

JOHN RAINOLDS [REYNOLDS] (1549-1607), THEOLOGIAN, CONTROVERSIALIST, AND COLLEGE HEAD. Converting to Protestantism during his time at Corpus Christi College (Oxford), Rainolds was a talented student who showed an early aptitude for verse and drama, presenting poetry to Elizabeth I and appearing in the woman's part of Hippolyta for a performance of Richard Edward's *Palaemon and Arcyte* that his college presented to the Queen in 1566. Rising swiftly through the college ranks, particularly after his embracing of strict Puritan and Calvinist principles, Rainolds had a long and successful academic career, culminating in the presidency of Corpus Christi College (1598-1607). Although most famous in his day for his theological works, such as *Sex Theses de Sacra Scriptura Ecclesia* (1580), and his refutations of Catholicism, such as in the popular *The Sum of the Conference between John Rainolds and John Hart* (1584), today he is mostly known as the author of *Th' Overthrow of Stage Plays* (1599), a lengthy and learned condemnation of plays and acting in the context of university education. An attack on university dramatic performance, *Th' Overthrow of Stage Plays* is structured as a refutation of William Gager's defence of this practice, which Gager published at the end of his play *Ulysses Redux* (1592), a copy of which he sent to Rainolds. An exchange of letters between the two, which later involved the civil law professor Alberico Gentili, served as the basis for Rainolds' treatise, published finally at Middelburg in 1599, with selections from this correspondence appended.

WILLIAM GAGER (1555-1622), DOCTOR OF CIVIL LAW, POET, AND LATIN PLAYWRIGHT. An influential Latin playwright and poet, Gager remains an important figure in the development of English drama, particularly in his treatment of classical sources. Many of his plays were commissioned for performance before distinguished visitors to Oxford University; his *Meleager*, based on a narrative in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for example, was performed before the earls of Pembroke and Leicester, as well as Sir Philip Sidney, in 1585. His other plays include the tragedy *Dido* (no longer extant), based on the story of the doomed love of Dido and Aeneas in Virgil's epic poem, the *Aeneid*, and the tragicomedy *Ulysses Redux*, based on Ulysses' return to Ithaca and his confrontation with his wife Penelope's suitors, which was performed before the Queen at Oxford in 1592. The following February, Gager presented his version of Seneca's *Hippolytus*, with two epilogues, one spoken by Momus who objected to the play on moral grounds and one that followed refuting this view. These paired epilogues were the trigger for Rainolds' and Gager's long debate over the moral and ethical value of the stage and plays, since Rainolds felt he was being satirized in the figure of Momus, who did indeed reflect the university president's negative views on the theatre.

#### EDITIONS:

Rainoldes, John, William Gager and Alberico Gentili. *Th' overthrow of Stage-Playes*. Preface by Arthur Freeman. New York: Garland, 1974. [facsimile edition of the 1599 edn.]

From TH' OVERTHROW OF STAGE PLAYS<sup>1</sup> (1599)

[Following the general practice of early modern controversialist literature, Rainolds quotes from his opponent's own writings in order to refute them. I have maintained Rainolds' practice of placing quotations from Gager's works in italics so that the reader may more easily identify them. In the notes I have occasionally offered selections from Rainolds' learned and dense marginalia, but I have not tried to include all of these.]

[...] Now, the prohibition of men to be attired as women, women as men, belongeth to the moral, not to the ceremonial law; for Christ hath delivered us from the keeping of the ceremonial,<sup>2</sup> so that, were this difference of attire a ceremony, then Christian men and women might ever continually wear the other's raiment as lawfully as they may wear a garment made of linen and woollen, sow their field with maslin,<sup>3</sup> plough with an ox and an ass; eat of swine's flesh, of blood, of strangled, if not more lawfully rather than these last, which the apostles did forbid the Gentiles for a time, in respect of the Jews.<sup>4</sup> But they may not wear each the other's raiment, as the general precepts absolutely given in the New Testament touching the distinct and several attire of both sexes show.<sup>5</sup> It is a commandment therefore of the moral law that women shall not attire themselves like men, neither men like women. And hereof it followeth that if a man might save his life, or benefit many, by putting on woman's raiment, yet ought he not to do it, because it is evil. Nay (which addeth greater weight unto the reason) it is a notorious and detestable evil, as the Spirit showeth by the words ensuing: 'For all that do so are abomination to the Lord thy God.'<sup>6</sup> And seeing that himself hath given this censure, God forbid but we should think it most true and just. Although our weak eyesight could discern no cause why so small a matter, as flesh

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<sup>1</sup> The full title is "Th' overthrow of stage-plays, by the way of controversy betwixt D[octo]r Gager and D[octo]r Rainolds wherein all the reasons that can be made for them are notably refuted; th' objections answered, and the case so cleared and resolved, as that the judgement of any man, that is not forward and perverse, may easily be satisfied. Wherein is manifestly proved, that it is not only unlawful to be an actor, but a beholder of those vanities. Whereunto are annexed and in th' end answered certain Latin letters betwixt the said Master Rainolds and D[octo]r Gentiles, reader of the civil law in Oxford, concerning the same matter."

<sup>2</sup> *Now the prohibition ... ceremonial* Christian thinkers early made the distinction between Jewish ceremonial laws (such as those governing diet, ritual observance, and compulsory circumcision) and Jewish moral laws (such as those embodied in the Doxology or Ten Commandments). The most systematic, early theological justification for Christian rejection of Jewish ritual observances can be found in St. Paul's Letter to the Romans. Rainolds is taking exception here to Gager's classing of cross-dressing prohibitions as an aspect of Jewish ceremonial law, rather than as an intrinsic part of the moral laws instituted by Christ through the New Testament.

<sup>3</sup> *maslin* a seed mixture (sometimes of rye and wheat).

<sup>4</sup> *which the apostles ... Jews* The Jerusalem Conference in 47 CE brought together all the leaders of the early Church to deal with the issue of non-Jewish Christians; it was decided that Christian converts from other religions did not have to follow Jewish ceremonial law, except for abstaining from meat sacrificed to idols, meat that was bloody, and meat that had been prepared from strangled animals; converts also had to refrain from sexual sin. See Acts 15.23-29.

<sup>5</sup> *But ... show* Far more often treatises that condemn cross-dressing on biblical grounds cite Dt. 22.5, which unequivocally condemns the practice. Rainolds' marginal note refers to 1 Cor. 7.1, which concerns gender-appropriate attire in church.

<sup>6</sup> *women ... God'* Dt. 22.5.

and blood might count it, should be controlled so sharply, howbeit,<sup>7</sup> if we mark with judgement and wisdom, first, how this precept is referred by learned Divines to the commandment ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery,’ some expressly making it a point annexed thereto,<sup>8</sup> some impliedly, in that either they knit it to modesty, a part of temperance, or note the breach of it as joined with wantonness and impurity;<sup>9</sup> next, among the kinds of adulterous lewdness how filthy and monstrous a sin against nature men’s natural corruption and viciousness is prone to, the Scripture witnesseth it in Canaanites, Jews, Corinthians, other[s] in other nations,<sup>10</sup> and one with special caution, ‘Nimium est quod intelligitur’;<sup>11</sup> thirdly, what sparkles of lust to that vice the putting of women’s attire on men may kindle in unclean affections, as Nero showed in Sporus,<sup>12</sup> Heliogabalus<sup>13</sup> in himself, yea certain, who grew not to such excess of impudency, yet arguing the same in causing their boys to wear long hair like women:<sup>14</sup> if we consider these things, I say, we shall perceive that he<sup>15</sup> who condemneth the female whore and male, and, detesting specially the male by terming him a ‘dog,’ rejecteth both their offerings with these words, that ‘they both are abomination to the Lord thy God,’ might well control likewise the means and occasions whereby men are transformed into dogs, the sooner to cut off all incitements to that beastly filthiness, or rather more than beastly. But whether this were part of the cause that moved the Spirit of God or no, it is clear and certain that he pronounceth them abominable in his sight, or (as the Hebrews speak more forcibly) ‘abomination,’ whosoever put on the different sex’s raiment. And so, it being simply and absolutely unlawful—because it is forbidden by the moral law, and proved to be evil, a foul abominable evil in God’s sight—the Christian faith instructeth us that we may not do it for any good to come thereof, no not for the saving of honour, wealth, or life, of others or ourselves.

The arguments, whereby you strive to prove the contrary, are drawn from two examples: One of the Macedonians, whose king Amyntas entertaining Persian ambassadors, and having at their request brought noblewomen to the banquet, when the ambassadors dallying with them did touch their breasts, and offered some to kiss them; the king’s son, misliking their lascivious actions, desired them to give the women leave to go forth, pretending they should return neater, and so by his direction there came in their stead young men, attired like them, with daggers under their garments, who slew the ambassadors as soon as they offered to touch them; the other of

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<sup>7</sup> *howbeit* even so.

<sup>8</sup> *some ... thereto* Rainolds refers in the margin to Calvin and Theodore Beza as holders of this opinion.

<sup>9</sup> *some impliedly ... impurity* Rainolds refers in the margin to Aquinas, Cyprian, and Chrysostom as holders of this opinion.

<sup>10</sup> *Canaanites .... nations* Rainolds refers to Gen. 19.1; 1 Kg. 14.24 and 2 Kg. 23.7; 1 Cor. 6.11; Aristotle, *Politics*, 2.9 and Seneca.

<sup>11</sup> *and one ... intelligitur* In 1.3.13-18 of *Institutio Oratoria* [*Education of the Orator*], the ancient Roman rhetorician Quintilian discusses the disciplining of young boys by their teachers, rejecting corporal punishment like flogging as fit only for slaves not freeborn children. He alludes to the bad teacher’s use of corporal punishment as an erotic activity and a prelude to sexual advances by the teacher and others. His implications are followed with the claim: “Non morabor in parte hac; nimium est quod intelligitur” (“I will not linger on this subject; it is more than enough if I have made my meaning clear”) [H.E. Butler, trans., Loeb Classical Library, 1963].

<sup>12</sup> *as Nero showed in Sporus* On Nero and Sporus, see Glossary (print anthology). The tale is from the ancient historian Suetonius’ ‘On Nero.’

<sup>13</sup> *Heliogabalus* See Glossary (print anthology). The story can be found in Lampridius’ ‘On Heliogabalus.’

<sup>14</sup> *arguing ... women* Rainolds cites Horace, *Odes* 2.5; Catullus, “In nuptias Juliae,” and Juvenal, ‘Satire 8.’

<sup>15</sup> *he* Deuteronomy 23.17.

Achilles,<sup>16</sup> whose mother Thetis, at the time of the Trojan War, knowing (as poets feign) that he should die at Troy if he went thither with the Grecians, did thereupon attire him (they say) as a woman, and committed him as her daughter to Lycomedes, king of Scyros, there to be kept safe from that danger. For hence you conclude that a man may lawfully put on woman's raiment to benefit others, to save his life, because the Macedonians, by their young prince's motion, and Achilles did so. Which argument if it hold, then may a man lie to save his life, or benefit others, because David did so:<sup>17</sup> then may a man forswear to save his life, or benefit others, because Peter did so.<sup>18</sup> For the examples of prophets and apostles are surer grounds to build on, than of Achilles or Macedonians. But you will not say that we may forswear, nor lie (I hope) for any cause; sure the Scripture will not, neither the best Divines;<sup>19</sup> no not Schoolmen,<sup>20</sup> or Canonistes,<sup>21</sup> which yet in many points are far beneath the best. You must remember, therefore, that we are to live by laws, not by examples, and regard in Macedonia and Greece, as in Rome, not what is done there, but what ought to be done there, else, by these very examples that you stand on, not only kings but also their sons may put to death, and that for wanton touching not only for adultery, nor their own subjects alone but foreign ambassadors, yea, their servants also, though innocent and guiltless, and make a booty<sup>22</sup> of their carriage, their treasure, their furniture, all against the king's advice and commandment, for so did the son of Amyntas. And a man, whose country doth need and crave his service in lawful war against their enemies, may, for fear of death, use Vettienus his shifts to keep at home;<sup>23</sup> a youth, that is in love, may put on maidens' raiment, as Chaerea did the eunuch's for his Pamphilae's sake;<sup>24</sup> a son may obey his mother, not in the Lord,<sup>25</sup> but against the Lord, and by her commandment behave himself undutifully, cowardly, wantonly, for so did the son of Thetis. Wherein, by the way, you may observe too both what inconvenience<sup>26</sup> and danger of uncleanness cleaveth to this practice, and how heathen men by the light of nature did descry<sup>27</sup> the shamefulnes of it and condemned it. For as he whose fact<sup>28</sup> yourself adjudge wicked, Clodius I mean, did satisfy his villainous lust with Caesar's wife by cladding himself in woman's raiment,<sup>29</sup> semblably<sup>30</sup> Achilles deflowered Deidamia, King Lycomedes' daughter, by the same occasion.

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<sup>16</sup> *Achilles* famous Greek hero, whose story is told in Homer's *Iliad*. The narrative here comes from Statius' later poem the *Achilleid*.

<sup>17</sup> *because David did so* 1 Sam. 21.2.

<sup>18</sup> *because Peter did so* Mt. 26.72.

<sup>19</sup> *the best Divines* Rainolds cites here Justin Martyr and Aquinas.

<sup>20</sup> *Schoolmen* i.e., the Scholastic philosophers. Rainolds cites Aquinas.

<sup>21</sup> *Canonistes* canon-lawyers (i.e., lawyers whose concern is with Church or canon law).

<sup>22</sup> *booty* a spoil of war or combat.

<sup>23</sup> *Vettienus his shifts ... home* Valerius Maximus says that Vettienus was punished for trying to avoid service in the Roman army. *shifts* tricks, stratagems.

<sup>24</sup> On *Chaerea*, see below, n60.

<sup>25</sup> *a son ... not in the Lord* Eph. 6.1.

<sup>26</sup> *inconvenience* moral evil.

<sup>27</sup> *descry* perceive.

<sup>28</sup> *fact* deed; crime.

<sup>29</sup> *Clodius* Publius, a Roman of high rank, disguised himself in women's clothes to gain sexual access to Julius Caesar's wife, with the intention of seducing her.

<sup>30</sup> *semblably* similarly.

[...]

Yet the third reason wherein plays are charged—not for making young men come forth in whores' attire, like the lewd woman in the Proverbs, but for teaching them to counterfeit her actions, her wanton kiss, her impudent face, her wicked speeches and enticements<sup>31</sup>—should have been allowed even by your own gloss and exposition of the text, sith<sup>32</sup> you say upon it, *that different behaviour becometh different sexes, and, it beseemeth not men to follow women's manners*. Thetis taught Achilles how to play the woman in gait, in speech, in gesture [...] And because his mother had not taught him enough, or he was but a bad scholar, Deidamia gave him further advertisements,<sup>33</sup> how 'he must hold his naked breast, his hands,' and so forth. These are women's manners unseemly for Achilles to imitate: he should not have done it. How much less seemly then is it for young men to dance like women, though like those who praised God with dances,<sup>34</sup> and much less seemly yet to dance like dishonest women, like Herodias?<sup>35</sup> Whereby what a flame of lust may be kindled in the hearts of men, as ready for the most part to conceive this fire, as flax is the other,<sup>36</sup> Christian writers show in part by Herod's example, but a heathen poet<sup>37</sup> more fully by his own experience: affirming that he was not ravished so much with his mistress' face, though marvellous fair and beautiful; nor with her hair hanging down loose after the fashion about her smooth neck; nor with her radiant eyes, like stars; nor with her silks, and outlandish bravery, as he was with her gallant dancing.

And greater reason is it you should condemn all stage-plays, wherein young men are trained to play such women's parts, because, unto Momus terming the stage *a school of scurrility and wantonness*, you reply, that *merry things are called wanton by him*, and that *he is not able to allege one word savouring of scurrility*. As if you had said, that, could he make proof of the least scurrility or wantonness therein, yourself would condemn them, according both to Christian piety by the apostles',<sup>38</sup> and to civil honesty by the Philosopher's precept.<sup>39</sup> Which sheweth that you acknowledge it unseemly also for men to play such men's parts as defile their mouths with immodest speeches, much more as stain their bodies and minds with wanton deeds. When Critobulus kissed the son of Alcibiades, a beautiful boy, Socrates said he had done amiss and very dangerously: because, as certain spiders, 'if they do but touch men only with their mouth, they put them to wonderful pain and make them mad: so beautiful boys by kissing do sting and pour secretly in a kind of poison, the poison of incontinency';<sup>40</sup> as Clemens Alexandrinus<sup>41</sup> speaking of unholy and amatory kisses, sayeth, 'Amatory embracing goeth in the same line with

<sup>31</sup> *lewd woman ... enticements* See Pr. 7.11-18.

<sup>32</sup> *sith* since, seeing that.

<sup>33</sup> *advertisements* instructions, advice.

<sup>34</sup> *women ... praised God ... dances* Ex. 15.20.

<sup>35</sup> *dishonest ... Herodias* Mk. 6.22; Herodias, daughter of Herod's wife, dances for Herod and he promises to give her anything she asks; she asks for and is given the head of John the Baptist.

<sup>36</sup> *as flax ... other* Candle or lamp wicks were usually made of flax, a textile well-known for burning easily.

<sup>37</sup> *heathen poet* Rainolds identifies him as Propertius (*Elegies*, Book 2).

<sup>38</sup> *Christian ... apostles'* Eph. 5.4

<sup>39</sup> *Philosopher's precept* Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 7, last chapter (Rainolds' note).

<sup>40</sup> *When Critobulus ... incontinency* For this anecdote, see 'Xenophon,' *The Memorable Things of Socrates*, *Online Companion*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>41</sup> *Clemens Alexandrinus* Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c. 215 CE), early Church theologian.

amatory kissing, if not a line beyond it.' Amatory dancing is in Homer's wantons, as oil unto the fire, and the commendation that Tully<sup>42</sup> giveth it in banquets, St. Ambrose giveth it in stage-plays.<sup>43</sup> Herewithal if amatory pangs be expressed in most effectual sort, can wise men be persuaded that there is no wantonness in the players' parts, when experience showeth (as wise men have observed) that 'men are made adulterers and enemies of all chastity by coming to such plays?'<sup>44</sup> that 'senses are moved, affections are delighted, hearts though strong and constant are vanquished by such players?'<sup>45</sup> that an 'effeminate stage-player, while he feigneth love, imprinteth wounds of love?'<sup>46</sup> Moreover, sith of like things you must needs judge alike, you disallow the practicing of other vices also, as well as of wantonness and scurrility. Which I presume the rather, because you say of your actors, the young men of your house, that *they are ingenuous, learned, chaste, well nurtured, and virtuously disposed*. For if, upon this praise given them by you, I should reply, as Phocio the Athenian did, who, when the king of Macedonia (his country's secret enemy) sent him a hundred talents, and he demanding of the bringers why among so great a number of the Athenians, the king sent that to him alone, they answered that 'the king thought him alone an honest man.' 'Then let him suffer me both to seem and be such a one,' quoth Phocio:<sup>47</sup> I assure myself you would rejoin that you wish them to seem and be such as you avouch they are; and therefore that you would no more have them do anything, whereby they might hazard the loss of any other of those good qualities, or the credit thereof, than whereby of chastity.

[...]

UNTO THIS MASTER D[OCTOR] GAGER REPLYING AND DESIRING MASTER RAINOLDS TO FORBEAR, MASTER RAINOLDS DID REJOIN AS FOLLOWETH.<sup>48</sup>

[...]

But in this matter your fault is the less, because you had some colour thereof by mine exemplifying in three of your players, nor did the Romans always count them so infamous but that the best of them were sometime well-esteemed of, as Tully's<sup>49</sup> great acquaintance with Roscius and Aesopus<sup>50</sup> argueth. In the next, you do me so much the greater injury, by how much

<sup>42</sup> *Tully* Marcus Tullius Cicero, Roman orator and writer, in his *Pro Murena*, 6.13: "For no man, one may almost say, ever dances when sober, unless perhaps he be a madman, nor in solitude, nor in a moderate and sober party; dancing is the last companion of prolonged feasting, of luxurious situation, and of many refinements" (trans., C.D. Yonge, London, 1856).

<sup>43</sup> *St Ambrose ... stage plays* Rainolds cites the ancient Church Father's *De paenitent*, 2.6.

<sup>44</sup> *'men ... plays'* Rainolds cites St. Cyprian's "Against Donatus."

<sup>45</sup> *'senses ... players'* Rainolds cites Marcus Minucius Felix's 'Octavius.'

<sup>46</sup> *'effeminate ... love'* No citation in Rainolds.

<sup>47</sup> The anecdote about Phocio is contained in Plutarch's *Apothogems*.

<sup>48</sup> By far the longest section of Rainolds' anti-theatrical tract is his reply to objections from Gager.

<sup>49</sup> *Tully's* See Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 3.14 (Rainolds' note).

<sup>50</sup> *Roscius and Aesopus* famous Roman actors.

both the turpitude and villainy is greater wherewith you bear your students in hand that I charge<sup>51</sup> them: and I was farther off from giving cause to be so dealt with, having refrained purposely from naming any of yours in opening of the point. For being to prove that the prohibition of men to put on women's raiment (in Deuteronomy) belongeth to the moral law, and thereupon declaring how it is referred by learned Divines to the commandment 'Thou shalt not commit adultery', I said that they had reason to refer it so, because, among the kinds of adulterous lewdness, men's natural corruption and viciousness is prone to monstrous sin against nature,<sup>52</sup> as the Scripture witnesseth in Canaanites, Jews, Corinthians, other[s] in other nations, one with special caution 'Nimium est quod intelligitur';<sup>53</sup> and the putting of women's attire upon men may kindle great sparkles of lust thereunto in unclean affections, as Nero showed in Sporus, Heliogabalus in himself; yea certain, who grew not to such excess of impudency, yet arguing the same in causing their boys to wear long hair like women. This, in your examining the sense of Moses' words, whereunto I used it, you pass over wholly, without mention of the judgement of the learned Divines, or of my reason given for it. But in the point following, where I handled other inconveniences and discommodities of plays, with special applying thereof unto yours:

*We pray you, sir (say you) to make a great difference between us and Nero with his Sporus, or Heliogabalus with himself, or the Canaanites, Jews, Corinthians, or them that cause their pages to wear long hair like women, or any such dogs: we heartily abhor them. You say out of Quintilian, 'Nimium est quod intelligitur': and I may say, 'Nimium est quod dicitur.' We thank God, our youth do not practice such things, they think not of them, they know them not: neither can any man living the rather for our plays charge any one of us with the least suspicion of any such abomination. I have been often moved by our plays to laughter, and sometime to tears: but I cannot accuse either myself, or any other, of any such beastly thought stirred up by them. And therefore we should most uncharitably be wronged, if our putting on of womanly raiment, should either directly or indirectly be referred to the commandment, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.'*

All these are your own words. In which that you may see what your dealing is, behold a pattern of it: there was a certain preacher, who catechizing his hearers in the principles of faith and delivering to them Christ's exposition of the law, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' told them that the very looking upon women, whereby men are occasioned to think or lust unchastely, is a breach thereof. He proved it by the examples of Potiphar's wife, who cast her eyes on Joseph<sup>54</sup> and fell in love with him; of Job, who therefore made a covenant with his eyes, lest he should think upon a maid;<sup>55</sup> of David, who looking on Bathsheba from his house top, did lust incontinently after her.<sup>56</sup> And because the parties, whom he taught, were scholars, well read in foreign writers, he added how the learned heathens had declared that love doth enter in by the eyes; fair persons seen, have made men mad [...] Now, among the company to which the preacher spoke, one, not evil-minded, yet loving good fellowship and a more remiss, or well-nigh loose, kind of living, fearing lest by the credit and force of this doctrine certain of his friends

<sup>51</sup> *bear your students in hand that I charge* i.e., lead your students to believe that I accuse.

<sup>52</sup> *monstrous sin against nature* As Rainolds indicates below, he refers here to sodomy.

<sup>53</sup> See n11.

<sup>54</sup> For Potiphar's wife's attempted seduction of Joseph, see Gen. 39.7.

<sup>55</sup> *Job ... maid* See Job 31.1.

<sup>56</sup> *David ... her* David arranged the death of the beautiful Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, so David could marry her. See 2 Sam. 11ff.

whom he had made acquainted with beautiful wives, or handsome maids, should grow into suspicion of wantonness and lightness, rose up and said unto the preacher: “We pray you, sir, to make a great difference between us, and them whom Cyrus speaketh of, or Propertius himself; or Potiphar’s wife, Job, David, or such as let their eyes be porters unto love, and dote by seeing fair persons; we heartily mislike them. [...] We thank God, our youth do not practice such things, they think not of them, they know them not: neither can any man living, the rather for our looking on handsome maids, or beautiful wives, charge any one of us with the least suspicion of any such uncleanness. I have been delighted often with their sight, and sometime moved to pity: but I cannot accuse either myself, or any other of any such wicked thought stirred up thereby. And therefore we should most uncharitably be wronged, if the casting of our eyes on wives, or on maids, should either directly or indirectly be referred to the commandment, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’.”

What think you of this man, Master D[octo]r Gager? Did he not the preacher wrong? Certainly, if you have the spirit wherewith David answered Nathan’s parable,<sup>57</sup> you will confess, he did. And what ensueth, you see: I need not add, ‘You are the man.’ But this I must add, that the wrong you do me is so much more palpable than was this carper’s of the preacher, because I said, that ‘the putting of women’s attire upon men may kindle sparks of lust in unclean affections.’ I said not ‘in all men’s affections,’ but in some; not in sanctified, but in unclean. What? And do you grant, that you, and your youth, have unclean affections, to the intent you may blame my speech? If not, why tell you me, that the putting of womanly raiment upon men hath not stirred any such beastly thought in any of you, when I spoke expressly of unclean affections? Besides, can you accuse yourself, or any other, of any wanton thought stirred up in you by looking on a beautiful woman? If you can, then ought you beware of beautiful boys transformed into women by putting on their raiment, their feature, looks and fashions. For men may be ravished with love of stones, of dead stuff, framed by cunning gravers to beautiful women’s likeness, as in poets’ fables appeareth by Pygmalion,<sup>58</sup> by Venus Gnidia<sup>59</sup> in stories. And Chaerea, arrayed like an eunuch only, did move the beastly lust of him who was lasciviously given in the comedy.<sup>60</sup> If you cannot, then do you both me, yourself and others, injury in concluding, *that therefore you should most uncharitably be wronged, if your putting on of womanly raiment, should either directly or indirectly be referred to the commandment*, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery.’ For my speech was general, that the cladding of youths in such attire is an occasion of drawing and provoking corruptly minded men to most heinous wickedness, and therefore should be wisely cut off by the faithful: as if, in a sermon to the university, expounding that of Job, ‘I made a covenant with mine eyes,’ I should tell the students, that though he name a maid, we must extend the lesson further; by the man’s example, whom a worthy governor, in

<sup>57</sup> *David answered Nathan’s parable* The prophet Nathan relates a parable about an unjust and covetous man who has deprived a poorer man of his only lamb; David responds by condemning the man, and then Nathan reveals that David is the unjust man in the parable. David accepts the rebuke and repents. See 2 Sam. 12.5ff.

<sup>58</sup> *Pygmalion* The mythic Greek sculptor Pygmalion created a female statue so beautiful that he fell in love with it.

<sup>59</sup> *Venus Gnidia* In the pseudo-Lucian *Erotes*, the statue of Venus Gnidia by the great Greek sculptor Praxiteles is described as being so beautiful that a young man fell in love with it and tried to have sex with it, leaving a semen stain on the marble.

<sup>60</sup> *Chaerea ... comedy* In the comedy *The Eunuch* by the Roman playwright Terence, the young man Chaerea disguises himself as a eunuch in order to gain access to a slave girl he is besotted with; once alone with her, he rapes her.



other words to like effect, admonished of making a covenant with his eyes, for saying, ‘O puerum pulchrum Pericle.’<sup>61</sup> Whereupon if any should tell his acquaintance of this or that college, tutor, or other accustomed to cast his eyes on such children as God had adorned with comeliness of body, that I went about to make them suspected of most horrible lewdness, he should do both them and me notorious injury. Albeit, as our Saviour, saying to his disciples, ‘Take heed what you hear,’ did purpose to stir them up to mark diligently that which he delivered, and faithfully to perform it, yet condemned them not as retchless<sup>62</sup> or unfruitful hearers of his word: so I would acknowledge that in saying likewise, ‘Take heed what you see,’ my meaning were to stir up both tutors, and all other[s], to carry themselves chastely, even in their looks also, lest death come in by their windows, though I mean no more to make them suspected by this admonition than I do myself. Which if you, who touch me so bitterly and often for doing you or yours uncharitable wrong, had charitably marked, I should have less cause of wishing you to play the physician better, and first to heal yourself.

This I say not only of my general speeches set upon the rack to make me odious to your students, but of the particular too that may be thought to concern them specially: as namely that I mentioned Eurymachus kissing of Melantho:<sup>63</sup> a thing which I gathered to have been done by her own words, sith they were both intended to be alone secretly when he had foul, immodest, lascivious talk with her, and the music and dancing, whereof she speaks withal, was represented on the stage. But I named them only for example sake, my drift being general against such plays as express such actions, whether set forth presently by you, as your *Rivales*,<sup>64</sup> in which some of the wooers perhaps kissed Phœdra, or heretofore, as that of Plautus, in which Phædromus kissed Planesium,<sup>65</sup> without ‘perhaps.’ Wherefore sith you defend your former plays as well as these, and in that respect commend by name Plautus, as you have great reason, comparing any comedy of his with your *Rivales*: what aimed you at in saying, that, *for the danger of kissing beautiful boys you know not how the suspicion should reach unto you, because it is untrue that Eurymachus kissed Melantho*; unless your meaning were to practice that malice (so learned men do justly term it) of rhetoric, I mean, by restraining my general intent unto your present players, to draw me into their hatred? [...]

I should not complain of this rigour,<sup>66</sup> but for the tail of it, and the sting of breeding evil-will among brethren, which doth lurk therein, the venom and poison whereof goeth about to spread itself abroad through more parts of your body than Phœmius, Eurymachus, and the players of women; by means that you likewise instil the same humour, at least seek to instil it as much as in you lieth, into the rest of all your players, their teachers and instructors, and in conclusion your whole house. For whereas the third branch of our reasons, set down by you in Momus his name

<sup>61</sup> Latin, ‘Oh, what a lovely boy, Pericles.’ The reference is to Cicero’s *De Officiis* (‘On Duties’), where Cicero speaks of the inappropriateness of mixing risqué talk with serious business. When Sophocles met with the general Pericles to discuss their shared civic duties, Sophocles made this remark on seeing a beautiful boy pass by. Pericles replied: “A general should guard not only his hands but also his eyes” (1.144).

<sup>62</sup> *retchless* – careless, indifferent.

<sup>63</sup> *Eurymachus kissing of Melantho* – In the *Odyssey*, the maidservant Melantho sleeps with the suitor Eurymachus. The reference is apparently to a scene in Gager’s *Ulysses Redux* where the couple kiss.

<sup>64</sup> *Rivales* – a comedy by Gager, no longer extant.

<sup>65</sup> *Plautus ... Planesium* – A reference to the Roman playwright Plautus’ comedy *Curculio* (or *The Weevil*), where the young man Phædromus is in love with the slave girl Planesium.

<sup>66</sup> *rigour* – unfair treatment.

against plays, had avouched not only their time to be misspent who were employed therein, but some of their persons, their minds, corrupted also; and I, to show how cunningly you, encountering this proposed the loss of time alone and not of men, did declare that Cyprian writing of a stage-player, who made boys effeminate by instructing them how to play the women, and to express and counterfeit dishonest, wanton gestures, sayeth, 'he was a master not of teaching but spilling children'; and thereof did infer, that the loss of time should not have been objected so much against your plays [...] behold, with how charitable applying of my words you come in thus upon me:

*The saying of Saint Cyprian against a stage-player [...] cannot be justly used against us. For he should do us great contumely that should think, or say, that either we are masters not of teaching, but spilling children; or that both time and our young men were cast away altogether by those exercises.*

And to make a deeper impression in your young men that I do them this contumely,<sup>67</sup> with another also brought for proof hereof, you go forward thus:

*But it is no marvel that you imply so ill a conceit of them, if you doubt that, as I answered Momus,<sup>68</sup> our actors can show greater fruit of their time well spent than any that is bred up by Momus' discipline can. For you pray God that they may, as doubting it is not so.*

Wherein, first and foremost, if your conscience tell you that yourself (for whom else you associate to you by 'we are masters,' I know not) are touched in Saint Cyprian's reproof of the stage-player, I can no way help it, save with that of Scripture: 'If your heart condemn you, God is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things.' But whether I might not allege Saint Cyprian's words, to show that somewhat more than time is cast away and spilt by such stage-plays as make boys effeminate, let our betters judge.

[...] Truly, it is marvel that you, professing so much good will to me as you do, should in so few words use so many tricks of calumny to breed a misliking of me in your young men. One, by making me to speak of them at large and indefinitely, whereas I noted only such as played the women, and of them such only [such] as were taught to counterfeit dishonest, wanton gestures, that is, as played *unchaste* women. [...], as if I had judged them dead, dead past all recovery, whereas the terms I used imported that they were in 'spilling,' not 'spilt,' much less 'spilt'<sup>69</sup> altogether [...] A third, by suppressing the means of their 'spilling,' to weet,<sup>70</sup> the making of them effeminate, which I specified; and by setting down a word of more honest and common signification instead thereof, to weet, 'exercises': as who say that peremptory sentence had been given of all, even them who played men's parts, yea the best men's; where I censured only the filth of playing wanton queans,<sup>71</sup> so with Cyprian.

[...]

<sup>67</sup> *contumely* grievous insult or injustice.

<sup>68</sup> *as I answered Momus* See the head-note on Gager, above.

<sup>69</sup> Earlier, Rainolds has said that young men who cross-dress on the stage are 'spilt,' in the sense of being utterly and completely corrupted.

<sup>70</sup> *to weet* to wit.

<sup>71</sup> *wanton queans* licentious whores.