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Original Poems And Translations, By John Dryden, Esq; Now First Collected and Publish'd together, In Two Volumes

Containing Translations, Epistles, Prologues, Epilogues, Elegies, Epitaphs, And Songs

Dryden, John

London, 1743

Prologue to Albumazar.

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Visual Library

London likes grosly; but this nicer Pit
Examines, fathoms all the Depths of Wit;
The ready Finger lays on every Blot;
Knows what shou'd justly please, and what shou'd not.
Nature herself lies open to your view;
You judge by her, what draught of her is true,
Where Out-lines false, and Colours seem too faint,
Where Bunglers dawb, and where true Poets paint.
But by the sacred Genius of this Place,
By ev'ry Muse, by each Domestick Grace,
Be kind to Wit, which but endeavours well,
And, where you judge, presumes not to excel.
Our Poets hither for Adoption come,
As Nations su'd to be made free of *Rome*:
Not in the suffragating Tribes to stand,
But in your utmost, last, provincial Band.
If his Ambition may those Hopes pursue,
Who with Religion loves your Arts and you,
Oxford to him a dearer Name shall be,
Than his own Mother University.
Thebes did his green, unknowing, Youth engage;
He chooses *Athens* in his riper Age.

PROLOGUE *to* ALBUMAZAR.

TO say, this Comedy pleas'd long ago,
Is not enough to make it pass you now.
Yet, Gentlemen, your Ancestors had wit;
When few Men censur'd, and when fewer writ.
And *Johnson*, of those few the best, chose this,
As the best Model of his Master-piece:
Subtle was got by our *Albumazar*,
That Alchymist by this Astrologer;

Here

Here he was fashion'd, and we may suppose
He lik'd the fashion well, who wore the Clothes.
But *Ben* made nobly *his* what he did Mould;
What was another's Lead, becomes his Gold:
Like an unrighteous Conqueror he Reigns,
Yet Rules that well, which he unjustly Gains.
But this our Age such Authors does afford,
As make whole Plays, and yet scarce write one word:
Who, in this Anarchy of Wit, rob all,
And what's their Plunder, their Possession call:
Who, like bold Padders, scorn by Night to prey,
But rob by Sun-shine, in the Face of Day:
Nay scarce the common Ceremony use
Of, Stand, Sir, and deliver up your Muse;
But knock the Poet down, and, with a Grace,
Mount *Pegasus* before the Owner's Face.
Faith, if you have such Country *Toms* abroad,
'Tis time for all true Men to leave that Road.
Yet it were modest, could it but be said,
They strip the Living, but these rob the Dead;
Dare with the Mummies of the Muses play,
And make Love to them the *Ægyptian* way;
Or, as a Rhiming Author would have said,
Join the Dead Living to the Living Dead.
Such Men in Poetry may claim some Part:
They have the License, tho' they want the Art;
And might, where Theft was prais'd, for Laureats stand,
Poets, not of the Head, but of the Hand.
They make the Benefits of others studying,
Much like the Meals of Politick *Jack-Pudding*,
Whose dish to challenge no Man has the Courage;
'Tis all his own when once h' has spit i' th' Porridge.
But, Gentlemen, you're all concern'd in this;
You are in fault for what they do amiss:

For