

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66641-2 - Matthew Prior: Dialogues of the Dead and other Works in Prose and Verse

A. R. Waller

Excerpt

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THE
HIND
AND THE
PANTHER

TRANSVERS'D

To the Story of

The *Country-Mouse* and the *City-Mouse*.

Much Malice mingled with a little Wit. *Hind. Pan.*
Nec vult Panthera domari. Quæ Genus.

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PREFACE.

THE Favourers of the Hind and Panther will be apt to say in its Defence, That the best things are capable of being turn'd to Ridicule; that Homer has been Burlesque'd, and Virgil Travestied without suffering any thing in their Reputation from that Buffoonry; and that in like manner, the Hind and the Panther may be an exact Poem, though 'tis the Subject of our Raillery: But there is this difference, that those Authors are wrested from their true Sense, and this naturally falls into Ridicule; there is nothing Represented here as monstrous and unnatural, which is not equally so in the Original. First as to the General Design, Is it not as easie to imagine two Mice bilking Coachmen, and supping at the Devil; as to suppose a Hind entertaining the Panther at a Hermits Cell, discussing the greatest Mysteries of Religion, and telling you her son Rodriguez writ very good Spanish? What can be more improbable and contradictory to the Rules and Examples of all Fables, and to the very design and use of them? They were first begun and raised to the highest Perfection in the Eastern Countries; where they wrote in Signs and spoke in Parables, and delivered the most useful Precepts in delightful stories; which for their Aptness were entertaining to the most Judicious, and led the vulgar into understanding by surprizing them with their Novelty, and fixing their Atten[tion]. All their Fables carry a double meaning; the Story is one and intire; the Characters the same throughout, not broken or chang'd, and always conformable to the Nature of the Creatures they introduce. They never tell you that the Dog which snapt at a shadow, lost his Troop of Horse, that would be unintelligible; a piece of Flesh is proper for him to drop, and the Reader will apply it to mankind; they would not say that the Daw who was so proud of her borrow'd Plumes lookt very ridiculous when Rodriguez came and took away all the book lu! the 17th, 24th,

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and 25th Chapters, which she stole from him : But this is his new way of telling a story, and confounding the Moral and the Fable together.

Before the Word was written, said the Hind,
Our Saviour Preacht the Faith to all Mankind.

What relation has the Hind to our Saviour ? or what notion have we of a Panther's Bible ? If you say he means the Church, how does the Church feed on Lawns, or range in the Forest ? Let it be always a Ch[u]rch, or always the cloven-footed Beast, for we cannot bear his shifting the scene every Line. If it is absurd [in] Comedies to make a Peasant talk in the strain of a Hero, or a Country Wench use the language of the Court ; how monstrous is it to make a Priest of a Hind, and a Parson of a Panther ? To [b]ring 'em in disputing with all the Formalities and Terms of the School ? Tho[u]gh as to the Arguments themselves, those, we confess, are suited to the Capacity of the Beasts, and if we would suppose a Hind expressing her self about these Matters, she would talk at that Rate.

As to the Absurdity of his expressions, there is nothing wrested to make 'em ridiculous, the terms are sometimes alter'd to make the Blunder more visible ; Knowledg misunderstood is not at all better sense than Unde[r]standing misunderstood, though 'tis confest the Author can play with words so well, that this and twenty such will pass off at a slight reading.

There are other mistakes which could not be brought in, for they were too gross for Bayes himself to commit. 'Tis hard to conceive how any man could censure the Turks for Gluttony, a People that debauch in Coffee, are voluptuous in a mess of Rice, and keep the strictest Lent, without the Pleasures of a Carnival to encourage them. But 'tis almost impossible to think that any man who had not renounced his Senses, should read Duncomb for Allen : He had been told that Mr. Allen had written a Discourse of Humility ; to which he wisely answers, That that magnified Piece of Duncombs was Translated from the Spanish of Rodriguez, and to set it beyond dispute, makes the infallible Guide affirm the same thing. There are few mistakes, but one may imagine how a Man fell into them, and at least what he aim'd at ; but what likeness is there between Duncomb and Allen ? do they so much as Rhime ?

We may have this comfort under the severity of his Satyr, to see

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his Abilities equally lessen'd with his Opinion of us ; and that he could not be a fit Champion against the Panther till he had laid aside all his Judgment. But we must applaud his Obedience to his new Mother Hind ; she Disciplin'd him severely, she commanded him it seems, to Sacrifice his darling Fame, and to do it effectually he publisht this learned Piece. This is the favourable Construction Page 90.
we would put on his faults, tho he takes care to inform us, that it was done from no Imposition, but out of a natural Propensity he has to Malice, and a particular Inclination of doing Mischief. What Pref.
else could provoke him to Libel the Court, Blaspheme Kings, abuse the whole Scotch Nation, rail at the greatest Part of his own, and lay all the Indignities imaginable on the only establish'd Religion? And we must now Congratulate him this Felicity, that there is no Page. 87.
Set or Denomination of Christians, whom he has not abused.

Thus far his Arms have with Success been crown'd.

Let Turks, Jews and Infidels, look to themselves, he has already begun the War upon them. When once a Conqueror grows thus dreadful, 'tis the Interest of all his Neighbours to oppose him, for there is no Alliance to be made with one that will face about, and destroy his Friends, and like a second Almanzor, change sides meerly to keep his hand in ure. This Heroick temper of his, has created him some Enemies, that did by no means affect Hostility ; and he may observe this Candor in the Management, that none of his Works are concern'd in these Papers, but his last Piece ; and I believe he is sensible this is a favour. I was not ambitious of Laughing at any Perswasion, or making Religion the Subject of such a Trifle ; so that no man is here concern'd, but the Author himself, and nothing ridicul'd but his way of arguing.

But, Gentlemen, if you won't take it so, you must grant my Excuse is more reasonable than our Author's to the Dissenters.

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Transvers'd to the Story of the *Country and
the City-Mouse*

Bayes. Johnson. Smith.

Johnson.

HAH! my old friend Mr. *Bayes*, what lucky chance has thrown me upon you? Dear Rogue, let me embrace thee.

Bayes. Hold, at your peril, Sir, stand off and come not within my Swords point, for if you are not *come over to the Royal party*, I expect neither fair war, nor fair quarter from you.

Jobns. How, draw upon your friend? and assault your old Acquaintance? O' my *conscience* my intentions were Honourable.

Bayes. *Conscience!* Ay, ay, I know the deceit of that word well enough, let me have the *marks* of your *Conscience* before I trust it, for if it be not of the same stamp with mine, Gad I may be *knockt down* for all your fair promises.

Smith. Nay, prithee *Bayes*, what damn'd Villany hast thou been about, that thou'rt under these apprehensions? upon my Honour I'm thy friend; yet thou lookest as sneaking and frighted, as a dog that has been worrying sheep.

Bayes. Ay Sir, *The Nation is in too high a ferment for me to expect any mercy*, or I'gad, to trust any body.

Smith. But why this to us, my old friend, who you know never trouble our heads with National concerns, till the third bottle has taught us as much of Politicks, as the next does of Religion?

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HIND AND PANTHER TRANSVERS'D

Bayes. Ah Gentlemen, leave this prophaneness, I am alter'd since you saw me, and cannot bear this loose talk now; Mr. *Johnson*, you are a man of Parts, let me desire you to read *the Guide of Controversy*; and Mr. *Smith*, I would recommend to you *the Considerations on the Council of Trent*, and so Gentle- Page 5.
men your humble Servant.——*Good life be now my Task.*

Johns. Nay Faith, we wont part so: believe us we are both your Friends; let us step to the *Rose* for one quarter of an hour, and talk over old Stories.

Bayes. I ever took you to be men of Honour, and for your sakes I will transgress as far as one Pint.

Johns. Well, Mr. *Bayes*, many a merry bout have we had in this House, and shall have again, I hope: Come, what Wine are you for?

Bayes. Gentlemen, do you as you please, for my part he shall bring me a single Pint of any thing.

Smith. How so, Mr. *Bayes*, have you lost your paltat? you have been more curious.

Bayes. True, I have so, but *senses* must be starv'd that the soul may be gratified. Men of your Kidney make the *senses* the Page 21.
supream Judg, and therefore bribe 'em high, but we have laid both the use and pleasure of 'em aside.

Smith. What, is not there good eating and drinking on both sides? you make the separation greater than I thought it.

Bayes. No, no, whenever you see a fat Rosie-colour'd Ibid.
fellow, take it from me, he is either a Protestant or a *Turk*.

Johns. At that rate, Mr. *Bayes*, one might suspect your conversion; methinks thou hast as much the face of an *Heretick* as ever I saw.

Bayes. *Such was I, such by nature still I am.* But I hope Page 5.
ere long I shall have drawn this *pamper'd Paunch* fitter for the *straight gate*.

Smith. Sure, Sir, you are in ill hands, your Confessor gives you more severe rules than he practices; for not long ago a *Fat Frier* was thought a *true Character*.

Bayes. Things were misrepresented to me: I confess I have been unfortunate in some of my Writings: but since you have put me upon that subject, I'll show you a thing I have in my Pocket shall wipe off all that, or I am mistaken.

Smith. Come, now thou art like thy self again. Here's the *Kings Health* to thee——Communicate.

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MATTHEW PRIOR

Bayes. Well, Gentlemen, here it is, and I'll be bold to say, the exactest Piece the world ever saw, a *Non Pareillo* I'faith. But I must bespeak your pardons if it reflects any thing upon your perswasion.

Job. Use your Liberty, Sir, you know we are no *Bigots*.

Bayes. Why then you shall see me lay the *Reformation* on its back, I'gad, and justifie our Religion by way of *Fable*.

Johns. An apt contrivance indeed! what do you make a *Fable* of your *Religion*?

Bayes. Ay I'gad, and without *Morals* too; for I tread in no mans steps; and to show you how far I can out-do any thing that ever was writ in this kind, I have taken *Horace's* design, but I'gad, have so out-done him, you shall be asham'd for your *old friend*. You remember in him the *Story* of the *Country-Mouse*, and the *City-Mouse*; what a plain simple thing it is, it has no more life and spirit in it, I'gad, than a Hobby-horse; and his *Mice* talk so meanly, such common stuff, so like *meer Mice*, that I wonder it has pleas'd the world so long. But now will I undeceive *Mankind*, and teach 'em to *heighten*, and *elevate a Fable*. I'll bring you in the very same *Mice* disputing the depth of *Philosophy*, searching into the fundamentals of *Religion*, quoting *Texts, Fathers, Councils*, and all that, I'gad, as you shall see either of 'em could easily make an *Asse* of a *Country Vicar*. Now whereas *Horace* keeps to the dry naked story, I have more copiousness than to do that, I'gad. Here, I draw you general *Characters*, and describe all the *beasts* of the *Creation*; there, I launch out into long *Digressions*, and leave my *Mice* for twenty Pages together; then I fall into *Raptures*, and make the finest *Soliloquies*, as would ravish you. Won't this do, think you?

Johns. Faith, Sir, I don't well conceive you; all this about two *Mice*?

Bayes. Ay, why not? is it not great and Heroical? but come, you'll understand it better when you hear it; and pray be as severe as you can, I'gad I defie all *Criticks*. Thus it begins.

Pag. 1.

*A milk-white Mouse immortal and unchang'd,
Fed on soft Cheese, and o're the Dairy rang'd;
Without, unspotted; innocent within,
She fear'd no danger, for she knew no Ginn.*

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Johns. Methinks Mr. *Bayes*, soft Cheese is a little too coarse Diet for an *immortal Mouse*; were there any necessity for her eating, you should have consulted *Homer* for some *Cælestial Provision*.

Bayes. Faith, Gentlemen, I did so; but indeed I have not the *Latin* one, which I have mark'd by me, and could not readily find it in the Original.

Yet had She oft been scar'd by bloody Claws Pag. 1.

Of winged Owls, and stern Grimalkins Paws

Aim'd at her destin'd Head, which made her fly, Pag. 2.

Tho She was doom'd to Death, and fated not to dye.

Smith. How came She that *fear'd no danger* in the line before, to be scar'd in this, Mr. *Bayes*?

Bayes. Why then you may have it *chas'd* if you will; for I hope a Man may run away without being *afraid*; mayn't he?

Johns. But pray give me leave: how was She *doom'd to Death*, if She was *fated not to dye*; are not *doom* and *fate*, much the same thing?

Bayes. Nay *Gentlemen*, if you question my skill in the Language, I'm your humble Servant; the *Rogues* the *Criticks*, that will allow me nothing else, give me that; sure I that made the Word, know best what I meant by it: I assure you, *doom'd* and *fated*, are quite different things.

Smith. Faith, Mr. *Bayes*, if you were *doom'd* to be hang'd, whatever you were *fated* to, 'twould give you but small comfort.

Bayes. Never trouble your head with that, Mr. *Smith*, mind the business in hand.

Not so her young; their Linsy-woolsy line, Pag. 2.
Was Hero's make, half humane, half Divine.

Smith. Certainly these *Hero's*, *half Humane*, *half Divine*, have very little of the *Mouse* their *Mother*.

Bayes. Gadsokers! Mr. *Johnson*, does your Friend think I mean nothing but a *Mouse*, by all this? I tell thee, Man, I mean a *Church*, and these young Gentlemen her Sons, signifie *Priests*, *Martyrs* and *Confessors*, that were hang'd in *Oats's Plot*. There's an excellent *Latin* Sentence, which I had a mind to

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bring in, *Sanguis Martyrum semen Ecclesiae*, and I think I have not wrong'd it in the Translation.

Pag. 2.

*Of these a slaughter'd Army lay in Blood,
Whose sanguine Seed increas'd the sacred Brood ;
She multipl'd by these, now rang'd alone,*

Pag. 3.

And wander'd in the Kingdoms once her own.

Smith. Was She alone when the sacred Brood was increased?

Bayes. Why thy Head's running on the *Mouse* again ; but I hope a *Church* may be alone, tho the *Members* be increased, mayn't it ?

Johns. Certainly Mr. *Bayes*, a *Church* which is a *diffusive Body of Men*, can much less be said to be alone.

Bayes. But are you really of that Opinion ? Take it from me, Mr. *Johnson*, you are wrong ; however to oblige you, I'll clap in some *Simile* or other, about the *Children of Israel*, and it shall do.

Smith. Will you pardon me one word more, Mr. *Bayes* ? What could the *Mouse* (for I suppose you mean her now) do more then *range* in the *Kingdoms*, when they were her own ?

Bayes. Do ? why She *reign'd* ; had a *Diadem*, *Scepter* and *Ball*, till they depos'd her.

Smith. Now her Sons are so *increas'd*, She may try t'other pull for't.

Bayes. I gad, and so She may before I have done with Her ; it has cost me some pains to clear Her Title. Well, but Mum for that, Mr. *Smith*.

Pag. 3.

The common Hunt, She timorously past by,
For they made tame, *disdain'd Her company* ;
They grin'd, She in a fright tript o're the *Green*,
For She was *lov'd*, wherever She was *seen*.

Johns. Well said little *Bayes*, I'faith the Critick must have a great deal of leasure, that attacks those Verses.

Bayes. I gad, I'll warrant him, who ere he is, *offendet solido* ; but I go on.

Pag. 3.

The Independent Beast.—

Smith. Who is that Mr. *Bayes* ?