

COMMENT. Sir Robert Southwell to Edward Southwell, 26 Aug. 1685 (in Morley, *Bartholomew Fair*, pp. 224-26): I think it not now so proper to quote you verses out of Persius, or to talk of Caesar and Euclide, as to consider the great theatre of Bartholomew Fair. . . . You wou'd certainly see the garboil there to more advantage if Mr Webster and you wou'd read, or cou'd see acted, the play of Ben Jonson, call'd Bartholomew Fair: . . . The main importance of this fair is not so much for merchandize, and the supplying what people really want; but as a sort of Bacchanalia, to gratify the multitude in their wandring and irregular thoughts. Here you see the rope-dancers gett their living meerly by hazarding of their lives, and why men will pay money and take pleasure to see such dangers, is of separate and philosophical consideration. You have others who are acting fools, drunkards, and madmen, but for the same wages which they might get by honest labour, and live with credit besides. Others, if born in any monstrous shape, or have children that are such, here they celebrate their misery, and by getting of money forget how odious they are made.

Wednesday 26
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