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Ebene 1 »

Book I

Ebene 2 » Metatextualität » IT is very much by the choice we make of subjects for our entertainment, that the refined taste distinguishes itself from the vulgar and more gross. Reading is universally allowed to be one of the most improving as well as agreeable amusements; but then to render it so, one should, among the number of books which are perpetually issuing from the press, endeavor to single out such as promise to be most conductive to those ends. In order to be as little deceived as possible, I, for my own part, love to get as well acquainted as I can with an author, before I run the risk of losing my time in perusing his work; and as I doubt not but most people are of this way of thinking, I shall, in imitation of my learned Brother, of ever precious memory, give some account of what I am, and those concerned with me in this undertaking; and likewise of the chief intent of the Lucubrations hereafter communicated, that the reader, on casting his eye over the four or five first pages, may judge how far the book may, or may not be qualified to entertain him, and either accept, or throw it aside as he thinks proper: And here I promise, that in the pictures I shall give of [2] myself and associates, I will draw no flattering lines, assume no perfection that we are not in reality possessed of, nor attempt to shadow over any defect with an artificial gloss. « Metatextualität

Ebene 3 » Selbstportrait » As a proof of my sincerity, I shall, in the first place, assure him, that for my own part I never was a beauty, and am now very far from being young; (a confession he will find few of my sex ready to make:) I shall also acknowledge, that I have run through as many scenes of vanity and folly as the greatest coquet of them all. — Dress; equipage, and flattery, were the idols of my heart. — I should have thought that day lost, which did not present me with some new opportunity of shewing myself. My life, for some years, was a continued round of what I then called pleasure, and my whole time engrossed by a hurry of promiscuous diversions. But whatever inconveniencies such a manner of conduct has brought upon myself, I have this consolation, to think that the public may reap some benefit from it: — The company I kept was not, indeed, always so well chosen as it ought to have been, for the sake of my own interest or reputation; but then it was general, and by consequence furnished me, not only with the knowledge of many occurrences, which otherwise I had been ignorant of; but also enabled me, when the too great vivacity of my nature became tempered with reflection, to see into the secret springs which gave rise to the actions I had either heard or been witness of; — to judge of the various passions of the human mind, and distinguish those imperceptible degrees by which they become masters of the heart, and attain the dominion over reason. — A thousand odd adventures, which, at [3] the time they happened, made flight impression on me, and seemed to dwell no longer on my mind than the wonder they occasioned, now rise fresh to my remembrance; with this advantage, that the mystery I then, for want of attention, imagined they contained, is entirely vanished and I find it easy to account for the cause by the consequence. « Selbstportrait « Ebene 3

Metatextualität » With this experience, added to a genius tolerably extensive, and an education more liberal than is ordinarily allowed to persons of my sex, I flattered myself that it might be in my power to be in some measure both useful and entertaining to the public; and this thought was so soothing to those remains of vanity, not yet wholly extinguished in me, that I resolved to pursue it, and immediately began to consider by what method I should be most likely to succeed. To confine myself to any on subject I knew could please but one kind of taste, and my ambition was to be as universally read as possible. From my observation of human nature, I found that curiosity had more or less a share in every breast; and my business therefore, was to hit this reigning humour in such a manner, as that the gratification it should receive from being made acquainted with other people's affairs, might at the same time teach every one to regulate their own.

Having agreed within myself on this important point, I commenced author, by setting down many things, which being pleasing to myself, I imagined would be so to others; but on examining them the next day, I found an infinite deficiency both in matter and style, and that there was an absolute necessity for me to call in to my assistance such of my acquaintance as were quali-[4]fied for that purpose. « Metatextualität Ebene 3 » Fremdportrait » — The first, that occurred to me, I shall distinguish by the name of Mira, a lady descended from a family to which wit seems hereditary, married to a gentleman every way worthy of so excellent a wife, and with whom she lives in so perfect a harmony, that having nothing to ruffle the composure of her soul, or disturb those sparkling ideas she received from nature and education, left me no room to doubt that what she favoured me with would be acceptable to the public. « Fremdportrait « Ebene 3

Ebene 3 » Fremdportrait » — The next is a widow of quality, who not having buried her vivacity in the tomb of her lord, continues to make one in all the modish diversions of the times, so far, I mean, as she finds them consistent with innocence and honour; and as she is far from having the least austerity in her behaviour, nor is riged to the failings she is wholly free from herself, those of her acquaintance, who had been less circumspect, scruple not to make her the confidante of secrets they conceal from all the world beside. « Fremdportrait « Ebene 3

Ebene 3 » Fremdportrait » — The third is the daughter of a wealthy merchant, charming as an angle, but endued with so many accomplishments, that to those who now her truly, her beauty is the least distinguished part of her. This fine young creature I shall call Euphrosine, since she has all the chearfulness and sweetness ascribed to that goddess. « Fremdportrait « Ebene 3

Metatextualität » These three approved my design, assured me of all the help they could afford, and soon gave a proof of it in bringing their several essays; but as the reader, provided the entertainment be agreeable, will not be interested from which quarter it comes, whatever productions I shall be favoured with from these ladies, or any others, I may hereafter correspond with, will be exhibited under the general title [5] of The Female Spectator; and how many contributors soever these may happen to be to the work, they are to be considered only as several members of one body, of which I am the mouth.

It is also highly proper I should acquaint the town, that to secure an eternal fund of intelligence, spies are placed, not only in all the places of resort in and about this great metropolis, but at Bath, Tunbridge, and the Spaw, and means found out to extend my speculations even as far as France, Rome, Germany, and other foreign parts; so that nothing curious or worthy remark can escape me; and this I look upon to be a more effectual way of penetrating into the mysteries of the alcove, the cabinet, or field, than if I had the power of invisibility, or could, with a wish, transport myself where-ever I pleased, since with the aid of those supernatural gifts, I could still be in no more than one place at a time; whereas now, by tumbling over a few papers from my emissaries, I have all the secrets of Europe, at least such of them as are proper for my purpose, laid open at one view.

I could, by no means, however, have what I say be construed into a design of gratifying a vicious propensity of propagating scandal: whoever sits down to read me with this view, will find themselves mistaken; for though I shall bring real facts on the stage, I shall conceal the actors names under such as will be conformable to their characters; my intention being only to expose the vice, not the person. — Nor shall I confine myself to modern transactions: whenever I find any example among the antients, which may serve to illustrate the topic I shall happen to be upon, I shall make no scruple to insert it. An instance of [6] shining virtue in any age, can never be too often proposed as a pattern, nor the fatality of misconduct too much impressed on the minds of our youth of both sexed; and as the sole aim of the following pages is to reform the faulty, and give an innocent amusement to those who are not so, all possible care will be taken to avoid everything that might serve as food for the venom of malice and ill-nature. Whoever, therefore, shall pretend to fix on any particular person the blame of actions they may happen to find recorded her, or make what they call a key to these lucubrations, must expect to see themselves treated in the next publication with all the severity so unfair a proceeding merits. « Metatextualität

And now, having said as much as I think needful of this undertaking, I shall, without being either too greatly confident, or too anxious for the success, submit it to the public censure.

Zitat/Motto » “Of all the passions given us from above,

The noblest, softest, and the best, is love, « Zitat/Motto

says a justly celebrated poet; and I readily agree that love in itself, when under the direction of reason, harmonizes the soul, and gives it a gentle, generous turn, but I can by no means approve of such definitions so that passion as we find in plays, novels, and romances. In most of these writings, the authors seem to lay out all their art in rendering that character most interesting, which most sets at defiance all the obligations, by the strict observance of which, love alone can become a virtue. They dress their Cupid in roses, call him the god of soft desires and ever-springing joys, yet at the same time give him the vindictive fury, and the rage of Mars; shew him impatient of [7] controul, and trampling over all the ties of duty, friendship, or natural affection, yet make the motive sanctify the crime. How fatal, how pernicious to a young and inexperienced mind must be such maxims, especially when dressed up in all the pomp of words! The beauty of the expression steals upon the senses, and every mischief, every woe that love occasions, appear a charm. — Those who feel the passion are so far from endeavouring to repel its force, or being ashamed of their attachment, however opposite to reason, that they indulge, and take a pride in turning into ridicule the remonstrances of their more discerning friends. But what is yet more preposterous, and more evidently shews the ill effects of writing in this manner, is that, we often see girls too young either to be addressed to on the score of love, or even to now what is meant by the passion, affect the languishment they read of, roll their eyes, sigh, sold their arms, neglect every useful learning, and attend to nothing but acquiring the reputation of being enough a woman to know all the pains and delicacies of love.

Ebene 3 » Exemplum » Miss Tenderilla is one of those I have described: she was the other day invited to a concert, and as soon as the music began to strike up, cried out in a kind of dying tone, yet loud enough to be heard by a great part of the assembly,

"If music be the food of love, play on."

A young lady happened to be with her, who is supposed to be very near entering into the marriage state, but contents herself with discovering what sentiments she is possessed of in favour of her intended bridegroom only to those interested in them. She blushed extremely at the extravagance of her [8] companion, and the more so, as she found the eyes of every one turned upon her, and by their smiles and whispers to each other, shewed that they imagined Miss had burst into this exclamation merely on her account. A smart gentleman, on the next seat to the them, took this opportunity of rallying her very wittily, as he thought, on the discovery her young confidante had made; and the poor lady was in the utmost confusion, until she who had occasioned it, being vexed to find what she had said so much mistaken, and that no notice was taken of herself, behaved in such a manner as left no room to doubt which of them was the proper object of ridicule. « Exemplum « Ebene 3

How easy were it now for a designing fortune-hunter to make a pray of this bib and apron heroine! — The less qualified he was to render her choice of him approved, and the more averse her friends appeared to such a match, the more would the glory in a noble obstinacy of contemning their advice, and sacrificing her person and fortune to an imaginary passion for him; and one has no need of being a very great prophet to foretell, that if she is not speedily removed from those who at present have the care of her, and some other methods taken than such as have hitherto been made use of, to give her a more rational way of thinking, that wealth her frugal parents hoard up, in order to purchase for her a lasting happiness, will only prove the bait for her destruction.

I am sorry to observe, that of late years this humour has been strangely prevalent among our young ladies, some of whom are scarce entered into their teens before they grow impatient for admiration, and to be distinguished in love-songs and [9] verses, – expect to have a great bustle made about them, and he who first attempts to persuade them he is a lover, bids very fair for carrying his point. The eagerness of their wishes to be addressed, gives charms to the address itself, which otherwise would not have; and hence it follows, that when a young creature has suffered herself to fall a victim to the artifices of her pretended lover, and her own giddy whim, and is afterwards convinced of her error, she looks back with no less wonder than shame on her past conduct, detests the object her former imaginary passion, and wishes nothing more than to be eternally rid of the presence of him she once with so much earnestness pursued.

It is not, therefore, from the inconstancy of nature which men charge upon our sex, but from that romantic vein which makes us sometimes imagine ourselves lovers before we are so, that we frequently run such lengths to shake off a yoke we have so precipitately put on. — When once we truly love, we rarely change: — we bear the frowns of fortune with fortitude and patience: — we repent not of the choice we have made, whatever we

suffer by it; and nothing but a long continued series of flights and ill usage from the object of our affections can render him less dear.

To be well convinced of the sincerity of the man they are about to marry, is a maxim, with great justice, always recommended to a young lady; but I say it is no less material for her future happiness, as well as that of her intended partner, that she should be well assured of her own heart and examine with the utmost care, whether it be real tenderness, or a bare liking she at present feels for him; and as this is not to be done all at once, [10] I cannot approve of hasty marriages, or before persons are of sufficient years to be supposed capable of knowing their own minds.

Ebene 3 » Exemplum » Could fourteen have the power of judging of itself, or for itself, who that knew the beautiful Martesia at that age, but would have depended on her conduct! Fremdportrait » Martesia, descended of the most illustrious race, possessed of all that dignity of sentiment befitting her high birth, endued by nature with a surprising wit, judgment, and penetration, and improved by every aid of education! « Fremdportrait – Martesia, the wonder and delight of all who saw or heard her, gave the admiring world the greatest expectations that she would one day b no less celebrated for all those virtues which render amiable the conjugal state, than she at that time was for every other perfection that does honour to the sex.

Yet how, alas, did all these charming hopes vanish into air! Many noble youths, her equals in birth and fortune, watched her increase of years for declaring a passion, which they feared as yet would be rejected by those who had the disposal of her; but what their respect and timidity forbad them to attempt, a more daring and unsuspected rival ventured at, and succeeded in. — Her unexperienced heart approved his person, was pleased with the protestations he made to her of it. - In fine, the novelty of being addressed in that manner, gave a double grace to all he said, and she never thought herself so happy as in his conversation. — His frequent visits at length were taken notice of; he was denied the privilege of seeing her, and she was no longer permitted to go out without being accompagnied by some person who was to be a spy upon her actions. — She had a great spirit, impatient of [11] control, and this restraint served only to heighten the inclination she before had to favour him: — she indulged the most romantic ideas of his merit and his love: — her own flying fancy invented a thousand melancholy soliloquies, and set them down as made by him in this separation. It is not, indeed, to be doubted, but that he was very much mortified at the impediment he found in the prosecution of his courtship; but whether he took this method of disburdening his affliction, neither she nor any body else could be assured. It cannot, however, be denied, but that the pursued means much more efficacious for the attainment of his wishes. By bribes, promises, and intreaties, he prevailed on a person who came frequently to the house, to convey his letters to her, and bring back her answers. This correspondence was, perhaps, of greater service to him, than had the freedom of their interviews not been prevented; she consented to be his, and to make good her word, ventured her life, by descending form a two pair of stairs window, by the help of quilt, blankets, and other things fastened to it at the dead of night. — His coach and fix waited to receive her at the end of the street, which reaching soon after break of day, his chaplain made them too fast for any authority so separate.

As he was of an antient honourable family, and his estate very considerable, her friends in a short time were reconciled to what was now irremediable, and they were looked upon as an extreme happy pair. But soon, too soon, the fleeting pleasures fled, and in their room anguish and bitterness of heart succeeded.

Martesia, in a visit she made to a lady of her [12] intimate acquaintance, unfortunately happened to meet the young Clitander; he was just returned from his travels, had a handsome person, an infinity of gaiety, and a certain something in his air and deportment which had been destructive of the peace and reputation of many of our sex He was naturally of an amorous disposition, and being so, felt all the force of charms, which had some effect even on the most cold and temperate. Emboldened by former successes, the knowledge Martesia was another's did not hinder him from declaring to her the passion she had inspired him with. She found a secret satisfaction in hearing him, which she was yet too young to consider the danger of, and therefore endeavoured not to suppress until it became more powerful for her to have done so, even had she attempted it with all her might; but the truth is, she began to experience in reality a flame she had but imagined herself possessed of for him who was now her husband, and was too much averse to the giving herself pain, to combat with an inclination which seemed to her fraught only with delights.

The house where their acquaintance first began, was now the scene of their future meetings: The mistress of it was too great a friend to gallantry herself, to be any interruption to the happiness they enjoyed in entertaining each other without witnesses. How weak is virtue when love and opportunity combine! Though no woman could have more refined and delicate notions than Martesia, yet all were ineffectual against the solicitations of her adored Clitander. One fatal moment destroyed at once all her own exalted ideas of honour and reputation, and the principles early in-[13] stilled into her mind by her virtuous preceptors.

The consequence of this amour was a total neglect of husband, house, and family. Herself abandoned, all other duties were so too. So manifest a change was visible to all that knew her, but most to her husband, as most interested in it. He truly loved, and had believed himself truly beloved by her. Loth he was to think his misfortune real, and endeavoured to find some other motive for the aversion she now expressed for staying at home, or going to any of those places where they had been accustomed to visit together; but she either knew not to dissemble, or took so little pains to do it, that he was, in spite of himself, convinced all that affection she so lately had professed, and given him testimonies of, was now no more. He examined all his actions, and could find nothing in any of them that could give occasion for so sad a reverse. He complained to her one day, in the tenderest terms, of the small portion she had of late allowed him of her conversation: intreated, that if by any inadvertency he had offended her, she would acquaint him with his fault, which he assured her he would take care never to repeat: asked, if there was any thing in her settlement or jointure she could wish to have altered, and assured her she need but let him know her commands to be instantly obeyed. To all this she replied, with the most stabbing indifference, that she knew now what he meant. That as she had accused him with nothing, he had no reason to think she was dissatisfied. But that people could not be always in the same humour, and desired he would not give himself nor [14] her the trouble of making any farther interrogatories. He must have been insensible, as he is known to be the contrary, had such a behavior not opened his eyes; he no longer doubted of his fate, and resolving, if possible, to find out the author of it, he caused her chair to be watched wherever she went, and took such effectual methods as soon informed him of the truth.

In the first emotions of his rage, he was for sending a challenge to this destroyer of his happiness; but in his cooler moments he rejected that design as too injurious to the reputation of Martesia, who was still dear to him, and whom he flattered himself with being able one day to reclaim.

It is certain, he put in practice every tender stratagem that love and wit could furnish him with for that purpose; but the appearing so far from being moved at any thing he either said or did, that, on the contrary, her behavior was every day more cold, he at last began to expostulate with her, gave some hints that her late conduct was not unknown to him; and that though he was willing to forgive what was past, yet, as a husband, it was not consistent with his character to bear any future insults of that nature. This put her beyond all patience; she reproached him in the bitterest terms for daring to harbor the least suspicion of her virtue, and censuring her innocent amusements as crimes; and perhaps was glad of this opportunity of testifying her remorse for having ever listened to his vows and cursing before his face the hour that joined their hands.

They now lived so ill a life together, that not having sufficient proof for a divorce, he parted [15] beds, and though they continued in one house, behaved to each other as strangers; never eat at the same table but when company was there, and then only to avoid the questions what would naturally have been asked had it been otherwise; neither of them being desirous the world should know any thing of their disagreement.

But while they continued to treat each other in a manner so little conformable to their first hopes, or their vows pledged at the holy altar, Martesia became pregnant. This gave the first alarm to that indolence of nature she hitherto had testified; her husband would now have it in his power to sue out a divorce; and though she would have rejoiced to have been separated from him on any other terms, yet she could not support the thought of being totally deprived of all reputation in the world. She was not ignorant of the censures she incurred, but had pride and spirit enough to enable her despise whatever was said of her, while it was not backed by proof; but the clearing one she was now about to give, struck shame and confusion to her soul. She left no means untried to produce an abortion; but failing in that, she had no other recourse than to that friend who was the confidante of her unhappy passion, who comforted her as well as she could, and assured her, that when the hour approached, she need have no more to do than to come directly to her house, where every thing should be prepared for the reception of a woman in her condition. To conceal the alteration in her shape, she pretended indisposition, saw

little company, and wore only loose gowns. At length the so much-dreaded moment came upon her at the dead of night; [16] and in the midst of all that rack of nature, made yet more horrible by the agonies of her mind, she rose, rung for her woman, and telling her she had a frightful dream concerning that lady, whom she knew she had the greatest value for of any person upon earth, ordered her to get a chair, for she could not be easy unless she went and saw her herself. The woman was strangely surprised, but her lady was always absolute in her commands. A chair was brought, and without any other company or attendants that her own distracted thoughts, she was conveyed to the only asylum where she thought her shame might find a shelter.

A midwife being prepared before, she was safely delivered of a daughter, who expired almost as soon as born; and to prevent as much as possible, all suspicion of the truth, she made herself be carried home next morning, where she went to bed, and lay several days, under pretence of having sprained her ancle.

But not all the precautions she had taken were effectual enough to prevent some people from guessing and whispering what had happened. Those whose nearness in blood gave them a privilege of speaking their minds, spared not to tell her all that was said of her; and those who durst not take that liberty, shewed by their distant looks a reserved behavior, whenever she came in presence, how little they approved her conduct. She was too discerning not to see into their toughs, nor was her innate pride of any service to keep up her spirits on this occasion. To add to the discontent, Clitander grew every day more cool in his respects, and she soon after learned he was on the point of marriage with one far inferior to herself in every [17] charm both of mind and person. In fine, finding herself deserted by her relations, and the greatest part of her acquaintance, without love, without respect, and reduced to the pity of those, who perhaps had nothing but a greater share of circumspection to boast of , she took a resolution to quit England; and having settled her affairs with her husband, who by this time had entered into other amusements, and it is probable was very well satisfied to be eased of the constraint her presence gave him, readily consented to remit her the sum agreed between then, to be paid yearly to whatever part of the world she chose to reside in; she then took leave of a country of which she had been the idol, and which now seemed to her as too unjust in not being blind to what she desired should be concealed.

Behold her now in a voluntary banishment from friends and country, and roaming round the world in fruitless search of that tranquility she could not have failed enjoying at home in the bosom of a consort equally beloved as loving. Unhappy charming lady! Born and endowed with every quality to attract universal love and admiration, yet by one inadvertent step undone, and lost to every thing the world holds dear, and only the more conspicuously wretched, by having been conspicuously amiable. « Exemplum « Ebene 3

But methinks it would be hard to charge the blame of indiscreet marriages on the young ladies themselves: parents are sometimes, by an overcaution, guilty of forcing them into things, which, otherwise, would be far distant from their thoughts. I am very certain it is not because the Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese women are so much warmer [18] in their constitutions than those of other nations, but because they are so cruelly debarred from all conversation with the men, that makes them so readily accept the first offer that presents itself. Where opportunities are scarce, they are glad to speak their minds at once, and fear to deny, left it should not be in their power afterwards to grant. Fremdportrait » Even in Turkey, where our ravellers boast of having had such success among the woman, I have known several who are married to English gentleman, and permitted to live after the custom of our country, who have made very excellent wives. In France, the people are, questionless, the gayest and most alert in the world, and allow the greatest liberties to their women; yet to hear of a clandestine marriage among them is a kind of prodigy; and tho'no place affords scenes of gallantery equal to it in any degree of proportion, yet I believe there is none where fever false steps are made, or husbands have less reason to complain of the want of chastity in their wives. « Fremdportrait Nature in all ages is abhorrent of restraint; but in youth especially, as more headstrong and impetuous, it will hazard every thing to break through laws it had no hand in making. It therefore betrays a great want of policy, as well as an unjust austerity, to seclude a young lady, and shut her up from al intercourse with men, for fear she should fine one among them who might happen to please her too well. Chance may in a moment destroy all that the utmost care can do; and I say a woman is in far less danger of losing her heart, when every day surrounded with a variety of gay objects, than when by some accident she falls into the conversation of a single one. A girl, who is continually [19] hearing fine things said to her, regards them but as words of course; they may be flattering to her vanity for the present, but will leave no impression behind them on her mind; but she, who is a stranger to the gallant manner with which polite persons

treat our sex, greedily swallows the first civil thing said to her, takes what perhaps is meant as a mere compliment, for a declaration of love, and replies to it in terms which either expose her to the designs of him who speaks, if he happens to have any in reality, or if he has not, to his ridicule in all company where he comes into.

For this reason the country-bred ladies who are never suffered to come to town for fear their faces should be spoiled by the small-pox, or their reputations ruined by the beaux, become an easier pray to the artifices of mankind, than those who have had an education more at large. As they rarely stir beyond their father's pales, except to church, the parson, if he be a forward man, and has courage to throw a love-song, or copy of verses to Miss over the wall, or flip it into her hand in a visit to the family, has a rare opportunity of making his fortune; and it is well when it happens no worse: many a squire's daughter has clambered over hedge and style, to give a rampant jump into the arms of a young jolly haymaker or ploughman.

Our London ladies are indeed very rarely laid under such restrictions; but whenever it happens to the case, as nature is the same in all, the consequence will be so too. Ebene 3 » Exemplum » Would ever Eagaretta have condescended to marry the greasy footman that run before her chair, had he not been the only man her over-careful father permitted her to speak to! Or would Arminia have found any charms [20] in a Mousetrap, or Leathern Apron, had she been indulged the conversation of a White Staff? « Exemplum « Ebene 3

Ebene 3 » Exemplum » Fremdportrait » Seomanthe, to her misfortune, was brought up under the tuition of her aunt Negratia a woman extremely sour by nature, but rendered yet more so by age and infirmity. Past all the joys of life herself, she looked with a malicious eye on every one who partook of them; censured the most innocent diversions in the severest manner; and the least complaisance between persons of different sexes, was, with her, scandalous to the last degree. Her character was so well known, that non but prudes, whose deformity was an antidote to desire, -worn-out, superannuated rakes, who had out-lived all sense of pleasure, -and canting zealots, whose bread depended on their hypocrisy, frequented her house. To this sort of company was the young, beautiful, and naturally gay Seomanthe condemned; she heard nothing but railing against that way of life she knew was enjoyed by others of equal rank and fortune with herself, and which she has too much good sense to look upon as criminal; she thought people might be perfectly innocent, yet indulge themselves in sometimes going to a play or opera; nor could be brought to believe the court such a bugbear as she was told it was:

A laced coat and a toupee wig had double charms for her, as they were every day so much preached against; and se never saw a coach pass, wherein were gentlemen and ladies, but the wished to be among them, or a well-dressed bean, with whom she did not languish to be acquainted. « Fremdportrait

At length her desires were fulfilled. Close as she was kept, the report that Negratia had a [21] young lady in her house, who was mistress of a large fortune on the day of marriage, reached the ears of one of those harpies who purchase to themselves a wretched sustenance, by decoying the unwary into everlasting ruin. This creature, who had been employed by one so far a gentleman as to be bred to no business, and whose whole estate was laid out on his back, in hopes of appearing charming in the eyes of some monied woman, too truly guessed she had found in Seomanthe what she fought. She came to the house under the pretence of offering some lace, Holland, and fine tea, extraordinary cheap: Negratia being what is called a good housewife, and a great lover of bargains, readily admitted her; and while she was examining some of the goods at a small distance off, the artful woman put a letter into Seomanthe's hand, telling her it came from the finest gentleman in the world, who she was sure would die, if she did not favour him with an answer. The young lady took it, blushed, and put it in her bosom, but had not time to make any reply to the woman, Negratia that instant coming towards them. As nobody understood her business better, she managed it so that she was ordered to come again the next day, when she said she should have greater variety to shew their ladyships. While she was packing up her bundles, she winked on Seomanthe, and at the same time gave her the most beseeching look; the meaning of which, young and unexperienced as she was, the destined victim but too well comprehended, and was, perhaps, no less impatient for the success of an adventure, the beginning of which afforded her infinite satisfaction. She ran immediately to her chamber, shut her-[22] self in, and broke open her billet, which she found stuffed with flames, darts, wounds, love and death; the highest encomiums on her beauty, and the most vehement imprecations of not out-living his hope of obtaining her favour. Expressions, which would have excited only the laughter of a woman who knew the world, but drew tears into the eyes of the innocent Seomanthe. She imagined he had seen her either at church, or looking out of the window, for she was permitted to shew herself in no other place; and doubted

not but all he had wrote to her of his love and despair, was no less true than what she had heard delivered from the pulpit. She looked upon herself as too much obliged by the passion he had for her, not to write an answer full of complaisance, and very dexterously gave it to the woman, on her coming the next day. On the ensuing Sunday she saw a strange gentleman in the next pew to her; by the glances he stole at her every time he could do it without being taken notice of, she fancied him the person who had declared himself her lover, and was convinced her conjecture had not deceived her, when being kneeled down at her devotions, she found means, while every one had their fans before their faces, to drop a letter on the bench she leaned upon; she was not so much taken up with the business she was employed about, as not to see it immediately, and throwing her handkerchief over it, clapped it into her pocket. The looks that passed between them afterwards, during the time of diving service, confirmed her in the opinion, that he was no less charmed with her than she said he was; and him, that the sight of him had not destroyed the impression his letter by the old woman had made on her. [23] Both thought they had reason to be highly satisfied with this interview; but poor Seomanthe was up to the head and ears in love. The person of the man was agreeable enough, and compared to those Negratia had suffered her to converse with, angelic. The prepossession she had for him at least, rendered him so in her eyes, and she thought every moment an age ill she got home to read this second billet; the contents of which were of the same nature with the former, only a postscript added, intreating she would contrive some means to let him entertain her with this passion, by word of mouth. He mentioned the woman who sold the things, and by whose means he at first made a discovery of it, and gave the directions where she lived; begged a meeting there, if possible; at least an answer, whether he might be so happy or not; which, he told her, he would wait for himself early the next morning under her window, if she would be so good as to throw it out.

She sighed at reading it; thought her fate very hard that it was not in the power to comply with the first part of his request, but hesitated not in the least if she ought to grant the other: She snatched the first opportunity she could lay hold on, to prepare a letter, in which she let him know how impossible it was for her to come out; but expressed such a regret at not being able to do so, as shewed it would be no difficult matter to prevail on her to run the greatest lengths.

By the help of his adviser, he carried on a correspondence with her, which ended in the consenting to quit Negratia for ever, and put herself under his protection; In fine, she packed up all her cloaths and jewels, threw the former from the [24] window to the woman, who stood ready to receive them on an appointed night; and having put the other into the pocket, exchanged one scene of hypocrisy for another, and flew from a life irksome for the present, to enter into one of lasting misery.

Early in the morning they were married, and it is possible passed some days in the usual transports of a bridal state; but when their place of abode was discovered by the friends and kindred of Seomanthe, who, distracted at her elopement, had searched the whole town, in how wretched a manner was she found! The villain had drawn her whole fortune out of the Bank, robbed her of all her jewels, and the best of her apparel, had shipped every thing off, and was himself embarked she knew not to what place. The people of the house where they lodged, perceiving him, whom they expected to have been their paymaster, gone, seized on the few trifles he had left behind, as satisfaction of their rent, and were going to turn the unfortunate Seomanthe out of doors.

Not the fight of her distress, nor the lamentations she made, which were pitiful enough to have softened the most rugged hears, had any effect on that of Negratia, who thought no punishment too severe for a person who had deceived her caution; but some others were of a more compassionate disposition; they took her home with them, and comforted her as well as they were able; she still lives with them a dependant on their courtesy, which she is obliged to purchase the continuance of, by rendering herself subservient to all their humours. No news is yet arrived what course her wicked husband took, but it is supposed he is retired either to France or Holland, being almost as [25] much in debt here as all he wronged Seomanthe of would discharge; so that there is little probability of his ever returning, or if he did, that it would be at all to the satisfaction of his unhappy wife. « Exemplum « Ebene 3

Metatextualität » I was going on to recite some other instances of the mischiefs, which, for the most part, are the consequence of laying young people under too great a restraint, when MIRA came in, and seeing what I was about, took the pen out of my hand, and told me I had already said enough; if I proceeded to expatiate

any farther on that head, I should be in danger of being understood to countenance an extreme on the other side, which was much more frequently fatal to our sex.

I yielded to her superior judgment, and needed but few arguments to be convinced, that if unbridled youth were indulged in all the liberties it would take, we should scarce see any thing but unhappy objects before maturity arrived. « Metatextualität

The great encouragement these later times afford to luxury of every kind, can never be too much guarded against by those who are charged with the first forming of the mind. Nature is in itself abhorrent of vice; but the ingenious contrivers of some of our modish entertainments, have found such ways to take off the deformity, that there requires a more strong discernment than youth will ordinarily admit of, to distinguish it from innocence. – The glitter with which it is adorned strikes the eye at a distance, and you perceive not the spirit within, ill, by too near an approach, you are in danger of being infected with its venom. It was not in diversions, such as our modern masquerades in winter, and ridottoes al fresco in summer, that our ancestors passed their [26] evenings; both which, agreeable as they may seem for the present to the senses, have often given source to the most bitter agonies in the reflecting mind. – They appear to me as a daring attempt to invert the vey order of nature, especially the former, which begins at those ours when recreations ought to cease, and encroaches on the times we should be preparing for that repose the mind and body stand in need of. Those who escape e best, are sure to lose one day from life after every masquerade; but others, more delicate in their constitutions, contract colds, and various disorders, which hang upon them a long while, and sometimes never get rid of. Yet, how severly treated would our young gentlemen and ladies think themselves, were they to be deprived of this elegant entertainment, as they term it! "–What can be more innocent (say they) than to see such a number of people together, all dressed in different habits, some talking, some dancing, some gaming, and the music all the time sweetly playing! Then the repartees among us so wet the wit!"

It is certain, indeed, that some great families, who continue the whole winter in the country, frequently have what they call a masquerade at their houses, to which all the neighbouring gentry are invited, and nothing can be more agreeable than those kind of entertainments. Where a selected company are disguised so as not to be known for a time to each other, a round of wit is perpetually played off, and affords mater, by the pleasant mistakes sometimes made, for conversation afterwards; for where every one is obliged to pull off his mask, and own himself for what he is, as soon as the ball is over, nothing will be said or done [27] improper or indecent; but here it is quite otherwise; in these mercenary entertainments, the most abandoned rake, or low-red fellow, who has wherewithal to purchase a ticket, may take the liberty of uttering the grossest things in the chastest ear; and safe in his disguise, go off without incurring either the shame or punishment his behaviour deserves. But, besides being subjected to the insults of every pert coxcomb, who imagines himself most witty when he is most shocking to modesty, I wonder ladies can reflect what creatures of their own sex they vouchsafe to blend with in these promiscuous assemblies, without blushing.

Ebene 3 » Allgemeine Erzählung » A witty gentleman of my acquaintance, but somewhat wild, told me, he never was so much diverted in his life as Ebene 4 » Exemplum » one night, when he saw the greatest prude in the nation, after having been accosted with some very odd expressions, by one, who doubtless mistook her for another, run, as if to shield herself from his importunities, to a certain fille-de-joye, to whom he had given a ticket, and cry out, "O Madam, did you hear the filthy creature!" « Exemplum « Ebene 4

Metatextualität » I could not forbear acknowledging the ridicule this lady incurred, was a just punishment for her appearing in a place so little conformable to the austerity she professed in other things; but at the same time took this opportunity of telling him, that I thought women of honour had little obligations to him, or any of those gentlemen, who, by making presents of tickets to such loose creatures, introduced them into company they otherwise would never have the assurance to approach. I added, that, in my opinion, a greater affront could not be put upon the sex; and that I was also strangely impolitic to bring their mistresses into an assembly, [28] where chance might possibly engage them in conversation with their own wives or sisters. « Metatextualität

To these last words he answered, with a kind of malicious smile, "No Madam, we never give "masquerade tickets to them". Intimating, that it was not with the approbation of the men, that the ladies of their own families should frequent such places; and therefore, if they happened to be affronted there, they must condemn themselves. « Allgemeine Erzählung « Ebene 3

Ebene 3 » Exemplum » Fremdportrait » This put me in mind of an acquaintance of mine, who is accounted a very good husband, and in effect is so, though he took somewhat an extraordinary method to cure his wife of a too great passion she had expressed on their first marriage, for going to those nocturnal revels. Notice was no sooner given of a masquerade, than her eyes sparkled with joy, the habit-maker was immediately sent for, and nothing was either talked or thought on, but the dress she should wear on the approaching happy night. Not but he was convinced her intentions were perfectly innocent, as she never desired to go without him, and even testified an eagerness that he would participate of a pleasure which had so many chars for herself. But he was a man who knew the town, and the dangers to which many women had been exposed in these assemblies; besides, the expence was what he could by no means relish; and fearing to draw on himself the character of a churlish, or a jealous husband, if he gave either of these reasons for restraining her, he bethought himself of a stratagem, which should render her avoiding to go for the future entirely her own act and deed. « Fremdportrait

He caused, unknown to her, one of his intimate friends to put on a habit so exactly the same with [29] that he wore himself, that being of a pretty equal statue, they could not be distinguished from each other when their masks were on. The gentleman, in the midst of a dance, slipt into the husband's place, who immediately withdrew, and absconded till the ball was over. The poor lady, little suspecting the deception, kept close to her supposed spouse the whole time, and when the company broke up, was put by him into a hackney coach, which had orders to drive to a tavern in Pall-mall. She was a little surprised at finding where she was; but thinking it a whim of him, whom it was her duty to comply with, suffered herself to be conducted into a room, where he, plucking off his mask, the fight of his face, and his desiring se would do the same, with some expressions not very becoming the person she had taken him for, so alarmed and terrified her, that she gave a great shriek. The husband, who had followed them in another coach, came in that moment, and found her ringing the bell, calling for the people of the house, and for a chair, that she might be carried home, the gentleman struggling with her, endeavouring all he could to prevail on her to unmask. He so well acted his part, that the person who employed him was highly diverted, and had suffered the farce to go on some time longer, had not the excessive fright his wife was in obliged him to put an end to it, which he did, by plucking off his vizard, and taking her in this arms, conjured her to compose herself. "This accident, said he, might have proved of ill consequence indeed, had it not happened with my particular friend. I saw, and followed you with a resolution to revenge the affront I imagined offered to [30] me; I am now convinced it was all a mistake on his side, as well as yours. See here, continued he, taking of his wife's mask, who it is you have gallanted, and were about to be so free with."

The gentleman affected to stat, and be very much amazed and ashamed of what he had done, begged his friend's pardon, and the lady's, who he said he accosted, as thinkin her a fine woman, and meeting with no manner of repulse, but, on the contrary, that she was very desirous of keeping as near to him as possible, and shunning all other conversation, he had all the reason in the world to flatter himself, she would be no less satisfied with his company in another place. "But, said he, I now perceive it was the likeness of habits deceived her, and that while I was gaining a mistress, she doubted not but she was following a husband."

This adventure occasioned a good deal of merriment among them; but it had all the effect my friend wished it should have on his wife. The imagined danger she had been in, and the real terror it had given her, dwelt so much upon her mind, that she resolved never more to set her foot within a place where virtue and reputation were liable to such hazards. He had the discretion, however, to maintain inviolably the secret of the trick he had put upon her, which, had it been so much as guessed at by her, might, perhaps, have occasioned a resentment more to the prejudice of his peace, than the continuance of that immoderate love of an amusement he did not approve could have been. « Exemplum « Ebene 3

But what this gentleman contrived the appearance of, has not been without its parallel in reality. Two noble families owe the ruin of their peace, as well as their enmity to each other, which [31] there is little likelihood will soon ease, to a fatal mistake, occasioned by the unfortunate similitude of habits, at one of these masquerades.

Ebene 3 » Exemplum » Alcales and Palmyra were married young, the match was made by the kindred on both sides, and their hearts not consulted in the affair: - they lived together, notwithstanding, in very good harmony, neither of them having any attachment elsewhere; and though no more than a calm indifference seemed to subsist between them, yet either through chance, or caution, nothing happened for a long time that could give the least umbrage to one or the other. His favourite amusements were reading, walking, and the play-houses. Hers were

giving and receiving visits, and going to operas and masquerades. He never examined into what company she went, nor did she ever give herself the trouble to inquire in what manner he passed his time. She was infinitely gay and free in conversation, but behaved so equally to all the men of her acquaintance, that malice had found no room to censure her, as guilty of a particular regard for any one. The conduct of Alcales was much the same; he did justice to the charms of every lady, but seemed affected by none: so that jealousy was a passion which this happy sensible pair as yet had never known. With how much tranquility might life have glided on, until both had dropped into eternity, had left the fairest reputation on their tomb, had they continued as they were a few years longer? But their ill fate ordained it otherwise, and all the unity between them was nearest to a dissolution, when most it seemed established and confirmed.

Palmyra, as she never missed a masquerade, was there one night, when Alcales, after she was [32] gone, was also dragged thither by some friends, who would not be denied. Tho' he had not the least relish for that diversion, yet being there, he thought he should be laughed at not to behave in the same fashion he saw others did, and presently singled out a lady, whom he found had some wit and address, for his partner. A lady, who had accompanied Palmyra, and happened to stand near, discovered him by his voice, which he did not attempt to conceal. She ran immediately with the news to his wife, who at first did not believe it; but the other made so many protestations, that he was not only there, but was also deeply engaged with his partner, and she was sure there was an intrigue between them, that Palmyra, at last, resolved to be convinced, and went to that part of the room were her officious informer had told her he was, and where she found him, still entertaining the lady. A passion she had never before experienced, now took possession of the heart. She knew she was not deceived, she heard the voice of her husband distinctly, and to find him in a place he had always pretended an aversion to, made her look upon him as a dissembler, and that he but seined a dislike, in order to come with the greater privacy, and carry on his amours. In fine, she had now the most disadvantageous idea of him, that a wife, imagining herself not only injured but imposed upon, could entertain. She had sometimes an inclination to speak to him, and let him see he was detected; but her ill genius prevented her from doing any thing that might have cleared up this affair, and represented to he, that to shew her resentment in that public place, would draw on her the ridicule of her acquaintance, and that [33] it would be more prudent to observe his behavior during the ball, and afterwards follow him; and in case he went not home, pursue him to the place of his rendezvous.

Accordingly she kept her eye upon him wherever he turned, as much as was possible for her to do, amidst the throng which happened to be there that night, and at length saw him, as she thought, quit the room before the assembly was broke up. As she had before lost sight of the lady he had been talking to, she doubted not but tree was an assignation between them; and finding he stepped into a chair, she took another and followed till she found he entered in a house near Covent-Garden. She considered but a moment what she should do before she ordered the chairman to knock at the door, which being opened, she desired the servant to shew her to the gentleman who was just come in. The fellow, not doubting but his master expected this fair visitor, conducted her up stairs, where she waited not long, before a very handsome gentleman, habited exactly in the same manner she had seen her husband, but now without a mask, came to her, and in the most complaisant terms, beget to know her commands.

Vexed and confused without measure at the disappointment, she replied abruptly, that she had mistaken him for another, and turned hastily away in order to go down stairs; but he seized her by the garment, and told her he should ill deserve the bounty fortune had thrown in his way, if he suffered her to depart without letting her know she could come in search of no man who would set a greater value on any condescension she should be pleased to grant him. [34] In spite of the ill humour she was in, there was somewhat in the person and address of this stranger that pleased her, and it just then entering into her head, there was a possibility he might have changed habits with Alcales, as people sometimes do at a masquerade, either out of frolick, or the better to carry on an intrigue, she asked him, if he had worn that habit the whole evening? To which he answering in the affirmative, she grew more and more perplexed, but was certain she had not been deceived in the voice she had heard, which was that of her husband, and very different form this who now spoke to her. She then asked farther, if he had not taken notice of a gentleman in the same habit with himself? To which he said, that he had observed such a one, and that the person she meant was very much taken up with a lady; but, added he with a smile, "that lady was not she, who now does him the honour to appear so much concerned about him."

These words piqued Palmyra to the soul, and flattering herself that she might learn something farther, by entering into a conversation with him, suffered herself to be prevailed on to sit down; and having told him she was the wife of the person she enquired for, plucked off her mask, in order to shew, that her face was no such as might justify the sight he had put upon her; and conjured him not to conceal any thing he knew of the perfidy of her husband.

This gentleman whom I shall call Lysimon, assured her, with a great deal of truth, that the person who happened to be in the same dress with himself, and which made him take the greater no-[35]tice of him, was utterly known to him; but so exaggerated the compliments he had heard him make to the lady, that Palmyra was quite lost in spite and jealous rage; which he perceiving artfully blended his praises of her beauty, with his exclamations on the ingratitude of a husband, who, having such a wife, could have eyes for any other charms, till vanity on the one side, and revenge on the other, rendered her in a fit disposition to listen to the pleas of a new flame; which he so successfully pursued, that before morning he not only gained the entire possession of her person, but of a heart, which, till then, had been insensible either of the pains or joys of love.

It was some hours past day-break when she came home; Alcales had not got rid of the company who had carried him abroad, until pretty near the same time, so was returned but just before her, and not yet in bed. He seemed not, however, the least surprised at her staying so much beyond the time she was accustomed to come from the masquerade, nor asked any questions concerning it; and she was too much engrossed by the thoughts of Lysimon, to take any notice that she knew he had been there; and all, perhaps, had passed over, if the sister of Alcales, whose house was directly opposite of that where Lysimon lodged, had not unluckily seen her at his window, adjusting her dress before she took her leave. This lady had secretly a passion for him, and had taken, all opportunities to throw herself in his way, in hopes of engaging him; but he having either not understood, or neglected the advances she made, the sight of Palmyra made her not doubt, but it was for her sake he had appeared so stupid and un-[36]grateful. Ebene 4 » Dialog » Fired with all the rage of jealousy, revenge, and disappointment, she came the next day to the house of Alcales, and before his face, flew in Palmyra, as a woman that had brought dishonor on their family, and was unworthy of so good a husband; repeated all she knew of being with Lysimon, and said she would bring her woman, and a man-servant, whom she had called to see her at his window, to be witness to the truth of what she said. So home a charge, and given by his sister, roused Alcales from that indolence of temper he had hitherto behaved with. His cheeks lowed, but his heart was yet more inflamed. Palmyra, first, denied the accusation, but finding the proofs were too plain against her, she turned the whole blame of this cruel censure upon her husband; confessed that jealousy and grief at seeing his engagement at the masquerade, had made her follow a person whom she mistook for him; but that as to having any acquaintance with that gentleman, on whose score she was reproached, she utterly denied it, or even that she knew his name.

Alcaleslistened to all she said, without offering to give her the least interruption; but perceiving she had done, replied, with a smile that had something in it which denoted a mingled malice and disdain, “It is wondrous sane, madam, since your excessive love for me, and e error you were in of a rival’s supplanting you in my affections, had carried you such lengths, how you could immediately, and without being convinced your suspicions were groundless, assume such a composedness in your behavior; you must certainly have a more than ordinary command over [37] your passions, never so much as to mention what gave you so great pain.” « Dialog « Ebene 4

Palmyra had little to allege against so critical an observation; but what she wanted in argument, she made up with railing; endeavoring, as is common in such cases, to conceal her own faults by exaggerating those of her husband. At last the quarrel arrived to such a height, that she flew to her chamber, packed up her jewels, and went to her brother’s house, where she complained loudly of the injustice she had received, and made bitter imprecations never to return to Alcales.

In the mean time he was fully convinced of the injury that had been done him, and in the heat of his resentment sent a challenge to Lysimon, who was too brave not to answer it. They fought, and were both of them dangerously wounded. The whole time that Alcales was confined to his bed, neither Palmyra, nor any of her friends, once sent to enquire after his health: this want of even common complaisance, neither himself, nor relations, have ever forgive, especially as they heard that Lysimon was treated by them with more respect. Nothing could be more inveterate than the hatred which has from that time been between the two families. Palmyra kept her word and never saw her husband after; the only thing, perhaps, she could have obliged him in. Assured as he

was of her infidelity, proofs were wanting for a divorce; therefore it was agreed by the lawyers appointed by each party, that she should have the interest of her own fortune to live upon, in what manner was most agreeable to her. They parted with the same indifference, though with less tranquility than they met. He retired to his country seat, where he [38] still drags on a solitary gloomy life. She went to France, where her beloved Lysimon was gone, soon after the recovery of his wounds; but whether she continues to find in his conversation sufficient to atone for her loss of innocence and reputation, is very much to be questioned. « Exemplum « Ebene 3

Ebene 3 » Exemplum » Fremdportrait » But of all who ever suffered by their curiosity, or attachment to this dangerous diversion, the case of the innocent Erminia was most truly pitiable.

This young lady and her brother were the only issue of a very happy marriage, and both shared equally the tenderness of their indulgent parents. They were educated in the strictest rudiments of piety and virtue, and had something so innately good in their dispositions, as made the practice of those duties, which to others seem most severe, to them a pleasure. « Fremdportrait The family lived in the country, and came not to London but once in two or three years, and then staid but a sort time; till the young gentleman having finished his studies at Cambridge, it was thought proper he should see more of the world, than he could possibly do in that retired part. But fearing he should fall into the vices of the age, in case he was left too much to himself, they resolved on moving to town, in order to have him still under their own eye.

Accordingly a house was taken in a certain square, and the whole family came up, and, not to seem particular, were obliged to live after the manner people do in town: Erminia was not above sixteen, and (as all new faces are, if tolerably handsome) was extremely taken notice of, yet was not her young heart puffed up with the least pride or vanity; and though she had all that cheerfulness which is the inseparable companion [39] of innocence and good-nature, yet it did never transport her so far as to take, or permit any of those liberties, which she saw some of her new acquaintance make no scruple of.

Soon after their arrival winter came on, and wherever either she or her brother went, nothing was talked on but the masquerade: neither of them had ever seen one, and the eagerness they observed in others, excited a curiosity in them. Their parents would not oppose the inclination they expressed, and consented they should go together; but gave their son a strict charge to be watchful over his sister, and never quit sight of her till he brought her come to them again. Though this was an entertainment unknown in England in their gay time of life, and consequently they were strangers to the methods practiced at it, yet having heard somewhat of the dangers, they repeated over and over the same injunction to the young gentleman, who assured them he would take the same care as if themselves were present.

Alas! He little knew how impracticable it was to keep his promise; they were no sooner entered, than both were bewildered among the promiscuous assembly; the strange habits, the hurry, the confusion quite distracted their attention. They kept close to each other, indeed, for some time; but were soon separated by a croud that came rushing between them, some accosting the brother, others the sister. Those who talked to them easily found they were strangers to the conversation of the place, and whispering it about, our young country gentry served as butts for the company to level all the arrows of their wit against.

Erminia had lost her brother for a considerable [40] time, and was encompassed by persons of both sexes, whose mode of speech was neither pleasing to her, nor did se now how to answer; at last, the sight of a blue domino, which was tea bit he went in, revived her, and she ran to the person who wore it, and catching fast hold of him, “Dear Brother, cried she, let us go home. I have been frightened to death by those noisy people yonder. I wonder what pleasure any body can take in being here”.

The person se accosted made no reply; but taking her under the arm, conducted her out as she had desired, and went with her into a hackney coach. Little suspecting the accident that had befallen her, she attended not to what orders he gave the coachman; and, glad to find herself out of a place which for her had so few charms, entertained her supposed brother with a repetition of what had been said to her, till the coach stopped at the door of a great house: as it was not yet light, she distinguished it not from their own, and innocently jumped out, and was within the entry before she discovered her mistake; but as soon as she did, “Bless me, cried se, where have you brought me, brother?” She followed him, however, up stairs, where he, pulling off his vizard, discovered a face she had never seen before.

Never was surprise and terror greater than that which now seized the heart of that unfortunate young lady; she wept, she prayed, she conjured him by every thing that is called sacred, or worthy of veneration, to suffer her to depart; but he was one, to whom, had she been less beautiful, her innocence was a sufficient charm. The more averse and shocked she seemed at the rude behaviour with [41] which he immediately began to treat her, the more were his desires inflamed; and having her in his power, and in a house where all her shricks and cries were as unavailing as her tears and intreaties, he satiated, by the most barbarous force his base inclinations; and for a moment's joy to himself, was the entire ruin of a poor creature, whose ignorance of the world, and the artifices of mankind, alone had betrayed to him.

The cruel conquest gained, he was at a loss how to dispose of his prey: a thousand times she begged he would complete the villainy he had begun, and kill the wretch he had made; but this was neither his safety, nor perhaps his principle, wicked as he was, would permit him to do. He easily found she was a girl of condition, and doubted not but she had friends who would revenge the injury he had done he, could they by any means discover the author; he therefore, after having in vain endeavoured to pacify her, and prevail on her to comply with his desires of holding a secret correspondence with him, compelled her to let him bind a handkerchief over her eyes, that she might not be able to describe either the house or street where she was abused; then put her into a hackney coach, which he ordered o drive into an obscure dirty lane in the Strand, near the water-side, where he made her set down, and immediately drove away with all the speed the horses could make.

She no sooner found herself at liberty, than she plucked the bandage from her eyes, - she cast a disconsolate look about, - she knew not where she was; but the sight of the water at some little distance from her, tempted her more than once, as she has since confessed, to throw herself into it. [42] The precepts of religion, however, restrained her, and she wandered backwards and forwards for some time, uncertain what to do; at length she came to a more populous place, and seeing a chair, made herself be carried home, though with what agonies of shame and grief is easier to imagine than describe.

The young gentleman, her brother, had all this time been in the utmost distraction; he no sooner missed, than he went in search of her round and round the room, and through all the little avenues that led to it; described her habit to the servants, and asked if they had seen such a lady; but all his endeavours being fruitless, he ran home, flattering himself, that missing him, she had gone before. Not finding he there, he flew back again to the Hay-market; made a second search, a second inquiry, and that being as ineffectual as the first, his grief and his despair were beyond all bounds. He truly loved is sister, and doubted not but some very unhappy accident had befallen her; but what involved him yet in greater horrors, was how he should answer to his parents his so ill acquitting himself of the charge they laid on him concerning her. Dreading their reproaches, and even yet more the agonies they would feel at seeing him return without her, he flew about the streets like one totally deprived of reason, until day being far advanced, and everybody he met staring at him as a person whom drink or madness had rendered an object of derision, shame, at last, got the better of his vexations, and he ventured to encounter what was more dreadful to him than death itself.

The anxious parents could not think of going [43] to their repose until their dear children were returned in safety; they had apprehensions which they could not account for, none having dared to inform them that Erminia was missing, or that her brother, many hours before, had called at the door to ask if she was come: Ebene 4 » Dialog » but when they now saw him enter with a confused and dejected air, and found their daughter was not with him, they both at once cried out, in a transport of mingled rage and grief, "Where is your sister? what is become of Erminia? do you approach us without her?"

The condition this poor youth was in, would be very difficult to express; he trembled, hung down his head, and his flowing eyes, let fall a shower of tears upon his breast, but had not power to speak, until his father, impatient of knowing even the worst that could befal, commanded him either to repeat what had happened, or that instant leave his sight for ever. "O Sir, (then cried he) what can I say? my sister is gone! all my care in obeying your commands was vain, and I am wholly ignorant how this misfortune happened." « Dialog « Ebene 4

Scarce had he spoke these words, when the ruined maid appeared. Father, mother, brother, all ran at once to catch her in their arms; but the shock of returning to them as she now was rendered, worked too powerfully on the weakness of her spirits, to leave her in a condition to receive their embraces, and she fell into a swoon,

in which she continued a long time, though they immediately undressed, put her to bed, and used all proper means for her recovery.

On the return of her senses, she fell into the [44] most lamentable complaints, but could not be prevailed upon, while her father and brother were in the room, to reveal any ting of the occasion. Her mother observing their presence was a restraint, desired tem to withdraw; after which, partly by commands, and partly by intreaties, but more by mentioning all the evils that her imagination could suggest, at last the whole sad secret was revealed.

Never was so disconsolate a family, and the more so, as they could by no means discover the brutal author of their misfortune; the precautions he had taken rendered all their search in vain; and when some days after they prevailed on Erminia to go with them in a coach almost throughout London, yet could she no point out either the house or street where her ravisher had carried.

To fill e measure of her woes, a young gentleman arrived in town, who long had loved, and had the approbation of her friends, and for whom she also felt all the passion that can inspire a virtuous mind. He had by some business been prevented from accompanying the family in their removal, but was now come full of the hopes of having his desires completed, by a happy marriage with Erminia.

Melancholy reverse of fate! Instead of being received with open arms, and that cheerful welcome he had been accustomed to, and had reason to expect, the most heavy gloom appeared on all the faces of those he was permitted to see: but Erminia no sooner heard of his arrival, than she shut herself up in her chamber, and would by no means be prevailed upon to appear before him. To excuse her absence, they told him she was in-[45] disposed; but this seemed all pretence, because the freedom with which they had always lived together might very well allow him the privilege of visiting her in her chamber. He complained of this alteration in her behaviour, and doubted not, at first, but it was occasioned by the preference they gave to some new rival. The true reason, however, could not be kept so much a secret, but that it was whispered about, and he soon got a hint of it. How sensible a shock it must gibe hi, may easily be conceived; but he got the better of it, and after a very little reflection, went to her father, told him the afflicting news he had heard, but withal assured hi, that as his love for Erminia was chiefly founded on her virtue, an act of force could not be esteemed any breach of it, and was still ready to marry her, if she would consent.

This generosity charmed the whole family; but Erminia could not think of accepting the offer: - the more she found him worthy of her affections in her state of innocence, the less could she support the shame of being his, in the condition she was:-she told her parents, tat se had taken a firm resolution never to marry, and begged their permission to retire to an aunt, who was married to an old clergyman, and lived in one of the most remote countries in England. Dear as her presence was, they found something so truly noble in her way of thinking, that they would not oppose it; and even her lover, in spite of himself, could not forbear applauding what gave a thousand daggers to his heart.

Erminia, in a short time, departed for her country residence: nothing was ever more mournful than the leave she took of her parents and bro-[46] ther; but not all the entreaties of her lover, by messages and letters, could gain so far upon her modesty, as to prevail on her to see him; she sent him, however, a letter, full of the most tender acknowledgments of his love and generosity, and with this he was obliged to be content. « Exemplum « Ebene 3

It is not every woman would have resented such an injury in the same manner with Erminia; and it must be confessed, that her notions of honour and virtue had somewhat superlatively delicate in them. What a loss then to the world to be deprived of so amiable an example, as she would have doubtless proved of conjugal truth, tenderness, and a strict observance of every duty the men so much desire to find in her they make a partner for life! How can her brutal ravisher reflect, as it is impossible but e sometimes must, on the mischiefs be as occasioned, without horrors, such as must render life a burden? – Though he yet is hid in darkness, and left no traces by which the public may point the villain out, and treat him with the abhorrence he deserves, his own thoughts must surely be the avengers of his crime, and make him more truly wretched than any exterior punishment could do.

It is true that accidents of his dreadful nature but rarely happen; and heaven forbid they should ever me more frequent! Yet I am afraid they are much more so than is publickly known: methinks, therefore, youth and innocence cannot be too much upon its guard, even against dangers that seem most remote: the snares laid for it are sometimes so well concealed, that the most penetrating eye cannot discover them; and she who boasts the greatest discernment, is often entangled in them the [47] soonest. The inadvertent and unwary are, indeed,

to be pitied; but those who run willfully, and in defiance, as it were, of all temptations, even tho' they should escape, merit little thanks from their own sex, because they set an ill precedent for others, who, perhaps, may be less fortunate.

I cannot say our summer evenings public entertainments, of which I think Vauxhall not only the most pleasant, but also most frequented by the great world, are liable to such unlucky accidents. Every one there appears with the same face which nature gave him, and if intrigues are carried on, it must, at least, be with the consent of both parties; yet here are dangerous excitements, -music, flattery, delightful groves, and sweet recesses, to lull asleep the guardians of honour. Ebene 3 » Exemplum » A certain well known gentleman, whose acquaintance bodes no good to the young and beautiful of our sex, has often boasted that Vauxhall was the temple of Flora, of which he has long been constituted high-priest. I wish there a may not be too much truth in what he says; but for the vindication of some ladies who have been lovers of a ramble cross the water, I must recite one instance of a disappointment he met with, much to his mortification, and which, for some time, brought him under disgrace with the most illustrious of all his patrons. As chief employment is the search of beauty, in which our modern fine gentlemen allow him to have an exquisite taste, he one night singled out a young girl, who seemed to have comprised in her every ting that could inspire an amorous inclination. Flavia, for so I shall call her, had two companions with her of her own sex. He artfully introduced himself into their conversation, and found [48] that she whom he had pitched upon, had no less wit and address, than she had beauty. This, he thought to himself was a conquest worth obtaining, and was resolved to spare no pains in the attempt, being certain that if he was so happy to succeed in it, his reward would be proportionate to the service.

The modest and grave deportment with which he behaved towards her and her friends, made them, as they had no male acquaintance with them, glad of his protection to see them into a boat when the company broke up, and the great croud and hurry which there always is, rendered him, indeed,so very useful, that they could not, without being guilty of too prudish a reserve, refuse permitting him a passage with them to the other side; by this means he got knowledge where they all lived, for his complaisance would need extend itself so far as to see each to her respective habitation.

Flavia being the only person on whom he had a design, he went to wait on her the next day, under pretence of inquiring after her health, the evening happening to be more cool than ordinary, he said he feared might have had some ill effect on a constitution so delicate as her's. Flavia, who suspected not the serpent that lay hid under such fair behaviour, received him with the utmost civility, but her other will infinitely more: she had been a woman of gallantry in her youth, and did not think herself yet past it, so was very ready to encourage the visits of any person who made a good appearance. She thanked him a thousand times over for the care he had taken of her daughter; and when encouraged by her manner of treating him, she asked permission to wait on them some-[49] times at teak-drinking, she assured him, nothing could do her more honour and pleasure, than to cultivate an acquaintance with a gentleman of his merit. He now looked on half his work as done, and by the disposition of the mother, judged he should find little difficulty in his designs on the daughter; especially as on inquiry into their circumstances, he found they were very low; - that the father of Flavia, at his death, had left a numerous family unprovided for, and that the other children were dispersed, some with one relation, some with another, the mother being able to support no more than this one. In this confidence he went immediately to the illustrious Rinaldo, and, after magnifying his own zeal and industry to serve his pleasures, told him he had discovered a treasure of charms, fit only for his possession; and with such luscious phrases painted to him every grace the beautiful Flavia was mistress of, that Rinaldo was all on fire to see her. "If I find her such as you describe," said he, "and I enjoy her by your means, I will deny you nothing you can ask." The other bowed, and assured him he would bring her into the Mall the next day, where his own eye should convince him of the truth.

This being agreed to, he went to the mother of Flavia, and intreated they would favour him with their company to the Park, for he would not hazard a refusal, by asking the one without the other; and beside, thought it would be imprudent to give them any room to suspect his intentions, till he should know Rinaldo's sentiments.

They now looked on him as one of their acquaintance, and were not all displeased to be gallanted by a person who made the figure he did. [50] In fine, they went; Rinaldo was there, met them at several turns, and found nothing in Flavia but what attracted his admiration. The last time he passed by them, "You are a happy man," said he, calling him by his name, "to have the conduct of so much beauty."

This purveyor for the vices of other men was highly pleased to find the choice he had made approved. Flavia blushed; but her mother was transported to see by whom they were taken notice of. All the time continued walking afterwards they were entertained with nothing but the praises of Rinaldo-, his fine shape, his genteel air, but above all, his goo-nature, generosity, and liberality to the ladies, were expatiated on with all the pomp that words could give them.

He proceeded no farther at that time; but the next day, when he waited on Rinaldo to know his commands, he found him all impatience for the possession of Flavia; on which he went directly to her, and made no scruple of acquainting both herself and mother with the passion that illustrious person was inspired with, and at the same time made them the most formal compliments of congratulation on their good fortune.

The mother listened o him with the most raptured attention. She already fancied herself in her coach-and-six, and a thousand wild ideas of grandeur, homage, and magnificence, ran through her head in an instant. She told him, tat she knew he duty better than to oppose any thing the great Rinaldo wished, and she hoped her daughter would also receive the honour he did he with a becoming obedience.

Ebene 4 » Dialog » Flavia all this time spoke not a word; the sur-[51] prize of such an offer, at first, and the shock it gave her to hear her mother's reply afterwards, kept her silent: but she blushes, which, in reality, were excited by her disdain, were taken only as the effect of her modesty. Both of them urged her to speak and the emissary of Rinaldo intreated to know from her own mouth, what answer se should give his patron: -At last, "Sir, (said she), I am utterly unworthy of any regard from so great a person, and equally ignorant how to repay it any otherwise tan by may prayers and good wishes. This is all I can say as to Rinaldo; but as to yourself, from whom I little expected such a proposal, be assured I am and will be virtuous." « Dialog « Ebene 4

With these words she flung out of the room, leaving the person she addressed them to in a great deal of consternation; but her mother soon brought him into a better humour: she told him the girl had some romantic notions in her head, but she should easily bring her to a more just sense of her duty, when she talked to her in private; and therefore begged he would not mention her foolish behaviour to Rinaldo, for she would undertake to prepare her to receive his commands whenever he pleased.

It was then concluded between them, that she should remove with her daughter to a small but pleasant house they had on the banks of the river, and which, indeed, was their usual habitation, they having only lodgings in town for the present, on account of a law-suit the mother of Flavia came to sollicit: -that she should have two or three days, in order to bring her into such a disposition, as they wished; and that when every thing was ready, she would let him know by a letter, after [52] which Rinaldo might come privately to their house by water.

Ebene 4 » Dialog » Our modern Pandarus was no sooner gone, than she flew to her daughter's chamber, where she found her in tears. She called her a thousand fools, - "What, (cried she), do you grieve for what any other than yourself would rejoice in? – Do you consider who Rinaldo is? – What he will hereafter be?-And what your sons, if you have any by him, will be?"

To this Flavia replied as became a maid devoted to virtue, begged she would insist no farther on a thing she was determined never to consent to, -and concluded with assuring her, that she should prefer the lowest state in life to all the grandeur in the world, if purchased at the expence of her innocence. « Dialog « Ebene 4

The old lady's vexation was inexpressible at finding her so refractory to her desires; but resolute not to lose the advantages she promised to herself and family by this proposal, she left no means untried to bend or persuade her to compliance.

When they got to their little country seat, she set before her eyes the misfortunes they were at present involved in, and endeavoured to convince her, that the passion Rinaldo had for her, seemed a peculiar mark of Divine Providence in their faovur; and that what would be a crime to grant to any other man, was entirely sanctified by his degree, and would be approved on both by heaven and earth. But finding these arguments of no weight, and that all the sophistry she made use of was in vain, she proceeded to threats, and even to blows; nay, denied her necessary food, and used her with a cruelty scarce to be paralleled in a mother. This [53] method also failing, and the virtuous maid remaining fixed in her resolution, she again had recourse to persuasion, till Flavia, quite tired out with hearing the same thing so often repeated, at last left off making any reply; but was all the time meditating how she should avoid the ruin intended her.

The mother now looked upon her silence as a kind of consent, and that it was only owing to an obstinacy of nature, that se did not give it in plain words. – In this opinion she set her house in the greatest order, and wrote to her good friend, as she termed him, intimating that her daughter now repented of her folly, and was in a disposition to receive the honour of a visit from Rinaldo whenever he pleased. To this she had a speedy answer, and a day appointed for the coming of that great person.

Ebene 4 » Dialog » Flavia was soon apprized of it by the preparations making in the house, and the order given her to dress, and to appear in the best manner she was able. "Whom am I then to see, madam?" demanded she, in a dejected tone: her mother then told her, that her illustrious lover intended them the honour of a visit: "but (continued she,) I will leave it to yourself how to behave towards him, and hope you have discretion enough to manage him so, as that the friendship he now vouchsafes to have for us, may not be wholly lost." « Dialog « Ebene 4

This artful woman had two reasons for now speaking to her in these mild terms; the one was, that if she made use of the authority of a mother, it might ruffle her features, and consequently render her less amiable in the eyes of Rinaldo; and the other, that by pretending every thing would [54] be left to her own choice, she would be less averse to entertaining him, which was all she wanted; firmly believing a girl of her years would not dare to refuse a person like him any thin he should ask, though she might have courage to do it to those employed by him.

The poor young creature, in the mean time, laboured under the greatest distraction of mind how to avoid an interview, in which she could not be assured of not losing, by force, that which she was always determined never to yield. She had no friend on whom she could enough depend to reveal the secret. At last it came into her head to apply to a certain clergyman, who lived about two miles distant from their house. He was a man pretty far advance din years, and had the reputation of all the purity of manners befitting his sacred function: she thought there could not be a more proper person for one in her circumstances to consult, or better able to advise how to shun the snares laid for her innocence.

Accordingly she rose extremely early, and before any of the family were awake, stole out of her mother's house, and made the best of her way to that of this reverend guide, to whom, after some tears and sighs, which the sad compulsion of being obliged to reveal the same of one so near to her in blood occasioned, she related the whole pity-moving story; and concluded with begging his protection, till she could find some means of getting her bread, either in service, or by working with her needle.

Ebene 4 » Dialog » The good doctor, who indeed, answered the character given of him, heard her with amazement and admiration; and after he had paused some [55] time, told her, that considering who were her seducers, he questioned whether ever any age could afford an example of the like virtue; "but, said he, how can I protect you against the authority of a mother, seconded by the power of Rinaldo? There is, continued he, but one way, and that is, by making you my wife. I know the disparity of our years, and that such an union may be as irksome to your inclinations, as the other is to your virtue. I will not, therefore, urge it; but fear, that all the endeavours I can make will be unavailing, without that tie, which even Rinaldo himself will not presume to violate." « Dialog « Ebene 4

Flavia was too much astonished to be able to make any immediate reply, yet testified nothing in her countenance that could give him room to think she was averse to his proposals, nor had she, in reality, any reason to be so. He had a good benefice, a small estate in land, no child, and a very graceful person, tho' his face was somewhat sorrowed by time. But what weighed more with her than all other considerations was, that a marriage with him would be a sure defence form all attacks upon her honour, and deliver her from the power of a mother, who, she had too much reason to believe, would, one time or other, give her up to infamy.

But, not to be longer in relating this affair than they were in agreeing on it, she neither had nor affected any scruples; and the coach that morning setting out for London, they took their passage in it, and were married the same day.

The distraction which the mother of Flavia was in when she was not be found, may easily be guessed; but when Rinaldo came, and received [56] such a baulk to his expectations, he was extremely incensed at first against the person who had so much assured him of a reception answerable to his warmest wishes. The negotiator had little to say in his defence, but that "the girl was certainly run mad, that he had never thought himself more secure," and begged pardon in the most servile manner. – That great person too much despised him to take another revenge on him, than reporting how much he had proved unfit for the employment he valued himself

upon: this was, however, a very severe punishment; for whenever e attempted any thing of the like nature, he was always reproached with Flavia, ad all he could do was insufficient to retrieve his credit for a long time. « Exemplum « Ebene 3

The virtue of Flavia as its reward in the greatest blessing heaven can give, a mind perfectly content. She lives pleased and happy in her lot, and by her behaviour justifies her husband's choice, and puts to shame all those who at first pretended to censure so unequal a match.

It is certain the ideas that arise in our minds, when we reflect on temptations we have had the power to shun, are, beyond all description, sweet. There is a laudable pride in triumphing over the artifices of those that would seduce us, which diffuses the highest satisfaction to the soul; but yet we ought to be aware how we court dangers in the assurance of overcoming them. We may flatter ourselves too far; there is nothing more frequently deceives us than our own hearts; and it is, methinks venturing too far, to stake that innate settled peace, which conscious innocence, tho' untried, unmagnified, affords against the precarious hope of purchasing a public fame, which, how-[57] ever just, is yet in danger of being blasted by envy and detraction. « Ebene 2 « Ebene 1