the Happy *Exit*. I perceive we should have a
rare set of *Virtues* if these *Poets* had the making of them! How they hug a Vitious
Character, and how profuse are they in their Liberalities to Lewdness? In the *Provoked*
Wife, *Constant* Swears at Length, solicits Lady *Brute*, Confesses himself Lewd, and prefers
Debauchery to Marriage. He handles the last Sybject very notably and worth the Hearing.
There is (says he) *a poor sordid Slavery in Marriage, that turns the flowing Tide of Honour,*
and sinks it to the lowest ebb of Infamy. 'Tis a Corrupted Soil, Ill Nature, Avarice, Sloth,
Cowardize, and Dirt, are all its Product.—But then Constancy (alias Whoring) is a Brave,
Free, Haughty, Generous, Agent. This is admirable stuff both for the Rhetorick and the
p. 35. Reason! The Character *Young Fashion* in the *Relapse* is of the same Staunchness, but this
the *Reader* may have in another Place.

To sum up the Evidence. A fine Gentleman, is a fine Whoring, Swearing, Smutty, Atheistical Man. These Qualifications it seems compleat the *Idea* of Honour. They are the Top-Improvements of Fortune, and the distinguishing Glories of Birth and Breeding! This is the {144}
Stage-Test for *Quality*, and those that can't stand it, ought to be *Disclaim'd*. The Restraints
of Conscience and the Pedantry of Virtue, are unbecoming a Cavalier: Future Securities,
and Reaching beyond Life, are vulgar Provisions: If he falls a Thinking at this rate, he
forfeits his Honour; For his Head was only made to run against a Post! Here you have a
Man of Breeding and Figure that burlesques the *Bible*, Swears, and talks Smut to Ladies,
speaks ill of his Friend behind his Back, and betraies his Interest. A fine Gentleman that
has neither Honesty, nor Honour, Conscience, nor Manners, Good Nature, nor civil
Hypocrisy. Fine, only in the Insignificancy of Life, the Abuse of Religion and the Scandals
of Conversation. These Worshipful Things are the *Poets* Favourites: They appear at the
Head of the *Fashion*; and shine in Character, and Equipage. If there is any Sense stirring,
They must have it, tho' the rest of the *Stage* suffer never so much by the Partiality. And
what can be the Meaning of this wretched Distribution of Honour? Is it not to give Credit
and Countenance to Vice, and to shame young People out of all pretences to Conscience,
and Regularity? They seem forc'd to turn Lewd in their own Defence: They can't otherwise {145}
justifie themselves to the Fashion, nor keep up the Character of Gentlemen: Thus People
not well furnish'd with Thought, and Experience, are debauch'd both in Practise and
Principle. And thus Religion grows uncreditable, and passes for ill Education. The *Stage*
seldom gives Quarter to any Thing that's serviceable or Significant, but persecutes Worth,
and Goodness under every Appearance. He that would be safe from their Satir must take
care to disguise himself in Vice, and hang out the *Colours* of Debauchery. How often is
Learning, Industry, and Frugality, ridiculed in Comedy? The rich Citizens are often Misers,
and Cuckolds, and the *Universities*, Schools of Pedantry upon this score. In short,
Libertinism and Profaness, Dressing, Idleness, and Gallantry, are the only valuable
Qualities. As if People were not apt enough of themselves to be Lazy, Lewd, and
Extravagant, unless they were prick'd forward, and provok'd by Glory, and Reputation.
Thus the Marks of Honour, and Infamy are misapplyed, and the *Idea's* of Virtue and Vice
confounded. Thus Monstrousness goes for Proportion, and the Blemishes of Human Nature,
make up the Beauties of it.

The fine Ladies are of the same Cut with the Gentlemen; *Moraima* is scandalously rude to {146}
DonSebast. her Father, helps him to a beating, and runs away with *Antonio*. *Angelica* talks sawcily to
Love for Love. p. her Uncle, and *Belinda* confesses her Inclination for a Gallant. And as I have observ'd
20. already, the Topping Ladies in the *Mock Astrologer*, *Spanish Fryar*, *Country Wife*, *Old*
Provok'd Wife. p. *Batchelour*, *Orphan*, *Double Dealer*, and *Love Triumphant*, are smutty, and sometimes
64. Profane.
Chap. 1. & 2.

And was Licentiousness and irreligion, alwaies a mark of Honour? No; I don't perceive but that the old *Poets* had an other Notion of Accomplishment, and bred their people of Condition a different way. *Philolaches* in *Plautus* laments his being debauch'd; and dilates

Mostel. A. 1. 2. upon the Advantages of Virtue, and Regularity. *Lusiteles* another Young Gentleman
Trinum. A. 2. 1. A. disputes handsomly by himself against Lewdness. And the discourse between him and
 2. 2. *Phylto* is Moral, and well managed. And afterwards he lashes Luxury and Debauching with
Enuch. A. 3. 3. a great deal of Warmth, and Satir. *Chremes* in *Terence* is a modest young Gentleman, he is
Hecyr. A. 3. 4. afraid of being surpriz'd by *Thais*, and seems careful not to sully his Reputation. And
Pamphilus in *Hecyra* resolves rather to be govern'd by Duty, than Inclination.

Plautus's Pinacium tells her Friend *Panegyric* that they ought to acquit themselves fairly to
Stich. A. 1. 1. their Husbands, tho' These should fail in their Regards towards them. For all good People
 will do justice tho' they don't receive it. Lady *Brute* in the *Provok'd Wife* is govern'd by
 p. 3. different maxims. She is debauch'd with ill Usage, says *Virtue is an Ass, and a Gallant's*
Stich. A. 1. 2. worth forty on't. *Pinacium* goes on to another Head of Duty, and declares that a Daughter
 can never respect her Father too much, and that Disobedience has a great deal of scandal,
 and Lewdness in't. The Lady *Jacinta* as I remember does not treat her Father at this rate of
 Decency. Let us hear a little of her Behaviour. The *Mock Astrologer* makes the Men draw,
 and frights the Ladys with the Apprehension of a Quarrel. Upon this; *Theodosia* crys *what*
 p. 60. *will become of us!* *Jacinta* answers, *we'll die for Company: nothing vexes me but that I am*
not a Man, to have one thrust at that malicious old Father of mine, before I go. Afterwards
 the old Gentleman *Alonzo* threatens his Daughters with a Nunnery. *Jacinta* spars again and
 says, *I would have thee to know thou graceless old Man, that I defy a Nunnery: name a*
Ibid. *Nunnery once more and I disown thee for my Father.* I could carry on the Comparison
 between the old and Modern Poets somewhat farther. But this may suffice. {148}

Thus we see what a fine time Lewd People have on the *English Stage*. No Censure, no mark
 of Infamy, no Mortification must touch them. They keep their Honour untarnish'd, and
 carry off the Advantage of their Character. They are set up for the Standard of Behaviour,
 and the Masters of Ceremony and Sense. And at last that the Example may work the better,
 they generally make them rich, and happy, and reward them with their own Desires.

Mr. *Dryden* in the *Preface* to his *Mock-Astrologer*, confesses himself blamed for this
 Practise. *For making debauch'd Persons his Protagonists, or chief Persons of the Drama;*
And, for making them happy in the Conclusion of the Play, against the Law of Comedy,
which is to reward Virtue, and punish Vice. To this Objection He makes a lame Defence.
 And answers

1st. That he knows no such Law constantly observ'd in Comedy by the Antient or Modern
Poets. What then? *Poets* are not always exactly in Rule. It may be a good Law tho' 'tis not
 constantly observ'd, some Laws are constantly broken, and yet ne're the worse for all that.
 He goes on, and pleads the Authorities of *Plautus*, and *Terence*. I grant there are Instances
 of Favour to vitious young People in those Authors, but to this I reply {149}

1st. That those *Poets* had a greater compass of Liberty in their Religion. Debauchery did
 not lie under those Discouragements of Scandal, and penalty, with them as it does with us.
 Unless therefore He can prove *Heathenism*, and *Christianity* the same, his *precedents* will
 do him little service.

2ly. Horace who was as good a judge of the *Stage*, as either of those *Comedians*, seems to
 be of another Opinion. He condemns the obscenities of *Plautus*, and tells you Men of
De Art. Poet. Fortune and Quality in his time; would not endure immodest Satir. He continues, that Poets
 were formerly admired for the great services they did. For teaching Matters relating to
 Religion, and Government; For refining the Manners, tempering the Passions, and
 improving the Understandings of Mankind: For making them more useful in Domestick
Ibid. Relations, and the publick Capacities of Life. This is a demonstration that Vice was not the
 Inclination of the Muses in those days; and that *Horace* beleiv'd the chief business of a
Poem was, to Instruct the Audience. He adds farther that the *Chorus* ought to turn upon
 the Argument of the *Drama*, and support the Design of the *Acts*. That They ought to speak
 in Defence of Virtue, and Frugality, and show a Regard to Religion. Now from the Rule of
 the *Chorus*, we may conclude his Judgment for the *Play*. For as he observes, there must be
 a Uniformity between the *Chorus* and the *Acts*: They must have the same View, and be all
 of a Piece. From hence 'tis plain that *Horace* would have no immoral *Character* have either
 Countenance or good Fortune, upon the *Stage*. If 'tis said the very mention of the *Chorus*
 shews the Directions were intended for *Tragedy*. To this {150}

I answer, that the Consequence is not good. For the use of a *Chorus* is not inconsistent
 with *Comedy*. The antient *Comedians* had it. *Aristophanes* is an Instance. I know 'tis said
 the *Chorus* was left out in that they call the *New Comedy*. But I can't see the
 conclusiveness of this Assertion. For *Aristophanes* his *Plutus* is *New Comedy* with a *Chorus*
[.....] Schol. in't. And *Aristotle* who lived after this Revolution of the *Stage*, mentions nothing of the
 Omission of the *Chorus*. He rather supposes its continuance by saying the *Chorus* was
Libr. de Poet. cap. added by the Government long after the Invention of *Comedy*. 'Tis true *Plautus* and
Psychē. *Terence* have none, but those before them probably might. *Moliere* has now reviv'd them,
 And *Horace* might be of his Opinion, for ought wee know to the contrary. {151}

Lastly. Horace having expressly mentioned the beginning and progress of *Comedy*, discovers himself more fully: He advises a *Poet* to form his Work upon the Precepts of *Socrates* and *Plato*, and the Models of Moral Philosophy. This was the way to preserve Decency, and to assign a proper Fate and Behaviour to every *Character*. Now if *Horace* would have his *Poet* govern'd by the Maxims of Morality, he must oblige him to Sobriety of Conduct, and a just distribution of Rewards, and Punishments.

Pref. Mock. Astrol. Mr. *Dryden* makes Homewards, and endeavours to fortifie himself in Modern Authority. He lets us know that *Ben Johnson* after whom he may be proud to Err, gives him more than one example of this Conduct; That in the *Alchemist* is notorious, where neither *Face* nor his *Master* are corrected according to their Demerits. But how Proud soever Mr. *Dryden* may be of an Errour, he has not so much of *Ben Jonson's* company as he pretends. His Instance of *Face &c.* in the *Alchemist* is rather notorious against his Purpose then for it.

Ibid. For *Face* did not Council his *Master Lovewit* to debauch the Widdow; neither is it clear that the Matter went thus far. He might gain her consent upon Terms of Honour for ought appears to the contrary. 'Tis true *Face* who was one of the Principal Cheats is Pardon'd and consider'd. But then his *Master* confesses himself kind to a fault. He owns this Indulgence was a Breach of Justice, and unbecoming the Gravity of an old Man. And then desires the Audience to excuse him upon the Score of the Temptation. But *Face continued, in the Cousenage till the last without Repentance.* Under favour I conceive this is a Mistake. For does not *Face* make an Apology before he leaves the *Stage*? Does he not set himself at the *Bar*, arraign his own Practise, and cast the Cause upon the Clemency of the Company? And are not all these Signs of the Dislike of what he had done? Thus careful the *Poet* is to prevent the Ill Impressions of his *Play*! He brings both *Man* and *Master* to Confession. He dismisses them like Malefactours; And moves for their Pardon before he gives them their Discharge. But the *Mock-Astrologer* has a gentler Hand: *Wild-Blood* and *Jacinta* are more generously used: There is no Acknowledgment exacted; no Hardship put upon them: They are permitted to talk on in their Libertine way to the Last: And take Leave without the least Appearance of Reformation. The *Mock-Astrologer* urges *Ben Johnson's Silent Woman* as an other *Precedent* to his purpose. For there *Dauphine confesses himself in Love with all the Collegiate Lady's.* And yet this naughty *Dauphine* is Crowned in the end with the Possession of his *Uncles Estate, and with the hopes of all his Mistresses.* This Charge, as I take it, is somewhat too severe. I grant *Dauphine* Professes himself in Love with the Collegiate Ladies at first. But when they invited him to a private Visit, he makes them no Promise; but rather appears tired, and willing to disengage. *Dauphine* therefore is not altogether so naughty as this Author represents him.

Essay of Dramatick Poetry. p. 28. *Ben Johnson's Fox* is clearly against Mr. *Dryden*. And here I have his own Confession for proof. He declares the *Poets end in this Play was the Punishment of Vice, and the Reward of Virtue.* *Ben* was forced to strain for this piece of Justice, and break through the *Unity of Design.* This Mr. *Dryden* remarks upon him: How ever he is pleased to commend the Performance, and calls it an excellent *Fifth Act.*

Ben Johnson shall speak for himself afterwards in the Character of a Critick; In the mean time I shall take a Testimony or two from *Shakespeare.* And here we may observe the admir'd *Falstaffe* goes off in Disappointment. He is thrown out of Favour as being a *Rake*, and dies like a Rat behind the Hangings. The Pleasure he had given, would not excuse him. The *Poet* was not so partial, as to let his Humour compound for his Lewdness. If 'tis objected that this remark is wide of the Point, because *Falstaffe* is represented in Tragedy, where the Laws of Justice are more strickly observ'd, To this I answer, that you may call *Henry* the Fourth and Fifth, Tragedies if you please. But for all that, *Falstaffe* wears no *Buskins*, his Character is perfectly Comical from end to end.

The London Prodigall. The next Instance shall be in *Flowerdale* the *Prodigal.* This Spark notwithstanding his Extravagance, makes a lucky Hand on't at last, and marries a rich Lady. But then the *Poet* qualifies him for his good Fortune, and mends his Manners with his Circumstances. He makes him repent, and leave off his Intemperance, Swearing &c. And when his Father warn'd him against a Relapse, He answers very soberly,

Heaven helping me I'll hate the Course of Hell.

I could give some instances of this kind out of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, But there's no need of any farther Quotation; For Mr. *Dryden* is not satisfied with his Apology from Authority: He does as good as own that this may be construed no better than defending one ill practise by another. To prevent this very reasonable objection he endeavours to vindicate his *Precedents* from the Reason of the Thing. To this purpose he makes a wide difference between the Rules of Tragedy and Comedy. That *Vice* must be impartially prosecuted in the first, because the Persons are Great &c.

It seems then *Executions* are only for *Greatness*; and *Quality.* Justice is not to strike much

lower than a *Prince*. *Private People* may do what they *please*. They are too *few* for *Mischief*, and too *Little* for *Punishment!* This would be admirable Doctrine for *Newgate*, and give us a general *Goal-Delivery* without more ado. But in *Tragedy* (says the *Mock Astrologer*.) *the Crimes are likewise Horrid*, so that there is a necessity for Severity and Example. And how stands the matter in *Comedy*? Quite otherwise. There the *Faults are but the follies of*

Ibid. *Youth, and the Frailties of Human Nature*. For Instance. There is nothing but a little Whoring, Pimping, Gaming, Profaness &c, And who could be so hard hearted to give a Man any Trouble for This? Such Rigours would be strangely Inhumane! A *Poet* is a better natur'd Thing I can assure you. These little Miscarrages *move Pity and Commiseration, and*

Ibid. *are not such as must of necessity be Punish'd*. This is comfortable Casuistry! But to be Serious. Is Dissolution of Manners such a Peccadillo? Does a Profligate Conscience deserve nothing but Commiseration? And are People damn'd only for *Humane Frailties*? I perceive the Laws of Religion and those of the *Stage* differ extreamly! The strength of his Defence lies in this choice Maxim, that the *Chief End of Comedy is Delight*. He questions *whether Instruction has any thing to do in Comedy*; If it has, he is sure 'tis no more than its

Ibid. *secondary end: For the business of the Poet is to make you laugh*. Granting the Truth of this Principle, I somewhat question the serviceableness of it. For is there no Diversion to be had unless Vice appears prosperous, and rides at the Head of Success. One would think such a preposterous, distribution of Rewards, should rather shock the Reason, and raise the Indignation of the *Audience*. To laugh without reason is the Pleasure of Fools, and against it, of something worse. The exposing of Knavery, and making *Lewdness* ridiculous, is a much better occasion for Laughter. And this with submission I take to be the End of *Comedy*. And therefore it does not differ from *Tragedy* in the End, but in the *Means*. Instruction is the principal Design of both. The one works by Terror, the other by Infamy. 'Tis true, they don't move in the same Line, but they meet in the same point at last. For this Opinion I have good Authority, besides what has been cited already.

1st. Monsieur *Rapin* affirms 'That Delight is the End that Poetry aims at, but not the Principal one. For Poetry being an Art, ought to be profitable by the quality of it's own nature, and by the Essential Subordination that all Arts should have to Polity, whose End in General is the publick Good. This is the Judgment of *Aristotle* and of *Horace* his chief Interpreter. *Ben Johnson* in his Dedicatory Epistle of his *Fox* has somewhat considerable upon this Argument; And declaims with a great deal of zeal, spirit, and good Sense, against the Licentiousness of the *Stage*. He lays it down for a Principle, 'That 'tis impossible to be a good *Poet* without being a good *Man*. That he (a good Poet) is said to be able to inform Young Men to all good Discipline, and enflame grown Men to all great Virtues &c.—That the general complaint was that the *Writers* of those days had nothing remaining in them of the Dignity of a *Poet*, but the abused Name. That now, especially in Stage Poetry, nothing but Ribaldry, Profanation, *Blasphemy*, all Licence of Offence to God and Man, is practised. He confesses a great part of this Charge is over-true, and is sorry he dares not deny it. But then he hopes all are not embark'd in this bold Adventure for Hell. For my part (says he) I can, and from a most clear Conscience affirm; That I have ever trembled to think towards the least Profaness, and loath'd the Use of such foul, and unwash'd Bawdry, as is now made the Food of the *Scene*.—The encrease of which Lust in Liberty, what Learned or Liberal Soul does not abhor? In whole *Enterludes* nothing but the Filth of the Time is utter'd—with Brothelry able to violate the Ear of a *Pagan*, and *Blasphemy*, to turn the Blood of a Christian to Water. He continues, that the Insolence of these Men had brought the *Muses* into Disgrace, and made *Poetry* the lowest scorn of the Age. He appeals to his Patrons the *Universities*, that his Labour has been heretofore, and mostly in this his latest Work, to reduce not only the antient Forms, but Manners of the *Scene*, the Innocence and the Doctrine, which is the **Principal End** of Poesy, to inform Men in the best Reason of Living.'

Lastly he adds, that 'he has imitated the Conduct of the Antients in this *Play*, The goings out (or Conclusions) of whose *Comedies*, were not always joyful but oft-times the Bawds, the Slaves, the Rivals, ye and the Masters are mulcted, and fitly, it being the Office of a *Comick Poet* (mark that!) to imitate Justice, and Instruct to Life &c.' Say you so! Why then if *Ben Johnson* knew any thing of the Matter, Divertisement and Laughing is not as Mr. *Dryden* affirms, the *Chief End of Comedy*. This Testimony is so very full and clear, that it needs no explaining, nor any enforcement from Reasoning, and Consequence.

And because Laughing and Pleasure has such an unlimited Prerogative upon the *Stage*, I shall add a Citation or two from *Aristotle* concerning this Matter. Now this great Man 'calls those Buffoons, and Impertinents, who rally without any regard to Persons or Things, to Decency, or good Manners. That there is a great difference between Ribaldry, and handsom Rallying. He that would perform exactly, must keep within the Character of Virtue, and Breeding. He goes on, and tells us that the old Comedians entertain'd the Audience with Smut, but the Modern ones avoided that Liberty, and grew more reserv'd. This latter way he says was much more proper and Gentile then the other. That in his Opinion Rallying, no less than Railing, ought to be under the Discipline of Law; That he who is ridden by his *Jests*, and minds nothing but the business of *Laughing*, is himself Ridiculous. And that a Man of Education and Sense, is so far from going these Lengths that he wont so much as endure the hearing some sort of Buffoonry.'

And as to the point of Delight in general, the same Author affirms, 'that scandalous

Satisfactions are not properly Pleasures. 'Tis only Distemper, and false Appetite which makes them palatable. And a Man that is sick, seldom has his Tast true. Besides, supposing we throw Capacity out of the Question, and make Experiment and Sensation the Judge; Granting this, we ought not to chop at every Bait, nor Fly out at every Thing that strikes the Fancy. The meer Agreeableness must not overbear us, without distinguishing upon the Quality, and the Means. Pleasure how charming soever, must not be fetched out of Vice. An Estate is a pretty thing, but if we purchase by Falshood, and Knavery, we pay too much {161} for't. Some Pleasures, are Childish and others abominable; And upon the whole, Pleasure, absolutely speaking, is no good Thing.' And so much for the Philosopher. And because *Ribaldry* is used for Sport, a passage or two from *Quintilian*, may not be unseasonable. This Orator does not only Condemn the grosser Instances, but cuts off all the *Double-Entendre's* at a Blow. He comes up to the Regularity of Thought, and tells us 'that the Meaning, as well as the Words of Discourse must be unsullied.' And in the same *Chapter* he adds that 'A Man of Probity has always a Reserve in his Freedoms, and Converses within the Rules of Modesty, and Character. And that Mirth at the expence of Virtue, is an Over-purchase,' *Nimium enim risus pretium est si probitatis impendio constat.*

De Mor. Lib. 10, cap. 2.
Institut. Lib. 6; c. 3.

Thus we see how these great *Masters* qualify Diversion, and tie it up to *Provisoos*, and Conditions. Indeed to make *Delight* the main business of *Comedy* is an unreasonable and dangerous Principle. It opens the way to all Licentiousness, and Confounds the distinction between Mirth, and Madness. For if Diversion is the *Chief End*, it must be had at any Price, No serviceable Expedient must be refused, tho' never so scandalous. And thus the worst {162} Things are said, and best abus'd; Religion is insulted, and the most serious Matters turn'd into Ridicule! As if the Blindside of an Audience ought to be caress'd, and their Folly and Atheism entertain'd in the first Place. Yes, if the Palate is pleas'd, no matter tho' the Body is Poyson'd! For can one die of an easier Disease than Diversion? But Raillery apart, certainly Mirth and Laughing, without respect to the Cause, are not such supreme Satisfactions! A man has sometimes Pleasure in losing his Wits. Frensy, and *Possession*, will shake the Lungs, and brighten the Face; and yet I suppose they are not much to be coveted. However, now we know the Reason of the Profaness, and Obscenity of the *Stage*, of their Hellish Cursing, and Swearing, and in short of their great Industry to make God, and Goodness Contemptible: 'Tis all to Satisfie the Company, and make People Laugh! A most admirable justification! What can be more engaging to an *Audience*, then to see a *Poet* thus Atheistically brave? To see him charge up to the Canons Mouth, and defy the Vengeance of Heaven to serve them? Besides, there may be somewhat of Convenience in the Case. To fetch Diversion out of Innocence is no such easy matter. There's no {163} succeeding it may be in this method, without Sweat, and Drudging. Clean Wit, inoffensive Humour, and handsom Contrivance, require Time, and Thought. And who would be at this Expence, when the Purchase is so cheap another way? 'Tis possible a *Poet* may not alwaies have Sense enough by him for such an Occasion. And since we are upon supposals, it may be the *Audience* is not to be gain'd without straining a Point, and giving a Loose to Conscience: And when People are sick, are they not to be Humour'd? In sine, We must make them Laugh, right or wrong, for *Delight* is the *Cheif End of Comedy*. *Delight!* He should have said *Debauchery*: That's the English of the Word, and the Consequence of the Practise. But the Original Design of *Comedy* was otherwise: And granting 'twas not so, what then? If the *Ends* of Thing are naught, they must be mended. Mischief is the Chief end of Malice, would it be then a Blemish in Ill Nature to change Temper, and relent into Goodness? The Chief *End* of a Madman it may be is to Fire a House, must we not therefore bind him in his Bed? To conclude. If *Delight* without Restraint, or Distinction without Conscience or Shame, is the Supream Law of *Comedy*, 'twere well if we had less on't. {164} Arbitrary Pleasure, is more dangerous than Arbitrary Power. Nothing is more Brutal than to be abandon'd to Appetite; And nothing more wretched than to serve in such a Design. The *Mock-Astrologer* to clear himself of this Imputation, is glad to give up his Principle at Last. *Least any Man should think (says He) that I write this to make Libertinism amiable, or that I cared not to debase the end, and Institution of Comedy.* (It seems then *Delight* is not the Chief end.) *I must farther declare that we make not Vitious Persons Happy, but only as Heaven makes Sinners so.* &c. If this will hold, all's well. But *Heaven* does not forgive without Repentance. Let us see then what Satisfaction he requires from his *Wild-Blood*, and what Discipline he puts him under. Why, He helps him to his Mistress, he Marries him to a Lady of Birth and Fortune. And now do you think He has not made him an Example, and punish'd him to some Purpose! These are frightful Severities! Who would be vitious when such Terrors hang over his Head? And does *Heaven make Sinners happy* upon these Conditions? Sure some People have a good Opinion of Vice, or a very ill one of Marriage, otherwise they would have Charged the Penance a little more. But I have nothing farther {165} with the *Mock-Astrologer*.

And now for the Conclusion of a *Chapter*, I shall give some Instances of the *Manners* of the *Stage*, and that with respect to Poetry, and Ceremony. *Manners* in the Language of Poetry, is a Propriety of Actions, and Persons. To succeed in this business, there must always be a regard had to Age, Sex, and Condition: And nothing put into the Mouths of Persons which disagrees with any of these Circumstances. 'Tis not enough to say a witty Thing, unless it be spoken by a likely Person, and upon a Proper occasion. But my Design will lead me to this Subject afterwards, and therefore I shall say no more of it at present, but proceed to apply the Remark.

One Instance of Impropriety in *Manners* both Poetical and Moral, is their making Women, and Women of Quality talk Smuttily. This I have proved upon them already, and could cite many more places to the same Purpose were it necessary.

But I shall go on, and give the *Reader* some other examples of Decency, Judgment, and Probability. *Don Sebastian* will help us in some measure. Here the *Mufti* makes a foolish {166} Speech to the Rabble, and jests upon his own Religion. He tells them, *tho' your Tyrant is a Lawful Emperour, yet your Lawful Emperour is but a Tyrant, — That your Emperour is a Tyrant is most Manifest, for you were born to be Turks, but he has play'd the Turk with you.* And now is not this Man fit to Manage the *Alcoran*, and to be set up for an Oracle of State? *Captain Tom* should have had this Speech by right: But the *Poet* had a farther Design, and any thing is good enough for a *Mufti*.

Sebastian after all the violence of his Repentance, his grasping at self Murther, and Resolutions for the *Cell*, is strangely pleased with the Remembrance of his *Incest*, and wishes the Repetition of it: And *Almeida* out of her Princely Modesty, and singular Compunction, is of the same mind. This is somewhat surprising! *Oedipus* and *Jocasta* in *Sophocles* don't Repent at this rate. No: The horror of the first Discovery continues upon their Spirits: They never relapse into any fits of Intemperance, nor entertain themselves with a lewd Memory. This sort of Behaviour is not only more Instructive but more Natural too. It being very unlikely one should wish the Repeating a Crime, when He was almost Distracted at the thoughts on't, At the thoughts on't, tho' 'twas comitted under all the {167} Circumstances of excuse. Now when Ignorance and meer Mistake are so very disquieting, 'tis very strange if a Man should plague his Mind with the Aggravations of Knowledge; To carry Aversion, and Desire, in their full strength upon the same Object; To fly and pursue p. 32. with so much eagerness, is somewhat Unusual.

If we step to the *Spanish Fryar* He will afford us a Flight worth the observing. 'Tis part of the Addresses of *Torrismond* to *Leonora*.

*You are so Beautiful
So wondrous Fair, you justifie Rebellion;
As if that faultless Face could make no Sin,
But Heaven by looking on it must forgive.*

These are strange Compliments! *Torrismond* calls his Queen Rebel to her head, when he was both her General and her Lover. This is powerful Rhetorick to Court a Queen with! Enough one would think to have made the Affair desperate. But he has a Remedy at hand. The *Poets Nostrum* of Profaness cures all. He does as good as tell Her, she may Sin as much as she has a mind to. Her Face is a Protection to her Conscience. For Heaven is {168} under a necessity to forgive a Handsom Woman. To say all this ought to be pass'd over in *Torrismond* on the score of his Passion, is to make the Excuse more scandalous than the Fault, if possible. Such Raptures are fit only for *Bedlam*, or a place which I shan't name. *Love Triumphant* will furnish another Rant not altogether inconsiderable. Here *Celadea* a Maiden Lady when she was afraid her Spark would be married to another, calls out presently for a *Chaos*. She is for pulling the World about her ears, tumbling all the Elements together, and expostulates with Heaven for making Humane Nature otherwise than it should have been.

p. 52. *Great Nature break thy chain that links together
The Fabrick of this Globe, and make a Chaos,
Like that within my Soul.—*

Now to my fancy, if she had call'd for a *Chair* instead of a *Chaos*, trip'd off, and kept her folly to her self, the Woman had been much wiser. And since we have shown our Skill in vaulting on the High Ropes, a little *Tumbling* on the *Stage*, may not do amiss for variety.

Spanish Fryar. p. 36. Now then for a jest or two. *Don Gomez* shall begin: And here he'll give us a Gingle upon {169} the double meaning of a word.

I think, says *Dominick* the Fryar, *it was my good Angel that sent me hither so opportunely.* *Gomez* suspects him brib'd for no creditable business and answers.

Gom. *Ay, whose good Angels sent you hither, that you know best, Father.*

These *Spaniards* will entertain us with more of this fine Raillery. Colonel *Sancho* in *Love Triumphant* has a great stroak at it. He says his Bride *Dalinda* is no more *Dalinda*, but p. 70. *Dalilah* the *Philistine*. This Colonel as great a Soldier as he is, is quite puzzled at a *Herald*. He *thinks they call him Herod, or some such Jewish Name*. Here you have a good Officer p. 61. spoil'd for a miserable jest. And yet after all, this *Sancho* tho' he can't pronounce *Herald*,

Enuch. King Arth. p. 2. knows what 'tis to be *Laconick*, which is somewhat more out of his way. *Thraso* in *Terence* was a man of the same size in Sense, but for all that he does not quibble. *Albanact* Captain of the Guards, is much about as witty as *Sancho*. It seems *Emmeline* Heiress to the Duke of *Cornwal* was Blind. *Albanact* takes the rise of his Thought from hence; And observes *that as Blind as she is, Coswald would have no blind Bargain of her.* *Carlos* tells *Sancho* he is sure of his Mistress, and *has no more to do but to take out a License.* {170}

Sancho replies, *Indeed I have her License for it.* *Carlos* is somewhat angry at this Gingle, and cries, *what quibbling too in your Prosperity?* Adversity it seems is the only time for *punning*. Truly I think so too. For 'tis a sign a Man is much Distress'd when he flies to such an Expedient. However, *Carlos* needed not to have been so touchy: For He can stoop as low himself upon occasion. We must know then that *Sancho* had made Himself a Hunch'd Back, to counterfeit the *Conde Alonzo*. The two Colonels being in the same Disguise, were just upon the edg of a Quarrel. After some Preliminaries in Railing, *Sancho* cries, *Don't provoke me; I am mischeivously bent.*

Carlos replies, *Nay, you are Bent enough in Conscience, but I have a Bent Fist for Boxing.* Here you have a brace of Quibbles started in a Line and a half. And which is worst of all, they come from *Carlos*, from a *Character* of Sense; And therefore the poet, not the *Soldier*, must answer for them.

I shall now give the *Reader* a few Instances of the Courtship of the *Stage*, and how decently they treat the Women, and *Quality* of both *Sexes*. The *Women* who are secured from Affronts by Custom, and have a Privilege for Respect, are sometimes but roughly saluted by these Men of Address. And to bar the Defence, this Coarseness does not alwaies come from Clowns, and Women-haters; but from *Persons* of Figure, neither singular, nor ill Bred. And which is still worse, The Satir falls on blindly without Distinction, and strikes at the whole *Sex*. {171}

p. 47. Enter *Raymond* a Noble-man in the *Spanish Fryar*.

*O Vertue! Vertue! What art thou become?
That men should leave thee for that Toy a woman,
Made from the dross and refuse of a Man;
Heaven took him sleeping when he made her too,
Had Man been waking he had nee'r consented.*

Oedip. p. 3. I did not know before that a Man's Dross lay in his *Ribs*; I believe sometimes it lies Higher. But the Philosophy, the Religion, and the Ceremony of these Lines, are too tender to be touched. *Creon* a Prince in *Oedipus*, rails in General at the *Sex*, and at the same time is violently in Love with *Euridice*. This upon the Matter, is just as natural, as 'tis Civil. If any one would understand what the *Curse of all tender hearted Women is, Belmour* will inform him. What is it then? 'Tis the *Pox*. If this be true, the Women had need lay in a stock of ill Nature betimes. It seems 'tis their only preservative. It guards their Virtue, and their Health, and is all they have to trust to. *Sharper* another Man of Sense in this *Play*, talks much at the same rate. *Belinda* would know of him *where he got that excellent Talent of Railing?* {172}

p. 35. *Sharp. Madam the Talent was Born with me.—I confess I have taken care to improve it, to qualifie me for the Society of Ladies.* *Horner*, a Topping *Character* in the *Country Wife*, is advised to *avoid Women, and hate them as they do him.* *He Answers.*

p. 22. *Because I do hate them, and would hate them yet more, I'll frequent e'm; you may see by Marriage, nothing makes a Man hate a Woman more than her Constant Conversation.*
Don. Sebast. p. 5. There is still something more Coarse upon the *Sex* spoken by *Dorax* but it is a privileged Expression, and as such I must leave it. The *Relapse* mends the Contrivance of the Satir, refines upon the Manner, and to make the Discourse the more probable, obliges the Ladies to abuse themselves. And because I should be loath to tire the *Reader*, *Berentia* shall close the Argument. This Lady having undertook the Employment of a *Procuress*, makes this remark upon it to her self. {173}

Berinth. So here is fine work! But there was no avoiding it.—Besides, I begin to Fancy there may be as much Pleasure in carrying on another Bodies Intrigue, as ones own. This is at least certain, It exercises almost all the Entertaining Faculties of a Woman. For there is Employment for Hypocrisy, Invention, Deceit, Flattery, Mischief, and Lying.

Let us now see what Quarter the *Stage* gives to *Quality*. And here we shall find them extreamly free, and familiar. They dress up the *Lords* in Nick Names, and expose them in *Characters* of Contempt. *Lord Froth* is explain'd a *Solemn Coxcomb*; And *Lord Rake*, and *Lord Foplington* give you their Talent in their Title. *Lord Plausible* in the *Plain Dealer* Acts *Relapse.*

Provok'd Wife. a ridiculous Part, but is with all very civil. He tells *Manly* he never attempted to abuse any Person, The other answers; *What? you were afraid?* *Manly* goes on and declares *He would call a Rascal by no other Title, tho' his Father had left him a Dukes.* That is, he would call a Duke a Rascal. This I confess is very much *Plain Dealing.* Such Freedoms would appear but only in Life, especially without Provocation. I must own the *Poet* to be an Author of good Sense; But under favour, these jests, if we may call them so, are somewhat high Season'd, the Humour seems overstrain'd, and the *Character* push'd too far. To proceed. *Mustapha* was selling *Don Alvarez* for a Slave. The Merchant asks *what Virtues he has.* *Mustapha* replies. *Virtues quoth ah! He is of a great Family and Rich, what other Virtues would'st thou have in a Nobleman?* *Don Carlos* in *Love Triumphant* stands for a Gentleman, and a Man of Sense, and out-throws *Mustapha* a Bars Length. He tells us *Nature has given Sancho an empty Noddle, but Fortune in revenge has fill'd his Pockets: just a Lords Estate in Land and Wit.* This is a handsom Compliment to the Nobility! And my Lord *Salisbury* had no doubt of it a good Bargain of the *Dedication.* *Teresa's* general Description of a Countess is considerable in its Kind: But only 'tis in no Condition to appear. In the *Relapse*, Sir *Tunbelly* who had Mistaken Young *Fashion* for Lord *Foplington*, was afterwards undeceiv'd; and before the surprize was quite over, puts the Question, *is it then possible that this should be the true Lord Foplington at Last?* The Nobleman removes the scruple with great Civility and Discretion! *Lord Fopl.* *Why what do you see in his Face to make you doubt of it? Sir without presuming to have an extraordinary Opinion of my Figure, give me leave to tell you, if you had seen as many Lords as I have done you would not think it Impossible A Person of a worse Taille then mine might be a Modern Man of Quality.* {174}

I'm sorry to hear *Modern Quality* degenerates so much. But by the way, these Liberties are altogether new. They are unpractised by the Latin *Comedians*, and by the *English* too till very lately, as the *Plain Dealer* observes. And as for *Moliere* in *France*, he pretends to fly his Satir no higher than a Marquis.

And has our *Stage* a particular Privilege? Is their *Charter* enlarg'd, and are they on the same Foot of Freedom with the *Slaves* in the *Saturnalia*? Must all Men be handled alike? Must their Roughness be needs play'd upon Title? And can't they lash the Vice without pointing upon the *Quality*? If as Mr. *Dryden* rightly defines it, a *Play ought to be a just Image of Humane Nature*; Why are not the Decencies of Life, and, the Respects of Conversation observ'd? Why must the Customes of Countries be Cross'd upon, and the Regards of Honour overlook'd? What necessity is there to kick the *Coronets* about the *Stage*, and to make a Man a Lord, only in order to make him a Coxcomb. I hope the *Poets* don't intend to revive the old Project of Levelling and *Vote* down the House of *Peers*. In earnest, the *Play-house* is an admirable School of Behaviour! This is their way of managing Ceremony, distinguishing Degree, and Entertaining the *Boxes*! But I shall leave them at present to the Enjoyment of their Talent, and proceed to another Argument. {175}

CHAP. V.

{177}

Remarks upon Amphytrion, King Arthur, Don Quixote, and the Relapse.

SECTION I.

The following *Plays*, excepting the Last, will fall under the same Heads of Commendation with the Former. However, since the *Poets* have here been prodigal in their Expence, and dress'd themselves with more Curiosity then ordinary, they deserve a proportionable Regard. So much Finery must not be Crowded. I shall therefore make Elbow-Room for their Figure, and allow them the Compass of a distinct Chapter.

To begin with *Amphytrion*. In this *Play* Mr. *Dryden* represents *Jupiter* with the Attributes of the supream Being: He furnishes him with Omnipotence, makes him the Creator of Nature, and the Arbitrer of Fate, puts all the Functions of Providence in his Hand, and describes him with the Majesty of the true God. And when he has put Him in this glorious Equipage, he brings him out for Diversion. He makes him express himself in the most intemperate Raptures: He is willing to *Renounce* his *Heaven* for his Brutality, and employ a whole *Eternity* in Lewdness. He draws his Debauch at its full Length, with all the Art, and Heightings, and Foulness of Idea immaginable. This *Jupiter* is not contented with his success against *Amphytrion*, unless he brings *Alcmena* into the Confederacy, and makes her a Party *ex post Facto*. He would not have her think of her *Husband*, but her *Lover*, that is, her *Whoremaster*. 'Tis not the success, but the manner of gaining it which is all in all. 'Tis the Vice which is the charming Circumstance. Innocence and Regularity, are dangerous Companions; They spoil Satisfaction, and make every Thing insipid! Unless People take care to discharge their Virtue, and clear off their Conscience, their Senses will vanish immediately! For *Jupiter*, says he, would owe nothing to a Name so dull as *Husband*. And in the next Page. {178}

I would give the *Reader* some more of these fine Sentences, but that they are too much out of Order to appear. The truth is, Our *Stage-Poets* seem to fence against Censure by the excess of Lewdness; And to make the overgrown size of a Crime, a Ground for Impunity. As if a Malefactor should project his Escape by appearing too scandalous for Publick Tryal. However, This is their Armour of Proof, this is the Strength they retreat to. They are fortified in Smut, and almost impregnable in Stench, so that where they deserve most, there's no coming at them. To proceed. I desire to know what Authority Mr. *Dryden* has for this extraordinary Representation? His Original *Plautus*, is no President. Indeed *Plautus* is the only bold Heathen that ever made *Jupiter* tread the *Stage*. But then he stops far short of the Liberties of the *English Amphitryon*. *Jupiter* at *Rome*, and *London*, have the same unaccountable Design; but the Methods of pursuit are very different. The First, does not solicit in scandalous Language, nor flourish upon his Lewdness, nor endeavours to set it up for the Fashion. *Plautus* had some regard to the Height of the Character, and the Opinion of his Country, and the Restraints of Modesty. The Sallies of *Aristophanes* do not come up to the case; And if they did, I have cut off the Succours from that Quarter already. {179}

Eunuch. *Terence's Chærea*. is the next bold Man: However, here the Fable of *Jupiter* and *Danae* are just glanced at, and the Expression is clean; and He that tells the Story, a Young Libertine. These are all circumstances of extenuation, and give quite another Complexion to the Thing. As for the *Greek Tragedians* and *Seneca*, there's no Prescription can be drawn from them. They mention *Jupiter* in Terms of Magnificence and Respect, and make his Actions, and his Nature of a piece. But it may be the Celebrated *Homer*, and *Virgil* may give Mr. *Dryden* some Countenance. Not at all. *Virgil's Jupiter* is alwaies great, and solemn, and keeps up the port of a Deity. 'Tis true, *Homer* does not guard the Idea with that exactness, but then He never sinks the Character into Obscenity. The most exceptionable passage is that where *Jupiter* relates his Love Adventures to *Juno*. Here this pretended Deity is charm'd with *Venus's* Girdle, is in the height of his Courtship, and under the Ascendant of his Passion. This 'tis confess'd was a slippery Place, and yet the Poet makes a shift to keep his Feet. His *Jupiter* is Little, but not nauseous; The Story, tho' improper, will bear the telling, and look Conversation in the Face. However; These Freedoms of *Homer* were counted intolerable: I shall not insist on the Censures of *Justin Martyr*, or *Clemens Alexandrinus*: Even the Heathen could not endure them. The Poets are lashed by *Plato* upon this Score; For planting Vice in Heaven, and making their Gods infectious; If Mr. *Dryden* answers that *Jupiter* can do us no Harm. He is known to be an Idol of Lewd Memory, and therefore his Example can have no Force: Under Favour this is a mistake: For won't Pitch daub when a dirty Hand throws it; or can't a Toad spit Poyson because she's ugly? Ribaldry is dangerous under any Circumstances of Representation. And as *Menander* and St. *Paul* express it, *Evil Communications corrupt good Manners*. I mention them both, because if the *Apostle* should be dislik'd, the *Comedian* may pass. But after all, Mr. *Dryden* has not so much as a Heathen President for his Singularities. What then made him fall into them? Was it the Decency of the Thing, and the Propriety of *Character*, and Behaviour? By no means. For as I have observ'd before, Nature and Operations, ought to be proportion'd, and Behaviour suited to the Dignity of Being. To draw a Monkey in Royal Robes, and a Prince in *Antick*, would be Farce upon Colours, entertain like a Monster, and please only upon the score of Deformity. Why then does Mr. *Dryden* cross upon Nature and Authority, and go off as he Confesses, from the Plan of *Plautus*, and *Moliere*? Tho' by the way, the *English Amphitryon* has borrow'd most of the Libertine Thoughts of *Moliere*, and improv'd them. But to the former question. Why must the beaten Road be left? He tells us, *That the difference of our Stage from the Roman and the French did so require it*. That is, our *Stage* must be much more Licentious. For you are to observe that Mr. *Dryden*, and his Fraternity, have help'd to debauch the *Town*, and Poyson their Pleasures to an unusal Degree: And therefore the Diet must be dress'd to the Palate of the *Company*. And since they are made *Scepticks*, they must be entertain'd as such. That the *English Amphitryon* was contriv'd with this View is too plain to be better interpreted. To what purpose else does *Jupiter* appear in the shape of *Jehovah*? Why are the incommunicable *Attributes* burlesqu'd, and Omnipotence applyed to Acts of Infamy? To what end can such Horrible stuff as this serve, unless to expose the Notion, and extinguish the Belief of a Deity? The Perfections of God, are Himself. To ridicule his Attributes and his Being, are but two words for the same Thing. {180}

Euseb. præpar. Evang. These Attributes are bestow'd on *Jupiter* with great Prodigality, and afterwards execrably outrag'd. The Case being thus, the Cover of an Idol, is too thin a pretence to Screen the Blasphemy. Nothing but Mr. *Dryden's Absalom* and *Achitophel* can out-do This. Here I confess the Motion of his Pen is bolder, and the Strokes more Black'd. Here we have Blasphemy on the top of the Letter, without any trouble of Inference, or Construction. This Poem runs all upon Scripture Names, Upon Suppositions of the true Religion, and the right Object of Worship. Here Profaness is shut out from Defence, and lies open without Colour or Evasion. Here are no Pagan Divinities in the Scheme, so that all the Atheistick Raillery must point upon the true God. In the beginning we are told that *Absalom* was *David's* Natural Son: So then there's a blot in his *Scutcheon* and a Blemish upon his Birth. The *Poet* will make admirable use of this, remark presently! This *Absalom* it seems was very extraordinary in his Person and Performances. Mr. *Dryden* does not certainly know how this came about, and therefore enquires of himself in the first place, {181}

Ep. Ded. {182}

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p. 1.

This is down right Defiance of the Living God! Here you have the very Essence and Spirit of Blasphemy, and the Holy Ghost brought in upon the most hideous Occasion. I question whether the Torments and Despair of the Damn'd, dare venture at such Flights as these. They are beyond Description, I Pray God they may not be beyond Pardon too. I can't forbear saying, that the next bad Thing to the writing these Impieties, is to Suffer them. To return to *Amphitryon*. *Phœbus* and *Mercury* have *Manners* assign'd very disagreeable to their Condition. The later abating Propriety of Language, talks more like a *Water-man* than a Deity. They rail against the Gods, and call *Mars* and *Vulcan* the *two Fools of Heaven*. *Mercury* is pert upon his Father *Jupiter*, makes jests upon his Pleasures, and his Greatness, and is horribly smutty and profane. And all this Misbehaviour comes from him in his own shape, and in the sublimity of his Character. Had He run Riot in the Disguise of *Sofia*, the Discourse and the Person had been better adjusted, and the Extravagance more Pardonable. But here the Decorum is quite lost. To see the *Immortals* play such Gambols, {185} and the biggest Beings do the least Actions, is strangely unnatural. An Emperour in the Grimaces of an Ape, or the Diversions of a Kitten, would not be half so ridiculous. Now as Monsieur *Rapin* observes, without Decorum there can be no *probability*, nor without Probability any true Beauty. Nature must be minded, otherwise Things will look forced, tawdry, and chimerical. Mr. *Dryden* discourses very handsomly on this occasion in his

p. 1. *Preface to Albion and Albanus*. He informs us, *That Wit has been truly defin'd a propriety of Words and Thoughts.*—*That Propriety of Thought is that Fancy which arises naturally from the Subject.* Why then without doubt, the Quality, of Characters should be taken care of, and great Persons appear like themselves. Yes, yes, all this is granted by implication, and Mr. *Dryden* comes still nearer to the present case. He tells us, that *Propriety is to be observed, even in Machines; And that the Gods are all to manage their Peculiar Provinces.* He instances in some of their respective Employments; but I don't find that any of them were to talk Lewdly. No. He plainly supposes the contrary. For as he goes on, *If they were to speak upon the Stage it would follow of necessity, that the Expressions should be Lofty,* {186} *Figurative, and Majestical.* It seems then their Behaviour should be agreeable to their Greatness. Why then are not these Rules observ'd, in the *Machines of Amphitryon*? As I take it, Obscenity has not the Air of Majesty, nor any Alliance with the *Sublime*. And as for the *Figurative* Part, 'tis generally of the same Cut with the *Lofty*: The Smut shines clear, and strong, through the Metaphor, and is no better screen'd than the Sun by a Glass Window. To use *Mercury* thus ill, and make the God of Eloquence speak so unlike himself is somewhat strange! But tho' the *Antients* knew nothing of it, there are Considerations above those of *Decency*. And when this happens, *A Rule must rather be tresspass'd on, than a Beauty left out.* 'Tis Mr. *Dryden's* opinion in his *Cleomenes*, where he breaks the *Unity of*

Pref. *Time*, to describe the *Beauty* of a Famine. Now Beauty is an arbitrary Advantage, and depends upon Custom and Fancy. With some People the Blackest Complexions are the handsomest. 'Tis to these *African* Criticks that Mr. *Dryden* seems to make his Appeal. And without doubt he bespeaks their Favour, and strikes their Imagination luckily enough. For to lodge Divinity and Scandal together; To make the Gods throw *Stars*, like *Snow-balls* at {187} one another, but especially to Court in Smut, and rally in Blasphemy, is most admirably entertaining! This is much better than all the Niceties of *Decorum*. 'Tis handsomly contriv'd to slur the Notion of a Superiour Nature, to disarm the Terrors of Religion, and make the Court Above as Romantick as that of the *Fairies*. A Libertine when his Conscience is thus reliev'd, and Atheism sits easie upon his Spirits, can't help being grateful upon the Occasion. Meer Interest will oblige him to cry up the Performance, and solicit for the *Poets* Reputation! Before I take leave of these *Machines*, it may not be amiss to enquire why the

p. 1. Gods are brought into the *Spiritual Court*. Now I suppose the Creditableness of the Business, and the *Poets* Kindness to those *Places*, are the principal Reasons of their coming. However. He might have a farther Design in his Head, and that is, to bring *Thebes* to *London*, and to show the Antiquity of *Doctors Commons*. For if you will believe *Mercury*,

19. this Conference between him and *Phœbus* was held three thousand years ago. Thus

Troil. and Cressid. *Shakespear* makes *Hector* talk about *Aristotles* Philosophy, and calls Sr. *John Old Castle*,

The Hist. of Sr. *Protestant*. I had not mention'd this Discovery in Chronology, but that Mr. *Dryden* falls {188} upon *Ben Johnson*, for making *Cataline* give *Fire at the Face of a Cloud*, before Guns were invented.

By the Pattern of these pretended *Deities*, we may guess what sort of *Mortals* we are likely to meet with. Neither are we mistaken. For *Phædra*, is bad enough in all Conscience, but *Bromia* is a meer Original. Indeed when Mr. *Dryden* makes *Jupiter*, and *Jupiter* makes the Women, little less can be expected. So much for *Amphitryon*.

King Arthur. I shall pass on to *King Arthur* for a word or two. Now here is a strange jumble and Hotch potch of Matters, if you mind it. Here we have *Genii*, and *Angels*, *Cupids*, *Syrens*, and *Devils*; *Venus* and St. *George*, *Pan* and the *Parson*, the Hell of Heathenism, and the Hell of *Revelation*; A fit of Smut, and then a Jest about Original Sin. And why are Truth and Fiction, Heathenism and Christianity, the most Serious and the most Trifling Things blended together, and thrown into one Form of Diversion? Why is all this done unless it be to ridicule the whole, and make one as incredible as the other? His *Airy* and *Earthy Spirits*

discourse of the first state of Devils, of their *Chief* of their Revolt, their Punishment, and Impostures. This Mr. *Dryden* very Religiously calls a *Fairy way of Writing, which depends* {189} *only on the Force of Imagination*. What then is the Fall of the Angels a Romance? Has it no basis of Truth, nothing to support it, but strength of Fancy, and Poetick Invention? After He had mention'd Hell, Devils, &c. and given us a sort of *Bible* description of these formidable Things; I say after he had formed his Poem in this manner, I am surprized to hear him call it a *Fairy kind of Writing*. Is the History of *Tophet* no better prov'd than that of *Styx*? Is the Lake of *Brimstone* and that of *Phlegeton* alike dreadful? And have we as much Reason to believe the Torments of *Titius* and *Prometheus*, as those of the Devils and Damn'd? These are lamentable Consequences! And yet I can't well see how the *Poet* can avoid them. But setting aside this miserable Gloss in the *Dedication*, the Representation it self is scandalously irreligious. To droll upon the Vengeance of Heaven, and the Miseries of the Damn'd, is a sad Instance of Christianity! Those that bring Devils upon the *Stage*, can hardly believe them any where else. Besides, the Effects of such an Entertainment must needs be admirable! To see Hell thus play'd with is a mighty Refreshment to a lewd Conscience, and a byass'd Understanding. It heartens the Young Libertine, and confirms {190} the well-wishers to Atheism, and makes Vice bold, and enterprising. Such Diversions serve to dispel the Gloom, and guild the Horrors of the *Shades below*, and are a sort of Ensurance against Damnation. One would think these *Poets* went upon absolute Certainty, and could demonstrate a Scheme of Infidelity. If they could, They had much better keep the Secret. The divulging it tends only to debauch Mankind, and shake the Securities of Civil Life. However, if they have been in the other World and find it empty, and uninhabited, and are acquainted with all the Powers, and Places, in Being; If they can show the Impostures of Religion, and the Contradictions of Common Belief, they have something to say for themselves. Have they then infallible Proof and Mathematick Evidence for these Discoveries? No Man had ever the Confidence to say This; And if He should, he would be but laughed at for his Folly. No Conclusions can exceed the Evidence of their Principles; you may as well build a Castle in the Air, as raise a Demonstration upon a Bottom of Uncertainty. And is any Man so vain as to pretend to know the Extent of Nature, and the Stretch of Possibility, and the Force of the Powers Invisible? So that notwithstanding the {191} Boldness of this *Opera*, there may be such a Place as Hell; And if so, a Discourse about Devils, will be no *Fairy way of Writing*. For a *Fairy way of Writing*, is nothing but a *History of Fiction*; A subject of Imaginary Beings; such as never had any existence in Time, or Nature. And if as Monsieur *Rapin* observes, *Poetry* requires a mixture of Truth and *Fable*; Mr. *Dryden* may make his advantage, for his *Play* is much better founded on Reality than He was aware of.

It may not be improper to consider in a word or two, what a frightfull Idea the *Holy Scriptures* give us of Hell. 'Tis describ'd by all the Circumstances of Terror, by every Thing dreadful to Sense, and amazing to Thought. The Place, the Company, the Duration, are all Considerations of Astonishment. And why has God given us this solemn warning? Is it not to awaken our Fears, and guard our Happiness; To restrain the Disorders of Appetite, and to keep us within Reason, and Duty? And as for the *Apostate Angels*, the *Scriptures* inform us of their lost Condition, of their Malice and Power, of their active Industry and Experience; and all these Qualities Correspondent to the Bulk of their Nature, the Antiquity {192} of their Being, and the Misery of their State. In short, They are painted in all the formidable Appearances imaginable, to alarm our Caution, and put us upon the utmost Defence.

Let us see now how Mr. *Dryden* represents these unhappy Spirits, and their Place of Abode. Why very entertainingly! Those that have a true Tast for Atheism were never better regaled. One would think by this *Play* the Devils were meer Mormo's and Bugbears, fit only to fright Children and Fools. They rally upon Hell and Damnation, with a great deal of Air and Pleasantry; and appear like *Robin Good-fellow*, only to make the Company laugh. *Philidel*: Is call'd a *Puling Sprite*. And why so? For this pious reason, because

*He trembles at the yawning Gulph of Hell,
Nor dares approach the Flames lest he should Singe
His gaudy silken Wings.
He sighs when he should plunge a Soul in Sulphur,
As with Compassion touch'd of Foolish Man.*

p. 6.

The answer is, *What a half Devil's he.*

You see how admirably it runs all upon the Christian Scheme! Sometimes they are *Half-* {193} *Devils*, and sometimes *Hopeful-Devils*, and what you please to make sport with. *Grimbald* is afraid of being *whooped through Hell at his return*, for miscarrying in his Business. It seems there is great Leisure for Diversion! There's *Whooping* in Hell, instead of *Weeping* and *Wailing*! One would fancy Mr. *Dryden* had Daylight and Company, when these Lines were written. I know his Courage is extraordinary; But sure such Thoughts could never bear up against Solitude and a Candle!

And now since he has diverted himself with the *Terrors of Christianity*, I dont wonder he, should treat those that Preach them with so much Civility! enter *Poet* in the Habit of a *Peasant*.

*We ha' cheated the Parson we'el cheat him again,
For why should a Blockhead have one in ten?
For prating so long like a Booklearned Sot,
Till Pudding, and Dumpling burn to pot.*

These are fine comprehensive stroaks! Here you have the *Iliads* in a Nutshell! Two or three courtly words take in the whole Clergy; And what is wanting in Wit, is made up in Abuse, {194} and that's as well. This is an admirable *Harvest Catch*, and the poor Tith-stealers stand highly indebted. They might have been tired with Cheating in *Prose*, had not they not been thus seasonably releiv'd in Doggrell! But now there is Musick in playing the Knave. A Countryman now may fill his Barn, and humour his ill Manners, and sing his Conscience asleep, and all under one. I dont question but these *four Lines* steal many a Pound in the year. Whether the *Muse* stands indictable or not, the Law must determine: But after all, I must say the Design is notably laid. For Place and Person, for Relish and Convenience; nothing could have been better. The Method is very short, clear, and Practicable. 'Tis a fine portable Infection, and costs no more Carriage than the Plague.

Well! the Clergy must be contented: It might possibly have been worse for them if they had been in his favour: For he has sometimes a very unlucky way of showing his Kindness. He
Ep. Ded. Don commends the *Earl of Leicester for considering the Friend, more than the Cause*; that is,
Sebast. for his Partiality; The Marquess of *Halifax for quitting the Helm, at the approach of a*
Ded. King Arthur. *Storm*; As if Pilots were made only for fair Weather. 'Tis Presum'd these Noble Persons are {195} unconcern'd in this Character. However the *Poet* has shown his skill in Panegyrick, and 'tis only for that I mention it. He commends *Atticus* for his Trimming, and *Tally* for his
Sebast. K. Arth. Cowardize, and speaks meanly of the Bravery of *Cato*. Afterwards he professes his Zeal for
Ibid. the Publick welfare, and is pleas'd to see *the Nation so well secur'd from Foreign Attempts* &c. However he is in some pain about the Coming of the *Gauls*; 'Tis possible for fear they should invade the *Muses*, and carry the *Opera's* into Captivity, and deprive us of *the Ornaments of Peace*.

And now He has serv'd his Friends, he comes in the last place like a modest Man, to commend Himself. He tells us there were a great many *Beauties* in the Original Draught of this *Play*. But it seems Time has since tarnish'd their Complexion. And He gives *Heroick* Reasons for their not appearing. To speak Truth, (all Politicks apart,) there are strange Flights of Honour, and Consistencies of Pretention in this Dedication! But I shall forbear the Blazon of the *Atcheivment*, for fear I should commend as unluckily as Himself.

SECT. II.

{196}

Remarks upon Don Quixot, &c.

Mr. *Durfey* being somewhat particular in his Genius and Civilities, I shall consider him in a word or two by himself. This Poet writes from the *Romance* of an ingenious Author: By this means his Sense, and *Characters* are cut out to his Hand. He has wisely planted himself upon the shoulders of a *Giant*; but whether his Discoveries answer the advantage of his standing, the Reader must judge.

What I have to object against Mr. *Durfey* shall most of it be ranged under these three Heads.

I. *His Profaness with respect to Religion and the Holy Scriptures.*

II. *His Abuse of the Clergy.*

III. *His want of Modesty and Regard to the Audience.*

I. *His Profaness, &c.*

And here my first Instance shall be in a bold *Song* against Providence.

Providence that formed the Fair

{197}

*In such a charming Skin,
Their Outside made his only care,
And never look'd within.*

Here the *Poet* tells you Providence makes Mankind by halves, huddles up the Soul, and takes the least care of the better Moyety. This is direct blaspheming the Creation, and a Satir upon God Almighty. His next advance is to droll upon the Resurrection.

p. 20. *Sleep and indulge thy self with Rest,
Nor dream thou e're shalt rise again.*

His Third Song makes a jest of the *Fall*, rails upon *Adam* and *Eve*, and burlesques the Conduct of *God Almighty* for not making Mankind over again.

p. 37. *When the World first knew Creation,
A Rogue was a Top-Profession,
When there was no more in all Nature but Four,
There were two of them in Transgression.*

*He that first to mend the Matter,
Made Laws to bind our Nature,
Should have found a way,
To make Wills obey,
And have Modell'd new the Creature.*

In this and the following page, the *Redemption* of the World is treated with the same {198} respect with the *Creation*. The word *Redeemer*, which among Christians is appropriated to our Blessed Saviour, and like the Jewish Tetragrammaton peculiarly reserv'd to the Deity; This adorable Name (*Redeemer* and *Dear Redeemer*;) is applyed to the ridiculous *Don Quixote*. These Insolencies are too big for the Correction of a Pen, and therefore I shall leave them. After this horrible abuse of the Works, and Attributes of God, he goes on to make sport with his Vengeance. He makes the Torments of Hell a very Comical Entertainment: As if they were only Flames in Painting, and Terrors in *Romance*. The *Stygian Frogs* in *Aristophanes* are not represented with more Levity, and Drolling. That the *Reader* may see I do him no wrong, I shall quote the places which is the main Reason why I have transcrib'd the rest of his Profaness.

Appear ye fat Feinds that in Limbo do groan, {199}
That were when in Flesh the same souls with his own:
You that always in Lucifers Kitchin reside,
'Mongst Sea-coal and Kettles, and Grease newly try'd:
That pamper'd each day with a Garbidge of Souls,
Broil Rashers of Fools for a Breakfast on Coals.

In the Epilogue you have the History of *Balaam's Ass* exposed, and the Beast brought upon the *Stage* to laugh at the Miracle the better;

*And as 'tis said a parlous Ass once spoke,
When Crab-tree Cudgel did his rage provoke.
So if you are not civil,—I fear
He'el speak again.—*

p. 13. In the second *Part* the Devil is brought upon the *Stage*. He cries as *he hopes to be Saved*. And *Sancho warrants him a good Christian*. Truly I think he may have more of Christianity in him than the *Poet*. For he trembles at that God, with whom the other makes Diversion.

I shall omit the mention of several outrages of this Kind, besides his deep mouth'd swearing, which is frequent, and pass on to the Second Head, which is His Abuse of the Clergy. And since Reveal'd Religion has been thus horribly treated, 'tis no Wonder if the {200} *Ministers* of it have the same Usage.

And here we are likely to meet with some passages extraordinary enough. For to give Mr. *Durfey* his due, when he meddles with Church men he lays about him like a Knight Errant: Here his Wit and his Malice, are generally in extreams, tho' not of the same Kind. To begin. Part. 1. p. 13. He makes the Curate *Perez* assist at the ridiculous Ceremony of *Don Quixots* Knighting. Afterwards Squire *Sancho* confessing his mistake to *Quixote*, tells him, *Ah consider dear Sir no man is born wise*. And what if he was born wise? He may be *Bred* a Fool, if he has not a care. But how does he prove this Memorable Sentence? Because a *Bishop is no more than another man without Grace and Good Breeding*. I must needs say if the *Poet* had any share of either of these Qualities, he would be less bold with his Superiors; and not give his

Clowns the Liberty to droll thus heavily upon a solemn *Character*. This *Sancho* Mr. *Durfey* takes care to inform us is a *dry shrewd Country Fellow*, The reason of this *Character* is for the strength of it somewhat surprising. 'Tis because *he blunders out Proverbs upon all Occasions, tho' never so far from the purpose*. Now if blundering and talking nothing to the purpose, is an argument of *Shrewdness*; some Peoples *Plays* are very shrewd Performances. To proceed. *Sancho* complains of his being married, because it hindred him from better offers. *Perez* the Curate is sorry for this Misfortune. *For as I remember* says he 'twas my luck to give *Teresa* and you the *Blessing*. To this *Sancho* replies. *A Plague on your Blessing! I perceive I shall have reason to wish you hang'd for your Blessing—Good finisher of Fornication, good Conjunction Copulative*. For this irreverence and Profaness *Perez* threatens him with Excommunication. *Sancho* tells him, *I care not, I shall lose nothing by it but a nap in the Afternoon*. In his Second Part, *Jodolet* a Priest is call'd a *Holy p. 51. Cormorant*, and made to dispatch *half a Turkey, and a Bottle of Malaga for his Breakfast*. Here one Country Girl chides another for her sawcyness. *D'ee* (says she) *make a Pimp of a Priest? Sancho* interposes with his usual shrewdness: *A Pimp of a Priest, why is that such a p. 7. Miracle?* In the Second Scene the Poet Provides himself another Priest to abuse. *Mannel* the Steward calls *Bernardo* the Chaplain Mr. *Cuff-Cushion*, and tells him a *Whore is a Pulpit he loves*.—In settling the *Characters Mannel* is given out for a *witty pleasant Fellow*. And now you see he comes up to Expectation. To the Blind all *Colours* are alike, {201} and Rudeness, and Raillery are the same thing! Afterwards, *Bernardo* says *Grace* upon the Stage; and I suppose Prays to God to bless the Entertainment of the Devil. Before they rise from Table, the *Poet* contrives a Quarrel between *Don Quixot* and *Bernardo*. The Priest rails on the Knight, and calls him *Don Coxcomb* &c. By this time you may imagine the Knight heartily Provok'd, ready to buckle on his *Bason*, and draw out for the Combat, Let us hear his Resentment. {202}

Don Quix. *Oh thou old black Fox with a Fire brand in thy Tail, thou very Priest: Thou Kindler of all Mischeifs in all Nations. De'e hear Homily: Did not the Reverence I bear these p. 41. Nobles—I would so thrum your Cassock you Church Vermin.*

p. 47. At last he bids *Bernardo* adieu in Language too Profane and Scandalous to relate. In the Fourth Act His Song calls the Clergy *Black Cattle*, and says *no Body now minds what they say*. I could alledge more of his Courtship to the *Order*, but the *Reader* might possibly be tired, and therefore I shall proceed in the

Third, place to his want of Modesty, and Regard to the Audience. As for Smut *Sancho* and *Teresa* talk it broad, and single sens'd, for almost a page together. *Mary* the *Buxsom* has likewise her share of this Accomplishment. The first Epilogue is Garnish'd with a Couplet of {203} it; *Marcella* the Maiden Shepherdess raves in Raptures of Indecency; And sometimes you have it mixt up with Profaness, to make the Composition the stronger. But this entertainment being no Novelty, I shall pass it over; And the rather because there are some other Rarities which are not to be met with else where.

Part. 1st. p. 7, 8.
pt. 2d. p. 57.
pt. 2d. p. 60;
pt. 1st. p. 38. pt.
2d. p. 14.

Here he diverts the Ladies with the Charming Rhetorick of *Snotty-Nose, filthy Vermin in the Beard, Nitty Jerkin, and Louse Snapper, with the Letter in the Chamber-pot, and natural Evacuation*; with an abusive description of a Countess, and a rude story of a certain Lady, and with some other varieties of this Kind, too coarse to be named. This is rare stuff for Ladies, and Quality! There is more of *Physick*, than *Comedy* in such Sentences as these. *Crocus Metallorum* will scarce turn the Stomack more effectually. 'Tis possible Mr. *Durfey* might design it for a *Receipt*. And being Conscious the *Play* was too dear, threw a *Vomit* into the Bargain. I wonder Mr. *Durfey* should have no more regard to the *Boxes* and *Pitt!* That a Man who has *studied the Scenes of Decency and Good Manners with so much Zeal*, should practise with so little Address! Certainly *indefatigable Diligence, Care and Pains*, {204} was never more unfortunate! In his *third Part*, *Buxsome* swears faster, and is more scandalous, and impertinent, than in the other two. At these Liberties, and some in *Sancho*, the Ladies took Check. This Censure Mr. *Durfey* seems heartily sorry for. He is *extreamly concern'd that the Ladies, that Essential part of the Audience*, should think his Performance *nauseous and undecent*. That is, he is very sorry they brought their Wits, or their Modesty along with them. However Mr. *Durfey* is not so Ceremonious as to submit: He is resolved to keep the Field against the Ladies; And endeavours to defend himself by saying, *I know no other way in Nature to do the Characters right, but to make a Romp, speak like a Romp, and a clownish Boor blunder* &c. *Ibid.*

pt. 1st. p. 7, 8. pt.
2d. p. 52. pt. 2d. p.
36, 49. pt. 2d. p.
37. 44.
Pref. pt. 3d.

By his favour, all Imitations tho' never so well Counterfeited are not proper for the *Stage*. To present Nature under every Appearance would be an odd undertaking. A *Midnight Cart*, or a *Dunghil* would be no Ornamental *Scene*. Nastyness, and dirty Conversation are of the same kind. For *Words* are a Picture to the Ear, as *Colours* and *Surface* are to the Eye. Such Discourses are like dilating upon Ulcers, and Leprosies: The more *Natural*, the worse; for the Disgust always rises with the Life of the Description. Offensive Language like offensive Smells, does but make a Man's Senses a burthen, and affords him nothing but Loathing and Aversion. Beastliness in Behaviour, gives a disparaging Idea of Humane Nature, and almost makes us sorry we are of the same Kind. For these reasons 'tis a Maxime in Good Breeding {205}

never to shock the Senses, or Imagination. This Rule holds strongest before *Women*, and especially when they come to be entertain'd. The Diversion ought to be suited to the Audience; For nothing pleases which is disproportion'd to Capacity, and Gust. The Rudenesses and broad Jests of Beggars, are just as acceptable to Ladies as their Rags, and Cleanliness. To treat Persons of Condition like the *Mob*, is to degrade their Birth, and affront their Breeding. It levells them with the lowest Education. For the size of a Man's Sense, and Improvement, is discovered by his Pleasures, as much as by any thing else.

Person. Dram. But to remove from *Scenes of Decency*, to *Scenes of Wit*. And here *Mannel* and *Sancho*, two *pleasant sharp Fellows*, will divert us extreamly. *Mannel* in the Disguise of a Lady addresses the Dutchess in this manner. *Illustrious Beauty—I must desire to know* {206}
whether the most purifidiferous Don Quixote of the Manchissima, and his Squireiferous Panca, be in this Company or no. This is the Ladies speech! Now comes *Sancho*. *Why look you forsooth, without any more Flourishes, the Governour Panca is here, and Don Quixotissimo too; therefore most afflictedissimus Matronissima, speak what you*
pt. 2d. p. 31. *willissimus, for we are all ready to be your Servitorissimus.*

I dare not go on, for fear of overlaying the *Reader*. He may cloy himself at his Leisure. The
p. 51. *Scene between the Taylor and Gardiner*, lies much in the same Latitude of Understanding.

The Third *Part* presents a set of *Poppets*, which is a Thought good enough; for this Play is only fit to move upon *Wires*. 'Tis pity these little *Machines* appear'd no sooner, for then the Sense, and the *Actors* had been well adjusted. In explaining the *Persons*, He acquaints us that *Carasco is a Witty Man*. I can't tell what the Gentleman might be in other Places, but I'm Satisfied he is a Fool in his *Play*. But some *Poets* are as great Judges of Wit, as they are an instance; And have the Theory and the Practise just alike.

Mr. *Durfeys Epistles Dedicatory* are to the full as diverting as his *Comedies*. A little of them may not be amiss.

In his first, He thus addresses the *Dutches of Ormond*. *'Tis Madam from your Graces* {207}
Prosperous Influence that I date my Good Fortune. To *Date* from time and Place, is vulgar and ordinary, and many a *Letter* has miscarried with it: But to do it from an *Influence*, is
Pref. pt. 1st. Astrological, and surprizing, and agrees extreamly with the *Hemisphere of the Play-house*.
Ibid. These Flights one would easily imagine were the *Poor Off-spring* of Mr. *Durfey's Brain*, as he very judiciously phrases it.

One Paragraph in his Dedication to Mr. *Montague* is perfect *Quixotism*; One would almost think him enchanted. I'll give the *Reader* a Tast.

Had your Eye's shot the haughty Austerity upon me of a right Courtier,—your valued minutes had never been disturb'd with dilatory Trifles of this Nature, but my Heart on dull
pt. 3d. *Consideration of your Merit, had supinely wish'd you prosperity at a Distance.* I'm afraid the *Poet* was under some Apprehensions of the Temper he complains of. For to my thinking, there is a great deal of *Supiness*, and *dull Consideration* in these Periods. He tells his Patron *his Smiles have embolden'd him*. I confess I can't see how He could forbear smiling at such Entertainment. However Mr. *Durfey* takes Things by the best Handle, and is resolv'd to be happy in his Interpretation. But to be serious. Were I the Author, I would
{208} discharge my Muse unless she prov'd kinder. His way is rather to cultivate his Lungs, and Sing to other Peoples Sense; For to finish him in a word, he is *Vox, & præterea nihil*. I speak this only on Supposition that the rest of his Performances are like These. Which because I have not perused I can judge of no farther than by the Rule of *ex pede Herculem*. I shall conclude with Monsieur *Boileau's Art of Poetry*. This citation may possibly be of some service to Mr. *Durfey*; For if not concern'd in the Application, he may at least be precaution'd by the Advice.

The Translation runs thus.

*I like an Author that Reforms the Age;
And keeps the right Decorum of the Stage:
That always pleases by just Reasons Rule:
But for a tedious Droll a Quibbling Fool,
Who with low nauseous Baudry fills his Plays;
Let him begone and on two Tressells raise
Some Smithfield Stage, where he may act his Pranks,
And make Jack-puddings speak to Mountebanks.*
p. 53.

The *Relapse* shall follow *Don Quixot*; upon the account of some Alliance between them. And because this *Author* swaggers so much in his *Preface*, and seems to look big upon his Performance, I shall spend a few more thoughts than ordinary upon his *Play*, and examine it briefly in the *Fable*, the *Moral*, the *Characters*, &c. The *Fable* I take to be as follows.

Fashion a *Lewd*, *Prodigal*, *younger Brother*; is reduced to extremity: Upon his arrival from his Travels, he meets with *Coupler*, an old sharpening Match-maker; This Man puts him upon a project of cheating his Elder Brother *Lord Foplington*, of a rich Fortune. Young Fashion being refused a Summ of Money by his Brother, goes into *Couplers Plot*, bubbles Sir *Tunbelly* of his Daughter, and makes himself Master of a fair Estate.

From the Form and Constitution of the *Fable*, I observe

1st. That there is a *Misnommer* in the Title. The *Play* should not have been call'd the *Relapse*, or *Virtue in Danger*: *Lovelace*, and *Amanda*, from whose *Characters* these Names {210} are drawn, are Persons of Inferiour Consideration. *Lovelace* sinks in the middle of the *Fourth* Act, and we hear no more of him till towards the End of the *Fifth*, where he enters once more, but then 'tis as *Cato* did the Senate house, only to go out again. And as for *Amanda* she has nothing to do but to stand a shock of Courtship, and carry off her Virtue. This I confess is a great task in the *Play-house*, but no main matter in the *Play*.

The *Intrigue*, and the *Discovery*, the great Revolution and success, turns upon *Young Fashion*. He without Competition, is the Principal Person in the *Comedy*. And therefore the *Younger Brother*, or the *Fortunate Cheat*, had been much a more proper Name. Now when a *Poet* can't rig out a *Title Page*, 'tis but a bad sign of his holding out to the *Epilogue*.

2ly. I observe the *Moral* is vitious: It points the wrong way, and puts the *Prize* into the wrong Hand. It seems to make *Lewdness* the reason of *Desert*, and gives *Young Fashion* a second Fortune, only for Debauching away his First. A short view of his *Character*, will make good this Reflection. To begin with him: He confesses himself a *Rake*, swears, and Blasphemes, Curses, and Challenges his Elder Brother, cheats him of his Mistress, and gets {211} him laid by the Heels in a Dog-Kennel. And what was the ground of all this unnatural quarrelling and outrage? Why the main of it was only because *Lord Foplington* refused to supply his Luxury, and make good his Extravagance. This *Young Fashion* after all, is the *Poets* Man of Merit. He provides, a *Plot* and a Fortune, on purpose for him. To speak freely, A Lewd Character seldom wants good Luck in *Comedy*. So that when ever you see a thorough Libertine, you may almost swear he is in a rising way, and that the *Poet* intends to make him a great Man. In short; This *Play* perverts the End of *Comedy*: Which as *Monsieur Rapin* observes ought to regard Reformation, and publick Improvement. But the *Relapser* had a more fashionable Fancy in his Head. His *Moral* holds forth this notable Instruction.

Reflect, &c. p. 131.

1st. That all *Younger Brothers* should be careful to run out their Circumstances as Fast, and as Ill as they can. And when they have put their Affairs in this posture of Advantage, they may conclude themselves in the high Road to Wealth, and Success. For as *Fashion* Blasphemously applies it, *Providence takes care of Men of Merit*.

Relapse. p. 19

2ly. That when a Man is press'd, his business is not to be govern'd by Scruples, or formalize {212} upon Conscience and Honesty. The quickest Expedients are the best; For in such cases the Occasion justifies the Means, and a Knight of the *Post*, is as good as one of the *Garter*. In the

3d. Place it may not be improper to look a little into the *Plot*. Here the *Poet* ought to play the Politician if ever. This part should have some stroaks, of Conduct, and strains of Invention more then ordinary. There should be something that is admirable, and unexpected to surprize the Audience. And all this Finess must work by gentle degrees, by a due preparation of *Incidents*, and by Instruments which are probable. 'Tis Mr. *Rapins* remark, that without probability *every Thing is lame and Faulty*. Where there is no pretence to *Miracle* and *Machine*, matters must not exceed the force of Beleif. To produce effects without proportion; and likelihood in the Cause, is Farce, and Magick, and looks more like Conjuring than Conduct. Let us examine the *Relapser* by these Rules. To discover his *Plot*, we must lay open somewhat more of the *Fable*.

Reflect. p. 133.

'*Lord Foplington* a Town Beau, had agreed to Marry the Daughter of Sir. *Tun-belly Clumsey* {213} a Country Gentleman, who lived Fifty miles from *London*. Notwithstanding this small distance, the Lord had never seen his Mistress, nor the Knight his Son in Law. Both parties out of their great Wisdom, leave the treating the Match to *Coupler*. When all the preliminaries of Settlement were adjusted, and *Lord Foplington* expected by Sir *Tun-belly*

in a few days, *Coupler* betrays his Trust to *Young Fashion*. He advises him to go down before his Brother: To Counterfeit his Person, and pretend that the strength of his Inclinations brought him thither before his time, and without his Retinue. And to make him pass upon Sir *Tun-belly*, *Coupler* gives him his *Letter*, which was to be Lord *Foplingtons* Credential. *Young Fashion* thus provided, posts down to Sir *Tun-belly*, is received for Lord *Foplington*, and by the help of a little Folly and Knavery in the Family, Marries the young Lady without her Fathers Knowledge, and a week before the Appointment.

This is the Main of the Contrivance. The Counterturn in Lord *Foplingtons* appearing afterwards, and the Support of the main *Plot*, by *Bulls*, and *Nurses* attesting the Marriage, contain's little of Moment. And here we may observe that Lord *Foplington* has an unlucky {214} Disagreement in his *Character*; This Misfortune sits hard upon the credibility of the Design. Tis true he was Formal and Fantastick, Smitten with Dress, and Equipage, and it may be vapour'd by his Perfumes But his Behaviour is far from that of an Ideot. This being granted, 'tis very unlikely this Lord with his five Thousand pounds *per annum*, should leave the choise of his Mistress to *Coupler*, and take her Person and Fortune upon *Content*. To court thus blindfold, and by *Proxy*, does not agree with the Method of an Estate, nor the Niceness of a *Beau*. However the *Poet* makes him engage Hand over Head, without so much as the sight of her Picture. His going down to Sir *Tun-belly* was as extraordinary as his Courtship. He had never seen this Gentleman. He must know him to be beyond Measure suspicious, and that there was no Admittance without *Couplers* Letter. This *Letter* which was, the Key to the Castle, he forgot to take with him, and tells you 'twas stolen by his Brother *Tam*. And for his part he neither had the Discretion to get another, nor yet to produce that written by him to Sir *Tun-belly*. Had common Sense been consulted upon this Occasion, the *Plot* had been at an End, and the *Play* had sunk in the Fourth *Act*. The {215} Remainder subsists purely upon the strength of Folly, and of Folly altogether improbable, and out of *Character*. The *Salvo* of Sir *John Friendly's* appearing at last, and vouching for Lord *Foplington*, won't mend the matter. For as the *Story* informs us, Lord *Foplington* never depended on this Reserve. He knew nothing of this Gentleman being in the Country, nor where he Lived. The truth is, Sir *John* was left in *Town*, and the Lord had neither p. 81. concerted his journey with him, nor engaged his Assistance. p. 83.

Let us now see how Sir. *Tun-belly* hangs together. This Gentleman the *Poet* makes a *Justice* of *Peace*, and a *Deputy Lieutenant*, and seats him fifty Miles from *London*: But by his Character you would take him for one of *Hercules's* Monsters, or some Gyant in *Guy* of *Warwick*. His Behaviour is altogether *Romance*, and has nothing agreeable to Time, or Country. When *Fashion*, and *Lory*, went down, they find the Bridge drawn up, the Gates barr'd, and the Blunderbuss cock'd at the first civil Question. And when Sir *Tun-belly* had notice of this formidable Appearance, he Sallies out with the *Posse* of the Family, and marches against a Couple of Strangers with a *Life Gaurd* of Halberds, Sythes, and {216} Pitchforks. And to make sure work, Young *Hoyden* is lock'd up at the first approach of the Enemy. Here you have prudence and wariness to the excess of Fable, and Frensy. And yet this mighty man of suspition, trusts *Coupler* with the Disposal of his only Daughter, and his Estate into the Bargain. And what was this *Coupler*? Why, a sharper by *Character*, and little better by Profession. Farther. Lord *Foplington* and the Knight, are but a days Journey asunder, and yet by their treating by *Proxy*, and Commission, one would Fancy a dozen Degrees of *Latitude* betwixt them. And as for Young *Fashion*, excepting *Couplers* Letter, he has all imaginable Marks of Imposture upon him. He comes before his Time, and without the Retinue expected, and has nothing of the Air of Lord *Foplington's* Conversation. When Sir *Tun-belly* ask'd him, *pray where are your Coaches and Servants my Lord?* He makes a trifling excuse. *Sir, that I might give you and your Fair Daughter a proof how impatient I am to be nearer akin to you, I left my Equipage to follow me, and came away Post, with* p. 59. *only one Servant*. To be in such a Hurry of Inclination for a Person he never saw, is somewhat strange! Besides, 'tis very unlikely Lord *Foplington* should hazard his Complexion on Horseback, out ride his Figure, and appear a Bridegroom in *Deshabille*. You {217} may as soon perswade a Peacock out of his Train, as a *Beau* out of his Equipage; especially upon such an Occasion. Lord *Foplington* would scarcely speak to his Brother just come a p. 11. *Shore*, till the Grand Committee of *Taylor's*, *Seamstresses*, &c. was dispatch'd. Pomp, and Curiosity were this Lords Inclination; why then should he mortifie without necessity, make his first Approaches thus out of Form and present himself to his Mistress at such Disadvantage? And as this is the Character of Lord *Foplington*, so 'tis reasonable to suppose Sir *Tunbely* acquainted with it. An enquiry into the Humour and management of a Son in Law, is very natural and Customary. So that we can't without Violence to Sense, suppose Sir *Tunbely* a Stranger to Lord *Foplington's* Singularities. These Reasons were enough in all Conscience to make Sir *Tunbely* suspect a Juggle, and that *Fashion* was no better then a Counterfeit. Why then was the *Credential* swallow'd without chewing, why was not *Hoyden* lock'd up, and a pause made for farther Enquiry? Did this *Justice* never hear of such a Thing as Knavery, or had he ever greater reason to guard against it? More wary steps might well have been expected from Sir *Tunbely*. To run from one extrem of {218} Caution, to another of Credulity, is highly improbable. In short, either Lord *Foplington* and Sir *Tunbely* are Fools, or they are not. If they are, where lies the Cunning in over-reaching them? What Conquest can there be without Opposition? If they are not Fools, why does the *Poet* make them so? Why is their Conduct so gross, so particoulour'd, and inconsistent? Take them either way, and the *Plot* miscarries. The first supposition makes it dull, and the later,

incredible. So much for the *Plot*. I shall now in the

4th. Place touch briefly upon the *Manners*.

The *Manners* in the Language of the *Stage* have a signification somewhat particular. *Aristotle* and *Rapin* call them the Causes and Principles of Action. They are formed upon the Diversities of Age, and Sex, of Fortune, Capacity, and Education. The propriety of *Manners* consists in a Conformity of Practise, and Principle; of Nature, and Behaviour. For the purpose. An old Man must not appear with the Profuseness and Levity of Youth; A Gentleman must not talk like a Clown, nor a Country Girl like a Town Jilt. And when the *Characters* are feign'd 'tis *Horace's* Rule to keep them Uniform, and consistent, and agreeable to their first setting out. The *Poet* must be careful to hold his *Persons* tight to their *Calling* and pretensions. He must not shift, and shuffle, their Understandings; Let them skip from Wits to Blockheads, nor from Courtiers to Pedants; On the other hand. If their business is playing the Fool, keep them strictly to their Duty, and never indulge them in fine Sentences. To manage otherwise, is to desert *Nature*, and makes the *Play* appear monstrous, and Chimerical. So that instead of an *Image of Life*, 'tis rather an Image of Impossibility. To apply some of these remarks to the *Relapser*. {219}

The fine *Berinthia*, one of the Top-Characters, is impudent and Profane. *Lovelace* would engage her Secrecy, and bids her Swear. She answers *I do*.

Lov. By what?

Berinth. By *Woman*.

Lov. *That's Swearing by my Deity, do it by your own, or I shan't believe you.*

p. 47. *Berinth.* By *Man* then.

This Lady promises *Worthy* her Endeavours to corrupt *Amanda*; and then They make a Profane jest upon the Office. In the progress of the *Play* after a great deal of Lewd Discourse with *Lovelace*, *Berinthia* is carried off into a Closet, and Lodged in a *Scene* of {220}

p. 74. Debauch. Here is Decency, and Reservedness, to a great exactness! Monsieur *Rapin* blames *Ariosto*, and *Tasso*, for representing two of their Women over free, and airy. These *Poets* says he, *rob Women of their Character, which is Modesty*. Mr. *Rymer* is of the same Opinion: His words are these. *Nature knows nothing in the Manners which so properly, and particularly distinguish a Woman, as her Modesty.*—*An impudent Woman is fit only to be kicked, and expos'd in Comedy.*

Tragedies of the last Age consider'd, &c. p. 113, 114.

Now *Berinthia* appears in *Comedy* 'tis true; but neither to be *kick'd*, nor *expos'd*. She makes a Considerable Figure, has good Usage, keeps the best Company, and goes off without Censure, or Disadvantage. Let us now take a Turn or two with Sir *Tun-belly's* Heiress of 1500 pounds a year. This Young Lady swears, talks smut, and is upon the matter just as rag-manner'd as *Mary the Buxsome*. 'Tis plain the *Relapser* copied Mr. *Durfey's* Original, which is a sign he was somewhat Pinch'd. Now this *Character* was no great Beauty in *Buxsome*; But it becomes the Knights Daughter much worse. *Buxsome* was a poor Pesant, which made her Rudeness more natural, and expected. But *Deputy Lieutenants* Children don't use to appear with the Behaviour of Beggars. To breed all People alike, and make no distinction between a *Seat*, and a *Cottage*, is not over artful, nor very ceremonious to the Country Gentlemen. The *Relapser* gives *Miss* a pretty Soliloquy, I'll transcribe it for *the Reader*. {221}

She swears by her Maker, *'tis well I have a Husband a coming, or I'de Marry the Baker I would so. No body can knock at the Gate, but presently I must be lock'd up, and, here's the Young Gray-hound—can run loose about the House all day long, she can, 'tis very well!!* Afterwards her Language is too Lewd to be quoted. Here is a Compound of Ill Manners, and Contradiction Is this a good Resemblance of Quality, a Description of a great Heiress, and the effect of a Cautious Education? By her Coarsness you would think her Bred upon a Common, and by her Confidence, in the Nursery of the *Play-house*. I suppose the *Relapser* Fancies the calling her *Miss Hoyden* is enough to justifie her Ill Manners. By his favour, this is a Mistake. To represent her thus unhewn, he should have suited her Condition to her Name, a little better. For there is no Charm in *Words* as to matters of Breeding, An unfashionable Name won't make a Man a Clown. Education is not form'd upon Sounds, and Syllables, but upon Circumstances, and Quality. So that if he was resolv'd to have shown her thus unpolish'd, he should have made her keep *Sheep*, or brought her up at the *Wash-Boul*. {222}

p. 61. Sir *Tun-belly* accosts Young *Fashion* much at the same rate of Accomplishment. My Lord, —*I humbly crave leave to bid you Welcome in a Cup of Sack-wine*. One would imagine the

Poet was overdozed before he gave the *Justice* a Glass. For *Sack-wine* is too low for a *Petty Constable*. This peasantry expression agrees neither with the *Gentlemans Figure*, nor with the rest of his *Behaviour*. I find we should have a *Creditable Magistracy*, if the *Relapser* had the Making them. Here the *Characters* are pinch'd in *Sense*, and stinted to short Allowance. At an other time they are over-indulged, and treated above Expectation.

For the purpose. *Vanity and Formalizing* is Lord *Foplingtons* part. To let him speak without *Aukwardness*, and *Affectation*, is to put him out of his *Element*. There must be *Gumm* and stiffening in his *Discourse* to make it natural. However, the *Relapser* has taken a fancy to his *Person*, and given him some of the most *Gentile* raillery in the whole *Play*. To give an Instance or two. This Lord in *Discourse* with *Fashion* forgets his *Name*, flies out into *Sense*, and smooth expression, out talks his *Brother*, and abating the starch'd *Similitude* of a
p. 42. *Watch*, discovers nothing of *Affectation*, for almost a *Page* together. He relapses into the same *Intemperance* of good *Sense*, in an other *Dialogue* between him and his *Brother*. I shall cite a little of it.

Y. Fash. Unless you are so kind to assist me in redeeming my Annuity, I know no Remedy, but to go take a Purse.

L. Fopl. Why Faith Tam—to give you my Sense of the Thing, I do think taking a Purse the best Remedy in the World, for if you succeed, you are releiv'd that way, if you are taken—
p. 43. *you are reliev'd to'ther.*

Fashion being disappointed of a supply quarrels his *Elder Brother*, and calls him *the Prince of Coxcombs*.
p. 44.

L. Fopl. Sir I am proud of being at the Head of so prevailing a party.

Y. Fash. Will nothing then provoke thee? draw Coward.

L. Fopl. Look you Tam, your poverty makes your Life so burdensome to you, you would provoke me to a Quarrel, in hopes either to slip through my Lungs into my Estate, or else to get your self run through the Guts, to put an end to your Pain. But I shall disappoint you in both. &c.

This *Drolling* has too much *Spirit*, the *Air* of it is too free, and too handsomly turn'd for Lord *Foplingtons* *Character*. I grant the *Relapser* could not afford to lose these *Sentences*. The *Scene* would have suffer'd by the *Omission*. But then he should have contriv'd the matter so, as that they might, have been spoken by *Young Fashion* in *Asides*, or by some other more proper *Person*. To go on. *Miss Hoyden* sparkles too much in *Conversation*. The
p. 64. *Poet* must needs give her a shining *Line* or two, which serves only to make the rest of her dullness the more remarkable. *Sir. Tun-belly* falls into the same *Misfortune* of a *Wit*, and
p. 85. rallies above the force of his *Capacity*. But the place having a mixture of *Profaness*, I shall forbear to cite it. Now to what purpose should a *Fools Coat* be embroider'd? *Finery* in the wrong place is but expensive *Ridiculousness*. Besides, I don't perceive the *Relapser* was in any *Condition* to be thus liberal. And when a *Poet* is not overstock'd, to squander away his *Wit* among his *Block-heads*, is meer *Distraction*. His men of *Sense* will smart for this prodigality. *Lovelace* in his discourse of *Friendship*, shall be the first Instance. *Friendship* (says he) is said to be a plant of tedious growth, its Root composed of tender *Fibers*, nice in their *Tast*, &c. By this Description the *Palate* of a *Fiber*, should be somewhat more nice and distinguishing, then the *Poets* Judgment. Let us examin some more of his *Witty People*. *Young Fashion* fancies by *Misses* forward *Behaviour*, she would have a whole *Kennel* of *Beaux* after her at *London*. And then *Hey to the Park, and the Play, and the Church, and*
p. 64. *the Devil*. Here I conceive the ranging of the *Period* is amiss. For if he had put the *Play*, and the *Devil* together, the *Order of Nature*, and the *Air of Probability* had been much better observ'd.

Afterwards *Coupler* being out of *Breath* in coming up stairs to *Fashion*, asks him *why the*
p. 94. *— canst thou not lodge upon the Ground-floor?*

Y. Fash. Because I love to lye as near Heaven as I can. One would think a *Spark* just come off his *Travels*, and had made the *Tour of Italy and France*, might have rallied with a better *Grace*! However if he lodg'd in a *Garret*, 'tis a good *Local* jest. I had almost forgot one pretty remarkable *Sentence* of *Fashion* to *Lory*. *I shall shew thee* (says he) *the excess of my Passion by being very calm.* Now since this *Gentleman* was in a vein of talking *Philosophy* to his *Man*, I'm sorry he broke of so quickly. Had he gone on and shown him the *Excess* of a *Storm* and no *Wind* stirring, the *Topick* had been spent, and the *Thought* improv'd to the utmost.
p. 15.

Let us now pass onto *Worthy*, the *Relapsers* fine *Gentleman*. This *Spark* sets up for *Sense*,

and Address, and is to have nothing of Affectation or Conscience to spoil his Character. However to say no more of him, he grows Foppish in the last *Scene*, and courts *Amanda* in Fustian, and Pedantry. First, He gives his Periods a turn of Versification, and talks *Prose* to her in *Meeter*. Now this is just as agreeable as it would be to *Ride* with one Leg, and *Walk* with the other. But let him speak for himself. His first business is to bring *Amanda* to an Aversion for her Husband; And therefore he perswades her to *Rouse up that Spirit Women ought to bear; and slight your God if he neglects his Angel*. He goes on with his Orisons. *With Arms of Ice receive his Cold Embraces and keep your Fire for those that come in Flames*. Fire and Flames, is Mettal upon Mettal; 'Tis false Heraldry. *Extend the Arms of Mercy to his Aid. His zeal may give him Title to your Pity, altho' his Merit cannot claim your Love*. Here you have *Arms* brought in again by Head and shoulders. I suppose the design was to keep up the Situation of the *Allegory*. But the latter part of the Speech is very Pithy. He would have her resign her Vertue out of Civility, and abuse her Husband on Principles of good Nature. *Worthy* pursues his point, and Rises in his Address. He falls into a Fit of Dissection, and hopes to gain his Mistress by Cutting his Throat. He is for *Ripping up his Faithful Breast*, to prove the Reality of his Passion. Now when a Man Courts with his Heart in his Hand, it must be great Cruelty to refuse him! No Butcher could have Thought of a more moving Expedient! However, *Amanda* continues obstinate, and is not in the usual Humour of the *Stage*. Upon this, like a well bred Lover he seizes her by Force, and threatens to Kill her. *Nay struggle not for all's in vain, or Death, or Victory, I am determin'd*. In this rencounter the Lady proves too nimble, and slips through his Fingers. Upon this disappointment, he cries, *there's Divinity about her, and she has dispenc'd some Portion on't to me*. His Passion is Metamorphos'd in the Turn of a hand: He is refin'd into a *Platonick* Admirer, and goes off as like a *Town Spark* as you would wish. And so much for the *Poets* fine Gentleman. {227}

I should now examine the *Relapser's Thoughts and Expressions*, which are two other Things of Consideration in a *Play*. The *Thoughts* or *Sentiments* are the *Expressions of the Manners, as Words are of the Thoughts*. But the view of the *Characters* has in some measure prevented this Enquiry. Leaving this Argument therefore, I shall consider his *Play* with respect to the {228}

Three Unities of Time, Place, and Action.

And here the *Reader* may please to take notice, that the Design of these Rules, is to conceal the Fiction of the *Stage*, to make the *Play* appear Natural, and to give it an Air of Reality, and *Conversation*.

The largest compass for the first *Unity* is Twenty Four Hours: But a lesser proportion is more regular. To be exact, the Time of the History, or *Fable*, should not exceed that of the *Representation*: Or in other words, the whole Business of the *Play*, should not be much longer than the Time it takes up in *Playing*.

The Second *Unity* is that of *Place*. To observe it, the *Scene* must not wander from one Town, or Country to another. It must continue in the same House, Street, or at farthest in the same City, where it was first laid. The Reason of this Rule depends upon the *First*. Now the Compass of *Time* being strait, that of *Space* must bear a Correspondent Proportion. Long journeys in *Plays* are impracticable. The Distances of *Place* must be suited to Leisure, and Possibility, otherwise the supposition will appear unnatural and absurd. The {229}

Third *Unity* is that of *Action*; It consists in contriving the chief Business of the *Play* single, and making the concerns of one Person distinguishably great above the rest. All the Forces of the *Stage* must as it were serve Under one *General*: And the lesser Intrigues or Underplots, have some Relation to the Main. The very Oppositions must be useful, and appear only to be Conquer'd, and Countermin'd. To represent Two considerable Actions independent of each other, Destroys the beauty of Subordination, weakens the Contrivance, and dilutes the pleasure. It splits the *Play*, and makes the *Poem* double. He that would see more upon this subject may consult *Corneille*. To bring these Remarks to the Case in hand. And here we may observe how the *Relapser* fails in all the *Rules* above mention'd.

*Discourse des Trois
Unitez. pt. 3d.*

1st. His *Play* by modest Computation takes up a weeks Work, but five days you must allow it at the lowest. One day must be spent in the First, Second, and part of the Third *Act*, before Lord *Foplington* sets forward to Sir *Tun-belly*. Now the Length of the Distance, the Pomp of the Retinue, and the Niceness of the Person being consider'd; the journey down, and up again, cannot be laid under four days. To put this out of doubt, Lord, *Foplington* is particularly careful to tell *Coupler*, how concern'd he was not to overdrive for fear of disordering his *Coach-Horses*. The Laws of *Place*, are no better observ'd than those of *Time*. In the Third *Act* the *Play* is in *Town*, in the Fourth *Act* 'tis stroll'd Fifty Miles off, and in the Fifth *Act* in *London* again. Here *Pegasus* stretches it to purpose! This *Poet* is fit to ride a Match with Witches. *Juliana Cox* never Switched a Broom stock with more Expedition! This is exactly {230}

One would think by the probability of matters, the *Plot* had been stolen from Dr. O—s.

The *Poet's* Success in the last *Unity of Action* is much the same with the former. *Lovelace*, *Amanda*, and *Berinthia*, have no share in the main Business. These Second rate *Characters* are a detached Body: Their Interest is perfectly Foreign, and they are neither Friends, nor Enemies to the *Plot*. *Young Fashion* does not so much as see them till the Close of the Fifth {231} *Act*, and then they meet only to fill the *Stage*: And yet these *Persons* are in the *Poets* account very considerable; Insomuch that he has misnamed his *Play* from the Figure of two of them. This strangness of *Persons*, distinct Company, and inconnexion of Affairs, destroys the Unity of the *Poem*. The contrivance is just as wise as it would be to cut a Diamond in two. There is a loss of Lustre in the Division. Increasing the Number, abates the Value, and by making it more, you make it less.

Thus far I have examin'd the *Dramatick* Merits of the *Play*. And upon enquiry, it appears a Heap of Irregularities. There is neither Propriety in the *Name*, nor Contrivance in the *Plot*, nor Decorum in the *Characters*. 'Tis a thorough Contradition to Nature, and impossible in

Pref. *Time*, and *Place*. Its *Shining Graces* as the Author calls them, are *Blasphemy* and *Baudy*, together with a mixture of *Oaths*, and *Cursing*. Upon the whole; The *Relapser's* Judgment, and his *Morals*, are pretty well adjusted. The *Poet*, is not much better than the *Man*. As for the *Profane* part, 'tis hideous and superlative. But this I have consider'd elsewhere. All that I shall observe here is, that the Author was sensible of this Objection. His Defence in his {232} *Preface* is most wretched: He pretends to know nothing of the Matter, and that '*tis all Printed*; Which only proves his Confidence equal to the rest of his Virtues. To out-face Evidence in this manner, is next to the affirming there's no such Sin as *Blasphemy*, which is the greatest Blasphemy of all. His Apology consists in railing at the *Clergy*; a certain sign of ill Principles, and ill Manners. This He does at an unusual rate of Rudeness and Spite. He calls them the Saints with Screw'd *Faces*, and wry *Mouths*. And after a great deal of scurrilous Abuse too gross to be mention'd, he adds; *If any Man happens to be offended at a story of a Cock and a Bull, and a Priest and a Bull-dog, I beg his Pardon*, &c. This is brave *Bear-Garden* Language! The *Relapser* would do well to transport his Muse to *Samourgan*.* There 'tis likely he might find Leisure to lick his *Abortive Brat* into shape; And meet with proper Business for his Temper, and encouragement for his Talent.

* *An Academy in Lithuania, for the Education of Bears. Pere Auville Voyage en Divers Etats, &c. p. 240.*

CHAP. VI.

{233}

The Opinion of Paganism, of the Church, and State, concerning the Stage.

Having in the foregoing *Chapters* discover'd some part of the Disorders of the *English Stage*; I shall in this Last, present the *Reader* with a short View of the Sense of *Antiquity*, To which I shall add some *Modern* Authorities; From all which it will appear that *Plays* have generally been look'd on as the *Nurseries* of *Vice*, the *Corrupters* of *Youth*, and the *Grievance* of the *Country* where they are suffer'd.

This proof from *Testimony* shall be ranged under these three Heads.

Under the *First*, I shall cite some of the most celebrated *Heathen Philosophers*, Orators, and Historians; Men of the biggest Consideration, for Sense, Learning, and Figure. The

Second, Shall consist of the *Laws* and *Constitutions* of *Princes*, &c. The

Third, Will be drawn from *Church-Records*, from *Fathers*, and *Councils* of unexceptionable {234} Authority, both as to Persons, and Time.

1st. I shall produce some of the most celebrated Heathen Philosophers &c. To begin with *Plato*. 'This Philosopher tells us that *Plays* raise the Passions, and pervert the use of them, and by consequence are dangerous to Morality. For this Reason he banishes these Diversions his *Common-Wealth*.'

Plat. de Repub. Lib. 10.

Euseb. Præpar. Evang.

Cyropæd. p. 34

Xenophon who was both a Man of *Letters* and a great *General*, commends the *Persians* for the Discipline of their Education. 'They won't (says he) so much as suffer their Youth to hear any thing that's Amorous or Tawdry.' They were afraid want of Ballast might make them miscarry, and that 'twas dangerous to add weight to the Byass of Nature.

Aristotle lays it down for a Rule 'that the Law ought to forbid Young People the seeing of *Comedies*. Such permissions not being safe till Age and Discipline had confirm'd them in

Polit. Lib. 7. c. p. sobriety, fortified their Virtue, and made them as it were proof against Debauchery.' This
12. Philosopher who had look'd as far into Humane Nature as any Man, observes farther. 'That
Polit. Lib. 8. the force of Musick and *Action* is very affecting. It commands the Audience and changes
the Passions to a Resemblance of the Matter before them.' So that where the {235}
Representation is foul, the Thoughts of the Company must suffer.

Tusc. Quest. Lib. 4. *Tully* cries out upon 'Licentious *Plays* and *Poems*, as the bane of Sobriety, and wise
De Leg. Lib. 1. Thinking: That *Comedy* subsists upon Lewdness, and that Pleasure is the Root, of all Evil.'

Livy, reports the Original of *Plays* among the *Romans*. 'He tells us they were brought in
upon the score of Religion, to pacifie the Gods, and remove a *Mortality*. But then He adds
that the Motives are sometimes good, when the Means are stark naught: That the Remedy
in this case was worse than the Disease, and the Atonement more Infectious then the
Dec. 1. Lib. 7. Plague.'

Valerius Maximus, Contemporary with *Livy*, gives much the same Account of the rise of
Theatres at *Rome*. 'Twas Devotion which built them. And as for the Performances of those
Places, which Mr. *Dryden* calls the *Ornaments*, this Author censures as the Blemishes of
Peace.' And which is more, He affirms 'They were the Occasions of Civil Distractions; And
Lib. 2. cap. 4. that the *State* first Blush'd, and then Bled, for the Entertainment. He concludes the {236}
cap. 6. consequences of *Plays* intolerable; And that the *Massilienses* did well in clearing the
Country of them. *Seneca* complains heartily of the Extravagance and Debauchery of the
Age: And how forward People were to improve in that which was naught. That scarce any
Body would apply themselves to the Study of Nature and Morality, unless when the *Play-*
House was shut, or the Weather foul. That there was no body to teach *Philosophy*, because
there was no body to Learn it: But that the *Stage* had *Nurseries*, and Company enough.
This Misapplication of time and Fancy, made Knowledge in so ill a Condition. This was the
Cause the Hints of Antiquity were no better pursued; that some Inventions were sunk, and
that Humane Reason grew Downwards rather than otherwise. And elsewhere he avers that
Natural Quest. Lib. there is nothing more destructive to Good Manners then to run Idling to see *Sights*. For
7. cap. 32. there Vice makes an insensible Approach, and steals upon us in the Disguise of pleasure.
Epist. 7.

'*Tacitus* relating how *Nero* hired decay'd Gentlemen for the *Stage*, complains of the
Annal. Lib 14. cap. Mismanagement; And lets us know 'twas the part of a Prince to relieve their Necessity, and
14. not to Tempt it. And that his Bounty should rather 'have set them above an ill practise, than {237}
driven them upon't.'

And in another place, He informs us that 'the German Women were Guarded against
danger, and kept their Honour out of Harms way, by having no *Play-Houses* amongst them.'
De Mor. German.
cap. 19

Plays, in the Opinion of the Judicious *Plutark* are dangerous to corrupt Young People; And
therefore *Stage* Poetry when it grows too hardy, and Licentious, ought to be checkt. This
was the Opinion of these Celebrated *Authors* with respect to *Theatres*: They Charge them
with the Corruption of Principles, and Manners, and lay in all imaginable Caution against
them. And yet these Men had seldom any thing but this World in their Scheme; and form'd
their Judgments only upon Natural Light, and Common Experience. We see then to what
sort of Conduct we are oblig'd. The case is plain; Unless we are little enough to renounce
our Reason, and fall short of *Philosophy*, and live *under* the Pitch of *Heathenism*.

To these Testimonies I shall add a Couple of *Poets*, who both seem good Judges of the
Affair in Hand.

The first is *Ovid*, who in his Book *De Arte Amandi*, gives his *Reader* to understand that the {238}
Play-House was the most likely Place for him to Forage in. Here would be choice of all
sorts: Nothing being more common than to see Beauty surpriz'd, Women debauch'd, and
Wenches Pick'd up at these Diversions.

Sed tu præcique curvis venare Theatris,
Hæc loca sunt voto fertilia tua.
— ruit ad celebres cultissima Fæmina Ludos;
Copia judicium sæpe morata meum est.
Spectatum veniunt, veniunt Spectentur ut ipsæ;
Ille locus casti damna pudoris habet.
Lib. 1.

And afterwards relating the imperfect beginning of *Plays* at the Rape of the *Sabine* Virgins,
he adds,

Silicet ex illo solennia more Theatra
Nunc quoque formosis insidiosa manent.

This *Author* some time after wrote the *Remedy of Love*. Here he pretends to Prescribe for Prudence, if not for Sobriety. And to this purpose, He forbids the seeing of *Plays*, and the reading of *Poets*, especially some of them. Such Recreations being apt to feed the *Distemper*, and make the *Patient* relapse.

*At tanti tibi sit non indulgere Theatris
Dum bene de cacuo Pectore cedat amor.
Enervant animos Citharæ, Cantusque, lyraque
Et vox, & numeris brachia mota suis.
Illic assidue ficti saltantur amantes,
Quid, caveas, actor, quid juvet, arte docet.*

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Remed. Amor.

In his *De Tristibus*, He endeavours to make some Amends for his scandalous *Poems*, and gives *Augustus* a sort of *Plan* for a Publick *Reformation*. Amongst other Things, he advises the suppressing of *Plays*, as being the promoters of Lewdness, and Dissolution of Manners.

*Ut tamen hoc fatear ludi quoque semina præbent
Nequitia, tolli tota Theatra jube.*

Lib. 2.

To the Testimony of *Ovid*, I could add *Plautus*, *Propertius*, and *Juvenal*, but being not willing to overburthen the *Reader*, I shall content my self with the *Plain-Dealer* as one better known at *Home*.

This *Poet* in his *Dedication* to *Lady B*, some Eminent *Procuress*, pleads the Merits of his Function, and insists on being Billeed upon *free Quarter*. *Madam* (says he) *I think a Poet ought to be as free of your Houses, as of the Play-Houses: since he contributes to the support of both, and is as necessary to such as you, as the Ballad-singer to the Pick-purse, in Convening the Cullies at the Theatres to be pick'd up, and Carried to a supper, and Bed, at your Houses.* This is franck Evidence, and ne're the less true, for the Air of a Jest. {240}

Ep. Ded.

I shall now in the Second Place proceed to the *Censures* of the *State*; And show in a few Words how much the *Stage* stands discouraged by the *Laws* of other Countrys and our own.

Plut. De Glor. Atheniens. To begin with the *Athenians*. This People tho' none of the worst Freinds to the *Play-House* 'thought a *Comedy* so unrespectable a Performance, that they made a Law that no Judge of the *Ariopagus* should make one.'

Plut. Lacon. Institut. The *Lacedemonians*, who were remarkable for the Wisdom of their *Laws*, the Sobriety of their *Manners*, and their Breeding of brave Men. This *Government* would not endure the *Stage* in any Form, nor under any Regulation.

Cic. de Repub. Lib. 4. cited by, St. Augustine. Libr. 2. de civ. dei. cap. 13. To pass on to the *Romans*. *Tully* informs us that their *Predecessours* 'counted all *Stage-Plays* uncreditable and Scandalous. In so much that any *Roman* who turn'd *Actor* was not only to be Degraded, but likewise as it were disincorporated, and unnaturalized by the {241} *Order* of the *Censors*.

Lib. 2. cap. 29. *St. Augustine* in the same Book, commends the *Romans* for refusing the *Jus Civitatis* to *Players*, for seizing their Freedoms, and making them perfectly Foreign to their *Government*.

Dec. 1. Libr. 7. We read in *Livy* that the Young People in *Rome* kept the *Fabulæ Attellanæ* to themselves. 'They would not suffer this Diversion to be blemish'd by the *Stage*. For this reason, as the Historian observes, the *Actors* of the *Fabulæ Atellanæ* were neither expell'd their *Tribe*, nor refused to serve in *Arms*; Both which Penalties it appears the *Common Players* lay under.'

XV. Cod. Theod. Tit. vii. p.375. In the Theodosian *Code*, *Players* are call'd *Personæ inhonestæ*; that is, to Translate it softly, Persons Maim'd, and Blemish'd in their Reputation. Their *Pictures* might be seen at the *Play-House*, but were not permitted to hang in any creditable Place* of the *Town*, Upon this *Text Gothofred* tells us the Function of *Players* was counted scandalous* by the *Civil Law*, L. 4. And that those who came upon the *Stage* to divert the people, had a mark of

* in loco Honesto.

* turpe munus.

L. 1. §. 6. de his qui notantur infamia.

Gothofred. Ibid. p. 376.

I shall now come down to our own *Constitution*. And I find by 39 *Eliz. cap. 4. 1. Jac. cap. 7.* That **all Bearwards, Common Players of Enterludes, Counterfeit Egyptians &c. shall be taken, adjudged and deem'd Rogues, Vagabonds, and sturdy beggars, and shall sustain all pain and Punishment, as by this Act is in that behalf appointed.** The *Penalties* are infamous to the last degree, and *Capital* too, unless they give over. 'Tis true, {242}

the first *Act* excepts those **Players which belong to a Baron or other Personage of higher Degree, and are authorized to Play under the hand and Seal of Armes of such Baron, or Personage.** But by the later *Statute* this Privilege of *Licensing* is taken away: And all of them are expressly brought under the Penalty without Distinction.

About the Year 1580, there was a Petition made to Queen *Elizabeth* for suppressing of *Play-Houses*. 'Tis somewhat remarkable, and therefore I shall transcribe some part of the Relation.

Many Godly Citizens, and other well disposed Gentlemen of London, considering that Play-Houses and Dicing-Houses, were Traps for Young Gentlemen and others, and perceiving the many Inconveniencies and great damage that would ensue upon the long suffering of the same, not only to particular Persons but to the whole City; And that it would also be a great disparagement to the Governours, and a dishonour to the Government of this Honourable City, if they should any longer continue, acquainted some Pious Magistrates {243}
therewith, desiring them to take some Course for the suppression of Common Play-Houses, &c. within the City of London and Liberties thereof; who thereupon made humble suit to Queen Elizabeth and her Privy Council, and obtain'd leave of her Majesty to thrust the Players out of the City and to pull down all Play-Houses, and Dicing-Houses within their Liberties, which accordingly was effected. And the Play-Houses in Grace-Church-street &c. were quite put down and suppress'd.

*Rawlidge his
Monster, lately
found out, &c. p. 2,
3, 4.*

I shall give a Modern Instance or two from *France* and so conclude these Authorities.

Gazett Rotterdam: In the Year 1696. we are inform'd by a Dutch *Print*, M. *L' Archevéque appuyé* &c. That the Lord Arch-Bishop 'support'd by the interest of some Religious Persons at Court, has done his utmost to suppress the *Publick Theatres* by degrees; or at least to clear them of Profaness.'

French Amsterdam And last Summer the *Gazetts* in the *Paris Article* affirm. That the King has 'order'd the *Italian Players* to retire out of *France* because they did not observe his *Majesties Orders*, but represented immodest *Pieces*, and did not correct their *Obscenities*, and indecent *Gestures*.'

The same *Intelligence* the next week after, acquaints us, 'that some Persons of the first {244}
Quality at Court, who were the Protectors of these *Comedians*, had solicited the French King to recal his *Order* against them, but their Request had no success.'

And here to put an end to the Modern Authorities, I shall subjoyn a sort of *Pastoral Letter* publish'd about two years since by the Bishop of *Arras* in *Flanders*. The *Reader* shall have as much of it as concerns him in both Languages.

MANDEMENT
DE MONSEIGNEUR
L'Illustrissime Et Reverendissime
EVEQUE D'ARRAS
CONTRE LA COMEDIE.

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GUY DE SEVE DE ROCHE CHOUART *par la grace de Dieu & du Saint Siège Apostolique Evéque d' Arras, A tous fideles dela Ville d'Arras Salut & Benediction. Il faut ignorer sa Religion pour ne pas connoître l'horreur qu'elle a marquée dans tous les temps des Spectacles, & de la Comédie en particulier. Les saints Peres la condamnent dans leurs écrits; Ils la regardent comme un reste du paganisme, & Comme une école d'impureté. L'Eglise l' a touÿjours regardée avec abomination, & si elle n'a pas absolument rejetté de son sein ceux qui exercent ce métier infame & scandaleux, elle les prive publiquement des Sacremens & n'oublie rien pour marquer en toutes rencountres son aversion pour cet état & pour l'inspirer a ses Enfans. Des Rituels de Dioceses tres réglés les mettent au nombre des personnes que les Curés sont obligés de traiter comme excommuniés; Celui de Paris les joint aux Sorciers, & aux Magiciens, & les regarde comme manifestement infames; Les Eveques les plus saints leur font refuser publiquement, les Sacremens; Nous avons veu un des premiers Eveques de France ne vouloir pas par cette raison recevoir au mariage un homme de cet état; un autre ne vouloir pas leur accorder la terre Sainte; Et dans les* {246}
Statuts d'un prelat bien plus illustre per son merite par sa Pieté, & par l'austerité de sa vie que par la pourpre dont il est revestu, on les trouve avec les concubinaires, les Usuriers, les Blasphemateurs, les Femmes debauchées, les excommuniés denoncés, les Infames, les Simoniaque's, & autres personnes scandaleuses mis an nombre de ceux a qui on doit

refuser publiquement la Communion.

Il est donc impossible de justifier la Comedie sans vouloir condamner l'Eglise, les saints peres, les plus saint Prelats, mais il ne l'est pas moins de justifier ceux qui par leur assistance a ces spectacles non seulement prennent part au mal qui s'y fait, mais contribuent en même temps à retenir ces malheureux ministres de Satan dans une profession, qui les separant des Sacremens de l'Eglise les met dans un état perpetuel de peché & hors de salut s'ils ne l'abandonnent.— — —

Et à egard des Comediens & Commediennes, Nous defendons très expressement à nos pasteurs & à nos Confesseurs des les recevoir aux Sacremens si cé n'est qu'ils aient fait Penitence de leur peché, donné des preuves d'amendment, renoncé a leur Etat, & repare par une satisfaction publique telle que nous jugerons à propos de leur ordonner, le Scandale public qu'ils ont donné. Fait & ordonné à Arras le quatrième jour de Decembre mil six cent quatre-vingt quinze.

Trois lettres
Pastorales De
Monseigneur
L'Eveque D'Arras
&c. A Delf. 1697.

Guy Evéque d'Arras
Et plus bas
Par Monseigneur

CARON.

In English thus,

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*An Order of the most Illustrious and most Reverend Lord
Bishop of Arras against Plays.*

'GUY DE SEVE DE ROCHE CHOUART by the grace of God, &c. Bishop of *Arras*. To all the Faithful in the Town of *Arras* Health and Benediction. A man must be very ignorant of his Religion, not to know the great disgust it has always declar'd, for *Publick Sights*, and for *Plays* in particular. The Holy *Fathers* condemn them in their writings; They look upon them as reliques of Heathenism, and Schools of Debauchery. They have been always abominated by the Church; And notwithstanding those who are concern'd in this Scandalous Profession; are not absolutely expell'd by a Formal Excommunication, yet She publicly refuses them the Sacraments, and omits nothing upon all occasions, to show her aversion for this Employment, and to transfuse the same sentiments into her Children. The *Rituals* {248} of the best govern'd Dioceses, have ranged the *Players* among those whom the Parish Priests are oblig'd to treat as Excommunicated Persons. The *Ritual of Paris* joyns them with Sorcerers, and Magicians, and looks upon them as notoriously infamous; The most eminent Bishops for Piety, have publicly denied them the Sacraments: For this reason, we our selves have known one of the most considerable Bishops in *France*, turn back a *Player* that came to be Married; And an other of the same order, refused to bury them in Consecrated Ground. And by the *Orders* of a Bishop, who is much more illustrious for his worth, for his Piety, and the Strictness of his Life, than for the *Purple* in his Habit; They are thrown amongst Fornicators, Usurers, Blasphemers, Lewd Women, and declar'd Excommunicates, amongst the Infamous, and Simoniacal, and other Scandalous Persons who are in the List of those who ought publicly to be barr'd Communion.

'Unless therefore we have a mind to condemn the Church, the Holy Fathers, and the most holy Bishops, 'tis impossible to justifie *Plays*; neither is the Defence of those less impracticable, who by their Countenance of these Diversions, not only have their share of {249} the Mischief there done, but contribute at the same time to fix these unhappy Ministers of Satan in a Profession, which by depriving them of the Sacraments of the Church, leaves them under a constant necessity of Sinning, and out of all hopes of being saved, unless they give it over.—'

From the general Unlawfulness of *Plays*, the Bishop proceeds to argue more strongly against seeing them at times which are more particularly devoted to Piety, and Humiliation: And therefore he strickly forbids his Diocess the *Play-House* in *Advent*, *Lent*, or under any publick *Calamity*. And at last concludes in this Manner.

'As for the Case of *Players* both Men, and Women, we expresly forbid all our Rectors, Pastors, and Confessours, to admit them to the Sacraments, unless they shall repent them of their Crime, make proof of their Reformation, renounce their *Business*, and retrieve the Scandal they have given, by such publick Satisfaction as we shall think proper to injoy them. Made and Decreed at *Arras* the fourth day of *December 1695*.

Guy Bishop of Arras. &c.

I shall now in the Third Place, give a short account of the sense of the *Primitive Church* {250} concerning the *Stage*: And first I shall instance in her *Councils*.

Ann. 305. Can. 67. The Council of *Illiberis*, or *Collioure* in *Spain*, decrees,

'That it shall not be lawful for any Woman who is either in full Communion or a probationer for Baptism, to Marry, or Entertain any *Comedians* or *Actors*; whoever takes this Liberty shall be Excommunicated.'

Ann. 314. Can. 5. The first Council of *Arles*, runs thus,

'Concerning *Players*, we have thought fit to Excommunicate them as long as they continue to *Act*.'

The Second Council of *Arles* made their *20th* Canon to the same purpose, and almost in the same words.

Ann. 452.

Ann. 397. Can. 11. The Third Council of *Carthage*, of which *St. Augustine* was a Member, ordains,

'That the Sons of Bishops, or other Clergy-men should not be permitted to furnish out Publick *Shews*, or *Plays** or be present at them: Such sort of Pagan *Entertainments* being forbidden all the *Laity*. It being always unlawful for all Christians to come amongst *Blasphemers*.
* *Secularia spectacula, which manifestly comprehends the Stage.*

This last branch shews the *Canon* was Principally levell'd against the *Play-House*: And the reason of the Prohibition, holds every jot as strong against the *English*, as against the *Roman Stage*. {251}

By the 35th *Canon* of this *Council* 'tis decreed,

'That *Actors* or others belonging to the *Stage*, who are either *Converts*, or *Penitents* upon a Relapse, shall not be denied Admission into the Church.' This is farther proof, that *Players* as long as they kept to their Employment were bar'd *Communion*.

Ann. 424. Can. 96 Another *African Council* declares,

'That the Testimony of People of ill Reputation, of *Players*, and others of such scandalous Employments, shall not be admitted against any Person.'

Concil. Cabilon. Ann. 813. Can. 9. The Second *Council* of *Chaalon* sets forth,

'That Clergy men ought to abstain from all over-engaging Entertainments in Musick or *Show*. (*oculorum auriumque illecebris*.) And as for the smutty, and Licentious Insolence of *Players*, and Buffoons, let them not only decline the Hearing it themselves, but likewise conclude the *Laity* oblig'd to the same Conduct.

I could cite many more Authorities of this Kind, but being conscious of the Niceness of the *Age*, I shall forbear, and proceed to the Testimony of the *Fathers*. {252}

To begin with *Theophilus* Bishop of *Antioch*, who lived in the Second *Century*.

Libr. 3. ad Autol. 'Tis not lawful (says he) for us to be present at the *Prizes* or your *Gladiators*, least by this means we should be *Accessaries* to the Murthers there committed. Neither dare we presume upon the Liberty of your other *Shews*,* least our Senses should be tinctur'd, and disoblig'd, with Indecency, and Profaness. The Tragical Distractions of *Tereus* and *Thyestes*, are Nonsense to us. We are for seeing no Representations of Lewdness. The Stage-Adulteries of the *Gods*, and *Hero's*, are unwarrantable Entertainments: And so much the worse, because the Mercenary *Players* set them off with all the Charms and Advantages of Speaking. God forbid that *Christians* who are remarkable for Modesty, and Reserv'dness; who are obliged to Discipline, and train'd up in Virtue, God forbid I say, that we should dishonour our Thoughts, much less our Practise, with such Wickedness as This!'

* *Spectacula.*

Tertullian who liv'd at the latter end of this *Century* is copious upon this subject; I shall translate but some Part of it. In his Apologetick, He thus addresses the Heathens. {253}

Chap. 38.

'We keep off from your publick *Shews*, because we can't understand the Warrant of their Original. There's Superstition and Idolatry in the Case: And we dislike the Entertainment because we dislike the reason of its Institution. Besides, We have nothing to do with the Frensies of the *Race-Ground*, the Lewdness of the *Play-House*, or the Barbarities of the *Bear-Garden*. The *Epicureans* had the Liberty to state the Notion, and determine the Object of Pleasure. Why can't we have the same Privilege? What Offence is it then if we differ from you in the Idea of Satisfaction? If we won't understand to brighten our Humour, and live pleasantly, where's the harm? If any body has the worst on't, 'tis only our selves.'

His Book *de Spectaculis* was wrote on purpose to diswade the Christians, from the publick Diversions of the *Heathens*, of which the *Play-House* was one. In his first Chapter He gives them to understand, 'That the Tenour of their Faith, the Reason of Principle, and the Order of Discipline, had bar'd them the Entertainments of the *Town*. And therefore He exhorts them to refresh their Memories, to run up to their Baptism, and recollect their first Engagements. For without care, Pleasure is a strange bewitching Thing. When it gets the Ascendant, 'twill keep on Ignorance for an Excuse of Liberty, make a man's Conscience wink, and suborn his Reason against himself. {254}

Chap. 3. 'But as he goes on, some peoples Faith is either too full of Scruples, or too barren of Sense. Nothing will serve to settle them but a plain Text of *Scripture*. They hover in uncertainty because 'tis not said as expresly thou shalt not go to the *Play-House*, as 'tis thou shalt not Kill. But this looks more like Fencing than Argument. For we have the Meaning of the prohibition tho' not the sound, in the first *Psalm*. *Blessed is the Man that walks not in the Council of the Ungodly, nor stands in the way of Sinners, nor sits in the Seat of the Scornful*.

Ibid. Cap. 10. 'The *Censors* whose business 'twas to take care of Regularity and Manners, look'd on these *Play-Houses* as no other than *Batteries* upon Virtue and Sobriety, and for this reason often pull'd them down before they were well built, so that here we can argue from the *Precedents* of meer *Nature*, and plead the *Heathens* against themselves. Upon this view *Pompey* the Great, when he built his *Dramatick* Bawdy-House, clapp'd a *Chappel* a Top on't. He would not let it go under the Name of a Play-House, but conven'd the people to a Solemn Dedication, and called it *Venus's* Temple; Giving them to understand at the same time that there were *Benches* under it for Diversion. He was afraid if he had not gone this way to work, The *Censors* might afterwards have razed the Monument, and branded his Memory. Thus a Scandalous pile of Building was protected: The Temple, cover'd the *Play-House*, and Discipline was baffled by *Superstition*. But the Design is notably suited to the Patronage of *Bacchus** and *Venus*. These two Confederate Devils of Lust and Intemperance, do well together. The very Functions of the *Players* resemble their *Protectors*, and are instances of Service and Acknowledgment. Their Motion is effeminate, and their Gestures vitious and Significant: And thus they worship the Luxury of one *Idoll*, and the Lewdness of the other. {255}

* The *Play-houses* were dedicated to *Bacchus*.

Ibid. cap. 15. 'And granting the Regards of Quality, the Advantages of Age, or Temper, may fortifie some People; granting Modesty secur'd, and the Diversion as it were refin'd by this Means: Yet a Man must not expect to stand by perfectly unmoved, and impregnable. No body can be pleas'd without Sensible Impressions. Nor can such Perceptions be received without a Train of Passions attending them. These Consequences will be sure to work back upon their Causes, sollicite the Fancy, and heighten the Original Pleasure. But if a Man pretends to be a *Stoick* at *Plays*, he falls under another Imputation. For where there is no Impression, there can be no Pleasure: And then the *Spectator* is very much Impertinent, in going where he gets nothing for his Pains. And if this were all; I suppose Christians have something else to do than to ramble about to no purpose. {256}

Ibid. cap. 22.

'Even those very Magistrates who abet the *Stage*, discountenance the *Players*. They stigmatize their *Character*, and cramp their Freedoms. The whole Tribe of them is thrown out of all Honour and Privilege. They are neither suffer'd to be Lords, nor Gentlemen: To come within the *Senate*, or harangue the People, or so much as to be Members of a *Common-Council*. Now what Caprice and Inconsistency is this! To love what we punish, and lessen those whom we admire! To cry up the Mystery, and censure the practise; For a Man to be as it were eclips'd upon the score of Merit is certainly an odd sort of Justice! True. But the Inference lies stronger another way. What a Confession then is this of an Ill Business; when the very Excellency of it is not without Infamy? {257}

Ibid. cap. 23. 'Since therefore Humane Prudence has thought fit to degrade the *Stage*, notwithstanding the Divertingness of it. Since Pleasure can't make them an Interest Here, nor shelter them from Censure. How will They be able to stand the shock of Divine Justice, and what *Reckoning* have they *Reason* to expect Hereafter?

Ibid. cap. 26. 'All things consider'd 'tis no wonder such People should fall under *Possession*. God knows we have had a sad Example of this already. A certain Woman went to the *Play-House*, and brought the Devil Home with Her. And when the Unclean Spirit was press'd in the

Exorcism and ask'd how he durst attack a Christian. I have done nothing (says he) but what I can justify. For I seiz'd her upon my own Ground. Indeed, how many Instances have we of others who have apostatiz'd from God, by this Correspondence with the Devil? What *Communion has Light with Darkness? No Man can serve two Masters*, nor have Life and {258} Death in him at the same time.

Ibid. cap. 27. 'Will you not then avoid this Seat of Infection? The very Air suffers by their Impurities; And they almost Pronounce the Plague. What tho' the performance may be in some measure pretty and entertaining? What tho' Innocence, yes and Virtue too, shines through some part of it? 'Tis not the custom to prepare Poyson unpalatable, nor make up Ratzbane with Rhubarb and Sena. No. To have the Mischief speed, they must oblige the Sense, and make the Dose pleasant. Thus the Devil throws in a Cordial Drop to make the Draught go down; And steals some few Ingredients from the *Dispensatory* of Heaven. In short, look upon all the engaging Sentences of the Stage; Their flights of Fortitude, and Philosophy, the Loftiness of their Stile, the Musick of the Cadence, and the Finess of the Conduct; Look upon it only I say as Honey dropping from the Bowels of a Toad, or the Bag of a Spider: Let your Health over-rule your Pleasure, and don't die of a little *Liquorishness*.

Ibid. cap. 28. 'In earnest Christian, our time for Entertainment is not yet: you are two craving and ill managed if you are so violent for Delight. And let me tell you, no wiser than you should be, {259} if you count such Things Satisfaction. Some Philosophers placed their Happiness in bare Tranquillity. Easiness of Thought, and Absence of Pain, was all they aim'd at. But this it seems won't Satisfie Thee. Thou liest sighing and hankering after the *Play-house*. Prethee recollect thy self: Thou knowest Death ought to be our Pleasure, And therefore I hope Life may be a little without it. Are not our Desires the same with the Apostles, *To be Dissolv'd and to be with Christ*. Let us act up to our pretentions, and let Pleasure be true to Inclination.

Ibid. cap. 29. 'But if you can't wait for Delight; if you must be put into present Possession, wee'l cast the Cause upon that Issue. Now were you not unreasonable, you would perceive the Liberalities of Providence, and find your self almost in the midst of Satisfaction. For what can be more transporting than the Friendship of Heaven, and the Discovery of Truth, than the Sense of our Mistakes, and the Pardon of our Sins? What greater Pleasure can there be, than to scorn being *Pleas'd?* To contemn the World? And to be a Slave to Nothing? 'Tis a mighty satisfaction I take it, to have a clear Conscience;

To make Life no Burthen, nor Death any Terror! To trample upon the *Pagan* Deities; To {260} batter *Principalities* and *Powers*, and force the Devils to Resign! * These are the Delights, these are the noble Entertainments of Christians: And besides the advantage of the Quality, they are always at hand, and cost us nothing.'

Lib. 3. Pædag. Ann. 204. cap. 11. *Clemens Alexandrinus* affirms 'That the *Circus* and *Theatre* may not improperly be call'd the *Chair of Pestilence*.—Away then with these Lewd, Ungodly Diversions, and which are but Impertinence at the Best. What part of Impudence either in words or practise, is omitted by the Stage? Don't the Buffoons take almost all manner of Liberties, and plunge through Thick and Thin, to make a jest? Now those who are affected with a vitious satisfaction, will be haunted with the Idea, and spread the Infection. But if a man is not entertain'd to what purpose should he go Thither? Why should he be fond where he finds nothing, and court that which sleeps upon the Sense? If 'tis said these Diversions are taken only to unbend the Mind, and refresh Nature a little. To this I answer. That the spaces between Business should not be fill'd up with such Rubbish. A wise man has a Guard upon {261} his Recreations, and always prefers, the Profitable to the Pleasant.'

Ann. 206. *Minutius Felix* delivers his Sense in these Words:

'As for us, who rate our Degree by our Virtue, and value our selves more upon our Lives, than our Fortunes; we decline your Pompous *Shews*, and publick Entertainments. And good Reason we have for our Aversion. These Things have their Rise from Idols, and are the Train of a false Religion. The Pleasure is ill Descended, and likewise Vitious and ensnaring. For who can do less than abominate, the Clamorous Disorders of the *Race-Ground*, and the profession of Murther at the *Prize*. And for the *Stage*, there you have more Lewdness, tho' not a jot less of Distraction. Sometimes your *Mimicks*, are so Scandalous and Expressing, that 'tis almost hard to distinguish between the *Fact* and the *Representation*. Sometimes a Luscious *Actor* shall whine you into Love, and give the Disease that he Counterfeits.'

St. Cyprian or the Author *de Spectaculis*, will furnish us farther.

Here this Father argues against those who thought the *Play-House* no unlawful Diversion, {262} because 'twas not Condemn'd by express *Scripture*. 'Let meer Modesty (says he) supply the *Holy Text*: And let *Nature* govern where *Revelation* does not reach. Some Things are too black to lie upon *Paper*, and are more strongly forbidden, because unmention'd. The Divine

Wisdom must have had a low Opinion of *Christians*, had it descended to particulars in this Case. Silence is sometimes the best Method for Authority. To Forbid often puts People in mind of what they should not do; And thus the force of the Precept is lost by naming the Crime. Besides, what need we any farther Instruction? Discipline and general Restraint makes up the Meaning of the Law; and common Reason will tell you what the Scripture has left unsaid. I would have every one examine his own Thoughts, and inquire at Home into the Duties of his Profession. This is a good way to secure him from Indecency. For those Rules which a Man has work'd out for himself he commonly makes most use of.'—And after having describ'd the infamous Diversions of the *Play-house*; He expostulates in this Manner.

'What business has a Christian at such Places as these? A Christian who has not the Liberty {263} so much as to think of an ill Thing. Why does he entertain himself with Lewd Representations? Has he a mind to discharge his Modesty, and be flesh'd for the *Practise*? Yes. this is the Consequence. By using to see these Things, hee'l learn to do them.—What need I mention the Levities, and Impertinence in *Comedies*, or the ranting Distractions of *Tragedy*? Were these Things unconcern'd with Idolatry, Christians ought not to be at them. For were they not highly Criminal, the Foolery of them is egregious, and unbecoming the Gravity of *Beleivers*.—

'As I have often said these Foppish, these pernicious Diversions, must be avoided. We must set a Guard upon our Senses, and keep the Sentinal always upon Duty. To make Vice familiar to the ear, is the way to recommend it. And since the mind of Man has a Natural Bent to Extravagance; how is it likely to hold out under Example, and Invitation? If you push that which totters already, whether will it tumble? In earnest, we must draw off our Inclinations from these Vanities. A Christian has much better *Sights* than these to look at. He has solid Satisfactions in his Power, which will please, and improve him at the same {264} time.

'Would a Christian be agreeably Refresh'd? Let him read the *Scriptures*: Here the Entertainment will suit his Character, and be big enough for his Quality.—Beloved, how noble, how moving how profitable a pleasure is it to be thus employed? To have our Expectations always in prospect, and be intent on the Glories of Heaven?'

He has a great deal more upon this Subject in his *Epistles to Donatus and Eucratius*, which are undoubtedly genuine. The later being somewhat remarkable, I shall Translate part of it
Ad Eucrat. for the *Reader*.

'Dear Brother, your usual Kindness, together with your desire of releiving your own Modesty and mine, has put you upon asking my Thoughts concerning a certain *Player* in your Neighbourhood; whether such a Person ought to be allow'd the Privilege of *Communion*. This Man it seems continues in his Scandalous Profession, and keeps a Nursery under him. He teaches that which 'twas a Crime in him to learn, sets up for a Master of Debauch, and Propagates the lewd Mystery. The case standing thus, 'tis my Opinion that the Admission of such a *Member* would be a Breach of the Discipline of the {265} Gospel, and a Presumption upon the Divine Majesty: Neither do I think it fit the Honour of the Church should suffer by so Infamous a Correspondence.'

Lib. 6. cap. 20. *Lactantius's* Testimony shall come next. This Author in his *Divine Institutions*, which he Dedicates to *Constantine* the Great, cautions the Christians against the *Play-House*, from the Disorder, and danger of those places. For as he observes.

'The debauching of Virgins, and the Amours of Strumpets, are the Subject of *Comedy*. And here the Rule is, the more Rhetorick the more Mischeif, and the best *Poets* are the worst Common-Wealths-men. For the Harmony and Ornament of the Composition serves only to recommend the Argument, to fortifie the Charm, and engage the Memory. At last he concludes with this advice.

'Let us avoid therefore these Diversions, least somewhat of the Malignity should seize us. Our Minds should be quiet and Compos'd, and not over-run with Amusements. Besides a Habit of Pleasure is an ensnaring Circumstance. 'Tis apt to make us forget God, and grow
Ibid. cap. 21. cool in the Offices of Virtue.

'Should a Man have a Stage at Home, would not his Reputation suffer extreamly, and all {266} people count him a notorious Libertine? most undoubtedly. Now the Place does not alter the Property. The *Practise* at the *Play-House* is the same thing, only there he has more Company to keep him in Countenance.

'A well work'd *Poem* is a powerful piece of Imposture: It masters the Fancy, and hurries it no Body knows whither.—If therefore we would be govern'd by Reason let us stand off

from the Temptation, such Pleasures can have no good Meaning. Like delicious Morsels they subdue the Palate, and flatter us only to cut our Throats. Let us prefer Reality to Appearance, Service, to Show; and Eternity to Time.

Ibid. cap. 22.

'As God makes Virtue the Condition of Glory, and trains men up to Happiness by Hardship and Industry. So the Devils road to Destruction lies through Sensuality and *Epicurism*. And as pretended Evils lead us on to uncounterfeited Bliss; So Visionary Satisfactions are the causes of Real Misery. In short, These Inviting Things are all stratagem. Let us, take care the softness and Importunity of the Pleasure does not surprise us, nor the Bait bring us within the snare. The Senses are more than *Out-Works*, and should be defended accordingly.'

In Psal. 119. I shall pass over St. *Ambrose*, and go on to St. *Chrisostome*. This *Father* is copious upon the Subject, I could translate some *Sheets* from him were it necessary. But length being not my Business, a few Lines may serve to discover his Opinion. His *15 Homily ad Populum Antiochenum*, runs thus.

'Most People fancy the Unlawfulness of going to *Plays* is not clear. But by their favour, a world of Disorders are the Consequences of such a Liberty. For frequenting the *Play-House* has brought Whoring and Ribaldry into Vogue, and finish'd all the parts of Debauchery.'

Afterwards he seems to make the supposition better than the *Fact*, and argues upon a feign'd Case.

'Let us not only avoid downright Sinning, but the Tendencies to it. Some Indifferent Things are fatal in the Consequence, and strike us at the Rebound. Now who would chuse his standing within an Inch of a Fall; or swim upon the Verge of a Whirlpool? He that walks upon a Precipice, shakes tho' he does not tumble. And commonly his Concern brings him to the Bottom. The Case is much the same in reference to Conscience, and Morality. He that won't keep his Distance from the Gulph, is oftentimes suck'd in by the Eddy; and the least oversight is enough to undo Him.'

In his 37 Homily upon the Eleventh Chapter of St. *Matthew* he declaims more at large against the Stage.

'Smutty Songs (says he) are much more abominable than Stench and Ordure. And which is most to be lamented, you are not at all uneasy at such Licentiousness. You Laugh when you should Frown; and Commend what you ought to abhor.—Heark you, you can keep the Language of your own House in order: If your Servants or your Childrens Tongues run Riot, they presently smart for't. And yet at the *Play-House* you are quite another Thing. These little Buffoons have a strange Ascendant! A luscious Sentence is hugely welcome from their Mouth: And instead of Censure, they have thanks and encouragement for their Pains. Now if a Man would be so just as to wonder at himself, here's Madness, and Contradiction in Abundance.

'But I know you'l say what's this to me, I neither sing nor pronounce, any of this Lewd stuff? Granting your Plea, what do you get by't? If you don't repeat these Scurrilities, you are very willing to hear them. Now whether the Ear, or the Tongue is mismanaged, comes much to the same reckoning. The difference of the *Organ*, does not alter the Action so mightily, as you may imagine. But pray how do you prove you don't repeat them? They may be your Discourse, or the Entertainments of your Closet for ought we know to the contrary. This is certain; you hear them with pleasure in your Face, and make it your business to run after them: And to my Mind, these are strong Arguments of your Approbation.

'I desire to ask you a Question. Suppose you hear any wretches Blaspheme, are you in any Rapture about it? And do your Gestures appear airy, and obliged? Far from it. I doubt not but your blood grows chill, and your Ears are stopt at the Presumption. And what's the Reason of this Aversion in your Behaviour? Why 'tis because you don't use to Blaspheme, your self. Pray clear your self the same way from the Charge of Obscenity. Wee'l then believe you don't talk Smut, when we percieve you careful not to hear it. Lewd Sonnets, and Serenades are quite different from the Prescriptions of Virtue. This is strange Nourishment for a Christian to take in! I don't wonder you should lose your Health, when you feed thus Foul. It may be Chastity is no such easy Task! Innocence moves upon an Ascent, at least for sometime. Now those who are always Laughing can never strain up Hill. If the best preparations of Care will just do, what must become of those that are dissolv'd in Pleasure, and lie under the Instructions of Debauchery?—Have you not heard how that St. *Paul* exhorts us *to rejoyce in the Lord*? He said *in the Lord*; not in the Devil. But alas! what leisure have you to Mind St. *Paul*? How should you be sensible of your Faults, when your Head is always kept Hot, and as it were intoxicated with Buffooning?— —He goes on, and lashes the Impudence of the *Stage* with a great deal of Satir and Severity; and at last proposes this Objection.

'You'l say, I can give you many Instances where the *Play-House* has done no Harm. Don't mistake. Throwing away of Time and ill example, has a great deal of Harm in't; And thus far you are guilty at the best. For granting your own Virtue impenetrable, and out of Reach, Granting the Protection of your Temper has brought you off unhurt, are all People thus Fortified? By no means. However, many a weak Brother has ventur'd after you, and miscarried upon your *Precedent*. And since you make others thus *Faulty*, how can you be *Innocent* upon self? All the People undone There, will lay their Ruine at your Door. The Company are all Accessary to the Mischeif of the Place. For were there no *Audience*, we should have no *Acting*. And therefore those who joyn in the Crime, will ne're be parted in the Punishment. Granting your Modesty has secur'd you, which by the way I believe nothing of; yet since many have been debauch'd by the *Play-House*, you must expect a severe Reckning for giving them Encouragement. Tho' after all, as Virtuous as you are, I doubt not, you wou'd have been much Better, had you kept away. {271}

'In fine, Let us not dispute to no purpose; The practise won't bear a Defence! Where the Cause is naught 'tis in vain to rack our Reason, and strain for Pretences. The best excuse for what is past, is to stand clear from the danger, and do so no more.'

One citation more from St. *Chrysostom*, and I take Leave. In the Preface of his Commentary upon St. *John's* Gospel speaking of *Plays* and other Publick *Shews*, he has these words.

'But what need I branch out the Lewdness of those *Spectacles*, and be particular in Description? For what's there to be met with but Lewd Laughing, but Smut, Railing, and Buffoonry? In a word. 'Tis all Scandal and Confusion. Observe me, I speak to you all; Let none who partake of this *Holy-Table*, unqualifie themselves with such Mortal Diversions.' {272}

St. *Hierom* on the 1st. Verse 32 *Psal.* makes this Exposition upon the *Text*.

'Some are delighted with the Satisfactions of this World, some with the *Circus*, and some with the *Theatre*: But the Psalmist commands every good Man to *delight himself in the Lord*.—For as *Isaiah* speaks, *woe to them that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter*.' And in his Epistles he cautions the Ladies against having any thing to do with the *Play-House*, against Lewd Songs, and Ill Conversation. Because they set ill Humours at work, Caress the Fancy, and make pleasure a Conveyance for Destruction. {273}

Ep. 9. 12. Advers. Jovinian. Lib. 2. cap. 7.

Chap. 20. In the 6th. Book of his Comentary on *Ezechie*l he lets us understand; 'That when we depart out of *Ægypt* we must refine our Inclinations, and change our Delights into Aversion. And after some other Instances, He tells us we must decline the *Theatres*, and all other dangerous Diversions, which stain the Innocence of the Soul, and slip into the *Will* through the Senses.' {273}

St. *Augustine* in his 5th. Epistle to *Marcellinus* will afford us something upon the same Argument.

'The prosperity of Sinners is their greatest Unhappiness. If one may say so, They are most Punish'd when they are overlook'd. By this means their bad Temper is encourag'd, and they are more inclin'd to be false to themselves; And we know an Enemy *within*, is more dangerous than one *without*. But the perverse Reasonings of the Generality, make different Conclusions. They fancy the World goes wonderfully well when People make a Figure. When a Man is a Prince in his Fortune, but a Begger in his Vertue; Has a great many fine Things about him, but not so much as one good Quality to deserve them. When the *Play-Houses* go up, and Religion go's down. When Prodigality is admir'd, and Charity laugh'd at. When the *Players* can revel with the Rich Man's purse, And the Poor have scarce enough to keep Life and Soul together.—When God suffers these Things to flourish, we may be sure he is most Angry. Present Impunity, is the deepest Revenge. But when he cuts off the Supplies of Luxury, and disables the Powers of Extravagance, then as one may say, he is mercifully severe.' {274}

cap. 33. In his 1st. Book *de consensu Evangelistarum*, He answers an objection of the *Heathens*, and comes up to the Case in Hand.

'Their Complaint as if the Times were less happy since the Appearance of Christianity is very unreasonable. Let them read their own Philosophers: There they'l find those very Things censured, which they now are so uneasy to part with; This Remark must shut up their Mouths, and convince them of the Excellency of our Religion. For pray what Satisfactions have they lost? None that I know of, excepting some Licentious ones, which they abused to the Dishonour of their Creatour. But it may be the Times are bad because the *Theatres* are Tumbling almost every where. The *Theaters* those *Cages of Uncleaness*, and publick Schools of Debauchery.—And what's the Reason of their running to Ruine? Why 'tis the Reformation of the Age: 'Tis because those Lewd Practises are out of Fashion,

which first built and kept them in Countenance. Their own *Tully's* Commendation of the *Actor Roscius* is remarkable. He was so much a Master (says he) that none but himself was worthy to Tread the *Stage*. And on the other hand, so good a Man, that he was the most unfit Person of the Gang to come There. And is not this a plain Confession of the Lewdness of the *Play-House*; And that the better a Man was, the more he was obliged to forbear it? {275}

I could go on, much farther with St. *Augustine*, but I love to be as brief as may be. I could likewise run through the succeeding *Centuries*, and collect Evidence all along. But I conceive the best Ages, and the biggest Authorities, may be sufficient: And these the *Reader* has had already. However, one Instance more from the *Moderns* may not be amiss. *Didacus de Tapia* an eminent *Spaniard*, shall close the *Evidence*. This Author in debating the Question whether *Players* might be admitted to the *Sacrament*, amongst other things encounters an Objection. Some People it seems pretended there was some good to be learn'd at the *Play-House*. To these, he makes this reply.

'Granting your Supposition, (says He) your Inference is naught. Do People use to send their Daughters to the *Stews* for Discipline? And yet it may be, they might meet some there lamenting their own Debauchery. No Man will breed his Son upon the *High-way*, to harden his Courage; Neither will any one go on board a Leaky Vessel, to learn the Art of shifting in a Wreck the better. My conclusion is, let no body go to the Infamous *Play-House*. A place of such staring Contradiction to the Strictness and Sobriety of Religion: A Place hated by God, and haunted by the Devil. Let no man I say learn to relish any thing that's said there; For 'tis all but Poyson handsomly prepared.'

*Didac. &c. in D.
Thom. p. 546.*

Thus I have presented the *Reader* with a short View of the Sense of *Christianity*. This was the opinion of the *Church* for the first 500 Years. And thus she has Censured the *Stage* both in *Councils*, and Single *Authorities*. And since the Satir of the *Fathers* comes full upon the *Modern Poets*, their Caution must be applicable. The parity of the Case makes their Reasons take place, and their Authority revive upon us. If we are *Christians*, the *Canons of Councils*, and the Sense of the Primitive *Church* must have a weight. The very Time is a good argument of it self. Then the *Apostolical Traditions* were fresh, and undisputed; and the *Church* much better agreed than she has been since. Then, Discipline was in Force, and Virtue Flourish'd, and People lived up to their *Profession*. And as for the *Persons*, they are beyond all exception. Their *Station*, their Learning, and Sufficiency was very Considerable; Their Piety and Resolution, extraordinary. They acted generously, and wrote freely, and were always above the little Regards of Interest or Danger. To be short; They were, as we may say the *Worthies* of *Christendom*, the Flower of Humane Nature, and the Top of their *Species*. Nothing can be better establish'd, than the Credit of these *Fathers*: Their Affirmation goes a great way in a proof; And we might argue upon the strength of their *Character*. {277}

But supposing them contented to wave their Privilege, and dispute upon the Level. Granting this, the *Stage* would be undone by them. The Force of their Reasoning, and the bare *Intrinsick* of the Argument, would be abundantly sufficient to carry the Cause.

But it may be objected, is the Resemblance exact between Old *Rome* and *London*, will the Paralel hold out, and has the *English Stage* any Thing so bad as the *Dancing* of the *Pantomimi*? I don't say that: The *Modern Gestures* tho' bold and Lewd too sometimes, are not altogether so scandalous as the *Roman*. Here then we can make them some little Abatement.

And to go as far in their *Excuse* as we can, 'tis probable their *Musick* may not be altogether so exceptionable as that of the *Antients*. I don't say this part of the Entertainment is directly vitious, because I am not willing to Censure at Uncertainties. Those who frequent the *Play-House* are the most competent Judges: But this I must say, the Performances of this kind are much too fine for the *Place*. 'Twere to be wish'd that either the *Plays* were better, or the *Musick* worse. I'm sorry to see *Art* so meanly Prostituted: Atheism ought to have nothing Charming in its *Retinue*. 'Tis great Pity *Debauchery* should have the Assistance of a fine Hand, to whet the Appetite, and play it down. {278}

Now granting the *Play-House-Musick* not vitious in the Composition, yet the design of it is to refresh the *Idea's* of the Action, to keep *Time* with the *Poem*, and be true to the *Subject*. For this Reason among others the *Tunes* are generally Airy and Gailliardizing; They are contriv'd on purpose to excite a sportive Humour, and spread a Gaiety upon the Spirits. To banish all Gravity and Scruple, and lay Thinking and Reflection a sleep. This sort of Musick warms the Passions, and unlocks the Fancy, and makes it open to Pleasure like a Flower to the Sun. It helps a Luscious Sentence to slide, drowns the Discords of *Atheism*, and keeps off the Aversions of Conscience. It throws a Man off his Guard, makes way for an ill Impresion, and is most Commodiously planted to do Mischief. A Lewd *Play* with good Musick is like a Loadstone *Arm'd*, it draws much stronger than before. {279}

Now why should it be in the power of a few mercenary Hands to play People out of their Senses, to run away with their Understandings, and wind their Passions about their Fingers as they list? Musick is almost as dangerous as Gunpowder; And it may be requires looking after no less than the *Press*, or the *Mint*. 'Tis possible a Publick Regulation might not be amiss. No less a Philosopher than *Plato* seems to be of this Opinion. He is clearly for keeping up the old grave, and solemn way of *Playing*. He lays a mighty stress upon this Observation: He does not stick to affirm, that to extend the *Science*, and alter the *Notes*, is the way to have the *Laws* repeal'd and to unsettle the *Constitution*. I suppose He imagined that if the Power of *Sounds*, the Temper of Constitutions, and the Diversities of Age, were well studied; If this were done, and some general Permissions formed upon the Enquiry, the *Commonwealth* might find their Account in't.

De Repub. L. 4.

Tully does not carry the Speculation thus high: However, he owns it has a weight in't, and should not be overlook'd. He denies not but that when the Musick is soft, exquisite, and airy, 'tis dangerous and ensnaring. He commends the Discipline of the ancient *Greeks*, for fencing against this Inconvenience. He tells us the *Lacedemonians* fixt the number of Strings for the Harp, by express *Law*. And afterwards silenc'd *Timotheus*,* and seiz'd his Harp, for having One String above publick Allowance. To return. If the *English Stage* is more reserv'd than the *Roman* in the Case above mention'd: If they have any advantage in their *Instrumental* Musick, they loose it in their *Vocal*. Their *Songs* are often rampantly Lewd, and Irreligious to a flaming Excess. Here you have the very *Spirit* and *Essence* of Vice drawn off strong scented, and thrown into a little Compass. Now the *Antients* as we have seen already were inoffensive in this respect.

Cic. de Leg. L. 2.

* A Famous Musician

To go on. As to Rankness of Language we have seen how deeply the *Moderns* stand charged upon the Comparison. And as for their Caressing of Libertines, their ridiculing of Vertue, their horrible Profaness, and Blasphemies, there's nothing in *Antiquity* can reach them.

Now were the *Stage* in a Condition to wipe off any of these Imputations, which They are not, there are two Things besides which would stick upon them, and [.....] an ill Effect upon the *Audience*.

The first is their dilating so much upon the Argument of Love.

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This Subject is generally treated Home, and in the most tender and passionate manner imaginable. 'Tis often the governing Concern: The Incidents make way, and the *Plot* turns upon't. As matters go, the Company expect it: And it may be the *Poets* can neither Write, nor Live without it. This is a cunning way enough of stealing upon the Blind Side, and Practising upon the Weakness of humane Nature. People love to see their *Passions* painted no less than their *Persons*: And like *Narcissus* are apt to dote on their own Image. This Bent of self Admiration recommends the Business of *Amours*, and engages the Inclination. And which is more, these Love-representations oftentimes call up the Spirits, and set them on work. The *Play* is acted over again in the *Scene* of Fancy, and the first Imitation becomes a Model. *Love* has generally a *Party Within*; And when the Wax is prepared, the Impression is easily made. Thus the Disease of the Stage grows Catching: It throws its own *Amours* among the Company, and forms these Passions when it does not find them. And when they are born before, they thrive extreamly in this *Nursery*. Here they seldom fail either of Growth, or Complexion. They grow strong, and they grow Charming too. This is the best Place to recover a Languishing Amour, to rowse it from Sleep, and retrieve it from Indifference. And thus Desire becomes Absolute, and forces the Oppositions of Decency and Shame. And if the Misfortune does not go thus far, the consequences are none of the best. The Passions are up in Arms, and there's a mighty Contest between Duty, and Inclination. The Mind is over-run with Amusements, and commonly good for nothing sometime after.

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I don't say the *Stage* Fells all before them, and disables the whole *Audience*: 'Tis a hard Battle where none escapes. However, Their *Triumphs* and their *Tropheys* are unspeakable. Neither need we much wonder at the Matter. They are dangerously Prepar'd for Conquest, and Empire. There's Nature, and Passion, and Life, in all the Circumstances of their *Action*. Their Declamation, their *Mein* their Gestures, and their Equipage, are very moving and significant. Now when the Subject is agreeable, a lively Representation, and a Passionate way of Expression, make wild work, and have a strange Force upon the Blood, and Temper.

And then as for the General Strains of Courtship, there can be nothing more Profane and extravagant. The Hero's Mistress is no less than his Deity. She disposes of his Reason, prescribes his Motions, and Commands his Interest. What Sovereign Respect, what Religious Address, what Idolizing Raptures are we pester'd with? *Shrines* and *Offerings* and Adorations, are nothing upon such solemn Occasions. Thus Love and Devotion, Ceremony and Worship are Confounded; And God, and his Creatures treated both alike! These Shreds of Distraction are often brought from the *Play-House* into Conversation: And thus the *Sparks* are taught to Court their Mistresses, in the same Language they say their

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A Second Thing which I have to object against the *Stage* is their encouraging Revenge. What is more Common than Duels and Quarrelling in their *Characters* of Figure? Those Practises which are infamous in Reason, *Capital* in *Law*, and Damnable in Religion, are the Credit of the *Stage*. Thus Rage and Resentment, Blood and Barbarity, are almost Deified: Pride goes for Greatness, and *Fiends* and *Hero's* are made of the same Mettal. To give Instances were needless, nothing is more frequent. And in this respect the *French Dramatists* have been to blame no less than the *English*. And thus the Notion of Honour is mistated, the Maxims of Christianity despised, and the Peace of the World disturb'd. I grant {284} this desperate Custom is no *Original* of the *Stage*. But then why was not the Growth of it check'd? I thought the *Poets* business had not been to back false Reasoning and ill Practise; and to fix us in Frensy and Mistake! Yes. They have done their endeavour to cherish the Malignity, and keep the Disorder in Countenance. They have made it both the Mark, and the Merit of a Man of Honour; and set it off with *Quality*, and Commendation. But I have discours'd on this Subject elsewhere, and therefore shall pursue it no farther.

Moral Essays.

To draw towards an End. And here I must observe that these two later Exceptions are but Petty Mismanagements with respect to the Former. And when the best are thus bad, what are the worst? What must we say of the more foul Representations, of all the Impudence in Language and Gesture? Can this Stuff be the Inclination of *Ladies*? Is a *Reading* upon Vice so Entertaining, and do they love to see the *Stews Dissected* before them? One would think the Dishonour of their own Sex, the Discovery of so much Lewdness, and the treating Human Nature so very Coarsly, could have little Satisfaction in't. Let us set Conscience aside, and throw the other World out of the Question: These Interests are but the greatest, but not all. The *Ladies* have other Motives to confine them. The Restraints of Decency, and the Considerations of Honour, are sufficient to keep them at Home. But hoping They will be just to themselves I shall wave this unacceptable Argument. I shall only add, that a Surprize ought not to be Censured. Accidents are no Faults. The strictest Virtue may sometimes stumble upon an *Ill Sight*. But Choise, and Frequency, and ill Ground, conclude strongly for Inclination. To be assured of the inoffensiveness of the *Play* is no more than a Necessary Precaution. Indeed the *Players* should be generally discouraged. They have no relish of Modesty, nor any scruples upon the Quality of the Treat. The grossest *Dish* when 'twill down is as ready as the Best. To say Money is their Business and they must *Live*, is the Plea of *Pick pockets*, and *High way men*. These later may as well pretend their *Vocation* for a Lewd practise as the other. But {285}

To give the Charge its due Compass: To comprehend the whole *Audience*, and take in the Motives of Religion.

And here I can't imagine how we can reconcile such Liberties with our Profession. These Entertainments are as it were Litterally renounc'd in *Baptism*. They are the *Vanities of the wicked World, and the Works of the Devil*, in the most open, and emphatical Signification. {286} *2 Cor. 6. 14. What Communion has Light with Darkness, and what concord has Christ with Belial.* Call you this Diversion? Can Profaness be such an irresistable Delight? Does the Crime of the Performance make the Spirit of the Satisfaction, and is the Scorn of Christianity the Entertainment of Christians? Is it such a Pleasure to hear the *Scriptures* burlesqu'd? Is Ribaldry so very obliging, and *Atheism* so Charming a Quality? Are we indeed willing to quit the Privilege of our Nature; to surrender our *Charter* of Immortality, and throw up the Pretences to another Life? It may be so! But then we should do well to remember that *Nothing* is not in our Power. Our Desires did not make us, neither can they unmake us. But I hope our wishes are not so mean, and that we have a better sense of the Dignity of our *Being*. And if so, how can we be pleas'd with those Things which would degrade us into Brutes, which ridicule our *Creed*, and turn all our Expectations into *Romance*.

And after all, the Jest on't is, these Men would make us believe their design is Virtue and Reformation. In good time! They are likely to combat Vice with success, who destroy the Principles of Good and Evil! Take them at the best, and they do no more than expose a little Humour, and Formality. But then, as the Matter is manag'd, the Correction is much worse than the Fault. They laugh at *Pedantry*, and teach *Atheism*, cure a Pimple, and give the Plague. I heartily wish they would have let us alone. To exchange Virtue for Behaviour is a hard Bargain. Is not plain Honesty much better than Hypocrisy well Dress'd? What's Sight good for without Substance? What is a well Bred Libertine but a well bred Knave? One that can't prefer Conscience to Pleasure, without calling himself Fool: And will sell his Friend, or his Father, if need be, for his Convenience. {287}

In short: Nothing can be more disserviceable to Probity and Religion, than the management of the *Stage*. It cherishes those Passions, and rewards those Vices, which 'tis the business of Reason to discountenance. It strikes at the Root of Principle, draws off the Inclinations from Virtue, and spoils good Education: 'Tis the most effectual means to baffle the Force of Discipline, to emasculate peoples Spirits, and Debauch their Manners. How *many* of the Unwary have these *Syrens* devour'd? And how often has the best Blood been tainted, with

this Infection? What Disappointment of Parents, what Confusion in Families, and What Beggery in Estates have been hence occasion'd? And which is still worse, the Mischief spreads daily, and the Malignity grows more envenom'd. The Feavour works up towards {288} Madness; and will scarcely endure to be touch'd. And what hope is there of Health when the *Patient* strikes in with the Disease, and flies in the Face of the *Remedy*? Can Religion retrieve us? Yes, when we don't despise it. But while our *Notions* are naught, our *Lives* will hardly be otherwise. What can the Assistance of the Church signify to those who are more ready to Rally the *Preacher*, than Practise the *Sermon*? To those who are overgrown with Pleasure, and hardned in Ill Custom? Who have neither Patience to hear, nor Conscience to take hold of? You may almost as well feed a Man without a Mouth, as give Advice where there's no disposition to receive it. 'Tis true; as long as there is Life there's Hope. Sometimes the Force of Argument, and the Grace of God, and the anguish of Affliction, may strike through the Prejudice, and make their way into the Soul. But these circumstances don't always meet, and then the Case is extreemly dangerous. For this miserable Temper, we may thank the *Stage* in a great Measure: And therefore, if I mistake not, They have the least pretence to Favour, and the most, need of Repentance, of all Men Living.

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A SHORT VIEW OF THE IMMORALITY,
AND PROFANENESS OF THE ENGLISH STAGE ***

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