

## Elizabeth Thomas, "Epistle to Clemena"

### Description

[ELIZABETH THOMAS]

#### "Epistle to Clemena"

*Occasioned by an Argument she had  
maintain'd against the AUTHOR.*

Tho' you my Resolution still accuse,  
And for *Misanthropy* condemn the Muse;  
Still finding Fault with what I most commend,  
And lose good Humour in the Name of *Friend*:  
Yet if these pettish Heats you lay aside,  
And by calm *Reason* let the *Cause* be try'd. 5  
I make no Question, but it would appear,  
You had no Cause to *boast*, nor I to *fear*.

For when two bind themselves in Marriage Bands,  
*Fidelity* in each, the *Church* commands; 10  
Equal's the Contract, equal are the Vows,  
Yet Custom, different Licences allows:  
The *Man* may range from his unhappy *Wife*,  
But *Woman*'s made a Property for *Life*.  
To no dear *Friend* the Grief may be reveal'd, 15  
No, she poor Soul, must keep her Shame conceal'd:  
And, to the Height of doating Folly grown,  
Believe her *Husband*'s Character her own.

So I have seen a lovely beauteous *Maid*,  
By *Duty* forc'd, by *Interest* betray'd, 20  
Resign her self into *Nefario*'s Arms,  
And make the sordid Wretch sole Master of her Charms.  
With seeming Transport he the Bliss receives,  
With seeming Gratitude, rich Presents gives:  
The finest *Brillants* thro' the Town are sought, 25  
The costliest *Liv*'ries for her Servants bought;  
The richest *Tissues* for her self to wear,  
And nothing that she lik'd could purchas'd be too dear.  
But 'ere the Sun his annual Course had run,

Or thrice three Moons with borrowâ??d *Lustre* shone; 30  
 The *Libertine* resumâ??d his brutal Life:  
 Oh! then how nauseous grew the Name of *Wife*.  
 Her Conversation, and her Charms were stale,  
 Nor *Wit* and *Beauty*, longer could prevail:  
 The Night he turnâ??d to Day, the Day to Night, 35  
 Yet still uneasy in *Aminta*â??s Sight.

At two, perhaps, he condescends to rise,  
 Fetches a Yawn or two, and rubs his Eyes:  
 Run, run, cries he, to Captain *Hackum*â??s straight,  
 And tell the Rakes, I for their Coming wait; 40  
 Be sure you bring the *Dogs*, and heark, dâ??ye hear,  
 Bid *Tom*, the *Butler*, in my Sight appear.

The hungry *Bravo*â??s to their Patron run,  
 And wonder that his *Levee* is so soon:  
 Bless me, says one, how well you look to Day! 45  
 Tâ??other replies, ay, he may well look Gay,  
 When *Wine*, and *Women*, pass his Time away.  
 While Busâ??ness other Mortals Peace destroys,  
 He gives his Soul a nobler Loose to Joys.  
 Enough, *Nefario* cries, sit down my Friends, 50  
 See where the sparkling *Burgundy* attends.  
 This *Wine* was sent from *France* but tâ??other Day,  
 And never yet in *Vinter*â??s Cellar lay.

Set in for Drinking thus, they each recite  
 The wonderful Atchievement of the Night. 55  
 One tells how he did *Phillis* serenade,  
 Fought with the *Watch*, and made them run afraid:  
 While tâ??other shrugging cries, I changâ??d my *Bed*,  
 And was in *Triumph* to the *Counter* led.  
 But if the Town does *Canes* enough afford, 60  
 Iâ??ll drub that *Rascal* where I bought my *Sword*.

Sated at last with fulsome *Lies* and *Wine*,  
*Nefario* swears aloud, â??Tis *Dinner* Time.  
*Aminta*â??s callâ??d, and calmly down they sit,  
 But she not one poor Word or Look can get. 65  
 This *Meat*â??s too salt, tâ??otherâ??s too fresh, he cries,  
 And from the *Table* in a Passion flies:  
 Not, that his *Cook* is faulty in the least,  
 But â??tis the *Wife* that palls his squeamish Taste.

Well, after having ransackâ??d *Park* and *Play*, 70  
 He with some *hackney Vizer* sneaks away,  
 To famâ??d *Pontack*â??s, or noted Monsieur *Locket*â??s,  
 Where Mrs. *Jilt*, as fairly picks his Pockets.

Thus bubbled, in Revenge, he walks his Round,  
 From *Loft* three Stories high, to *Cellar* under Ground: 75  
 Scowls all the *Streets*, some Brother *Rake* doth fight,  
 And with a broken *Pate* concludes the *Night*.  
 Or in some *Tavern* with the gaming Crew,  
 He *drinks*, and *swears*, and *plays*, till Day doth Night pursue.

Mean while *Aminta* for his Stay doth mourn, 80  
 And sends up pious Vows for his Return:  
 Fears some Mishap, looks out at every Noise,  
 And thinks each Breath of Wind, her dear *Nefario*'s Voice.  
 At last the Clock strikes Five, and Home he comes,  
 And kicks the *spaniel* Servants through the Rooms; 85  
 Till he the lovely pensive *Fair* doth spy,  
 Nor can she escape the sordid *Tyranny*:  
 A thousand brutish Names to her he gives,  
 Which she poor Lady patiently receives:  
 A thousand *Imprecations* doth bestow, 90  
 And scarcely can refrain to give the impending Blow.  
 Till tired with *Rage*, and overcome with *Wine*,  
 Dead drunk he falls, and snoring lies supine.

Wretched *Nefario*! no Repentance shows,  
 But mocks those ills *Aminta* undergoes: 95  
 Ruined by him, with Pain she draws her *Breath*,  
 And still survives an *Evil* worse than *Death*.

Ah *Friend*! in these depraved unhappy Times,  
 When *Vice* walks barefaced, *Virtues* pass for Crimes:  
 Many *Nefario*'s must we think to find, 100  
 Though not so bad as this, yet *Villains* in their Kind.  
 Hard is that Venture where our *All* we lose;  
 But harder yet an honest Man to choose.

## NOTES:

**23** *Transport* – Vehement emotion; mental exaltation, rapture, ecstasy (OED)

**26** *Livories* – The uniform or insignia worn by a household's servants (OED)

**31** *Libertine* – A person (typically a man) who is not restrained by morality, esp. with regard to sexual relations; a person of dissolute or promiscuous habits (OED); also called – rakes.

**43** *Bravo*'s In this context, fellow rakes.

**44** *Levee* – A reception of visitors on rising from bed; a morning assembly held by a prince or person of distinction (OED).

**57** *Watch* Watchman, appointed to keep watch and ward in all towns from sunset to sunrise (OED).

59 *Counter*   • Prisonâ• (OED).

70 *Park and Play* References to St. Jamesâ•s Park and the theatre, both known haunts for rakish men and prostitutes in the period.

71 *hackney Vizer*   • A prostituteâ• (OED).

72 *Pontack*â•s A popular London tavern located on Abchurch Lane; *Monsieur Locket*â•s Another fashionable tavern where the young and gay met to dine,â• located in Gerard street, Soho (John Timbs, *Clubs and Club Life in London*(London, [1875]), pp. 379-80, 322).

74 *bubbled*   • Deluded, duped, or cheatedâ• (OED).

77 *Pate*   • The head, the skullâ• (OED).

85 *spaniel*   • Submissive or cringingâ• (OED).

**SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions. By a Lady* (London, 1726), pp. 174-79. [Google Books]**

*Edited by Will Hinds*