THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONGREVE THE DRAMATIST IN RELATION TO RESTORATION AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY COMEDY

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ABSTRACT

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By

Laurence Bartlett

The comedies of William Congreve are invariably considered to represent the quintessence of Restoration comedy, with the result that the plays are approached in terms of the Restoration social and intellectual milieux and dramatic conventions which reflect, if not the morals, the tastes of the predominantly aristocratic audience. Consequently, the plays' relationship to the kind of comedy which was to evolve in the first quarter of the eighteenth century is frequently ignored. Because Congreve was an artist, sensitive to the changes that were taking place inside and outside the world of the theater, it is reasonable to suppose that his comedies contain evidence of such transformations. This paper supports the thesis that Congreve's comedies gain in interest and meaning if they are related to both Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy, and that Congreve's development as a dramatist may be explained with reference to the plays' changing relationships to the two comic traditions.

The introductory chapter deals with some of the major trends discernible in the criticism on Congreve. This is followed by a brief examination of Congreve's early work, the novel Incognita, which reveals a dramatic and critical mind at work,

later put to effective use in the comedies. The main body of the dissertation then examines the individual comedies with specific attention to plot, theme and characterization, and their relationship to Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy.

The discursive plot and the predominantly cynical attitude towards love and marriage expressed by conventional Restoration characters relate The Old Bachelor to the earlier dramatic mode. But there is also some indication in the characterization that Congreve is moving towards a more indulgent and benevolent view of human nature. The Double Dealer, on the other hand, is similar in both concept and effect to eighteenth-century comedy. The overtly didactic purpose now controls all aspects of the play. The structure of the play is divided into two: the conflict between moral absolutes is confined to the main plot, while the Restoration elements are relegated to the subplots. The result is that the moral focus is clear and the play's seriousness intensified. In reversing many Restoration donnés, Congreve also reflects a change in sensibility which comes to typify eighteenth-century comedy. These two plays, therefore, exemplify respectively two different approaches towards comedy which are reconciled in the last two comedies.

The plot of Love for Love has all the variety of The Old Bachelor, but because all the lines of action arise directly from the young couple who are now given greater dominance in the

play, a greater structural unity is achieved. The division between the main plot and subplots is also retained, but due to the fact that the young couple are themselves a blend of Restoration and sentimental traits, the difference between the two levels of action is less obvious. The theme also brings together the two modes. It deals not only with the courtship between the lovers but also with what was to become the predominantly eighteenth-century theme of the relationship between marriage and materialism. While the main characters possess many characteristics of their counterparts in eighteenth-century comedy, those in the subplots relate more readily to Restoration comedy.

In The Way of the World, Congreve avoids the excesses of the first two comedies and refines upon the fusion attained in the third play. As the plot evolves around the young couple, who now serve as the centrifugal and centripetal force of the action, no division is felt between the different levels of action. The theme deals with the respective values of courtship and marriage, but now a fine balance is maintained between a witty and materialistic attitude towards life so that there is no last-minute recourse to sentimentalism as in Love for Love. The characters belong to the same ambivalent universe which illustrates both cynicism and benevolence. Consequently, the plot, theme and characterization are so fully integrated that all the elements in the play belong to a world which demonstrates both the values of Restoration comedy and those which were to prevail in eighteenth-century comedy.

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I

INTRODUCTION

To see William Congreve as anything other than a Restoration dramatist may be considered at worst irrelevant and at best casuistic. Ever since William Hazlitt's "Lectures on the English Comic Writers" (1819) Congreve has been grouped with William Wycherley, Sir John Vanbrugh, George Farquhar and, since John Palmer's The Comedy of Manners (1913), with Sir George Etherege. It has been the general tendency to see the plays of Congreve as the apex in the triangular development which Restoration comedy is thought to present, rising with the works of the insouciant Etherege and the mordant Wycherley, and descending from Congreve's plays to the more overtly moral and sentimental comedies of Vanbrugh and Farquhar. That Congreve brings to the comedies a more refined sensibility cannot be disputed, but because the critics are inclined to view his plays as the quintessence of Restoration comedy, they frequently ignore elements in them which anticipate many of those found in eighteenth-century comedy.[1] Without simplifying

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1. Recent critical works which approach the dramatists on their own terms are Dale Underwood's Etherege and the Seventeenth-Century Comedy of Manners (New Haven, 1957), Rose A. Zimbardo's Wycherley's Drama (New York, 1965), and Eric Rothstein's George Farquhar (New York, 1967).

and distorting the main tenor of their arguments, it is possible to distinguish four major trends in the varied and stimulating criticism on Congreve - the moral, aesthetic, formal and historical - all of which treat Congreve's plays within the context of the Restoration.

Believing that the plays reflect the immorality of the age and the jaded taste of the audience, the moralists concern themselves with content rather than form and stress the grossness and the apparent lewdness of the subject matter. Representatives of this school are Jeremy Collier's A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage (1698), Samuel Johnson's life of Congreve in The Lives of the Poets (1781), Horace Walpole's "Thoughts on Comedy" (1798), and T. B. Macaulay's critique in "The Edinburgh Review" (1841) of Leigh Hunt's introduction to The Dramatic Works of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar (1840). But as Congreve and many of his contemporaries believed that the purpose of comedy was to reflect the follies and vices of their society, it was natural for them to reject the more overtly didactic comedy advocated by these critics.

Charles Lamb's essay, "On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century" (1821), and Elmer Edgar Stoll's "Literature and Life" (1927), on the other hand, dispense with the problem of morality, but only at the expense of relegating

the plays to an amoral world of art, remote from everyday reality, with its own laws. Although Lamb does not necessarily deny the connection between the world of the plays and the social life of the Restoration he, as well as Stoll, believes that the characters are there neither to instruct us not exalt us but simply to amuse us. Consequently, he supposes that our moral sensibilities are held in abeyance. Both Lamb and Stoll imply that the plays are created in vacuo, and so they reject the idea that a work of art is a statement made by an artist and, as such, reflects those attitudes and mores which consciously or otherwise influence him.

The formalists accentuate the scintillating wit so popular with the Restoration gallant, but they ultimately believe that the plays lack intellectual substance, depth of characterization, and a broad vision. Typical of this approach are William Hazlitt's "Lectures on the English Comic Writers" (1819), W. M. Thackeray's The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century (1953), George Meredith's On Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit (1877), and H. T. E. Perry's The Comic Spirit in Restoration Drama (1925). While appreciating the verbal dexterity of Congreve, these critics unfortunately overlook the shaping hand of the dramatist who frequently uses the language to reveal the folly and virtue of the characters. In concentrating so much on the form, they do much injustice to the integrity of a dramatist who is at all times concerned with the moral nature of man.

More recently, the works of the critical historians compensate for the more negative conclusions reached by the earlier critics. They see the plays as either a reflection of a particular section of seventeenth-century society or as illustrations of specific dramatic conventions and popular ideologies. John Palmer's The Comedy of Manners (1913) and Bonamy Dobrée's Restoration Comedy 1660-1720 (1924) take the opposite view to Lamb and Stoll. Palmer believes that the plays demonstrate a veracious picture of a particular golden moment in the history of actual English manners and morals, and Dobrée thinks that they illustrate the attempt to rationalize human relationships. Both, however, feel that Congreve's attitude is basically uncritical. The drama historians deal with the conventions within which Congreve writes but, in emphasizing Congreve's relationship to earlier dramatists, they also fail to stress those elements that came to be associated with eighteenth-century comedy. Examples of such an approach are Kathleen Lynch's The Social Mode of Restoration Comedy (1926), Elisabeth Mignon's Crabbed Age and Youth (1947), and J. H. Smith's The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy (1948).

T. H. Fujimura, in The Restoration Comedy of Wit (1952), approaches the plays through the contemporary intellectual and aesthetical implications of the word "Wit" and so helps to discount the more superficial view of the formalists. But in the chapter "The Aesthetics of Wit Comedy"

he comes dangerously close to the aesthetic critics for he, too, believes that there is a willing suspension of moral judgment in the dramatic experience which Restoration comedy affords. In The First Modern Comedies (1959), Norman Holland states that the plays are the first modern comedies because the dramatists take for granted the separation between social conventions and anti-social desires and that the plays illustrate the problem of how to embody the natural life in viable social forms. The discrepancy between appearance and nature is, for him, "distinctly and specially a Restoration theme" (4).[2]

W. H. Van Voris' The Cultivated Stance (1965) is the only work which deals exclusively with Congreve, but the dangers of approaching the plays by way of a single theme are evident from the outset. Beginning with a highly questionable interpretation of Kneller's portrait of Congreve, Van Voris asserts that the picture and the plays demonstrate Congreve's lack of conviction about the permanence of ideals. If art manages to control time, so he believes Congreve to argue, why not make an art of oneself? Consequently, Van Voris believes that the characters in the plays attempt to evolve around

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2. Parenthesized numbers, with the exception of dates, are those of the pages upon which the statement or quotation may be found in the edition of the text cited in the Bibliography.

themselves an artifice which prevents them from seeing the ugly reality which surrounds them. This approach certainly brings out the darker side of the comedies, but it is one which views the plays as therapeutic exercises and the world which they illustrate as one of nightmarish agony. In the last analysis, the critic concludes that the plays for Congreve and the Restoration audience served as a psychological shield which protected them from the chaos of experience and the threat of time.

Despite the fact that these critics view the plays through many interesting perspectives, they all regard Congreve as a dramatist whose plays illustrate different facets of Restoration life. But in order to see Congreve in this way it must be assumed that all his efforts were directed toward the perfection of a kind of drama which, already held in disfavor by certain members of the audience and public, was gradually disintegrating under the demand for a more sensible and less ambiguously moral type of comedy. The plays of Congreve, therefore, gain in interest and meaning if looked at not as attempts to perpetuate a dying convention but as stimulating examples of plays which draw upon the same tradition as those of Etherege, Wycherley and Dryden on the one hand, and which present ideas that prevail in the comedies of Cibber, Vanbrugh, Farquhar and Steele on the other. Congreve retains the gaiety and wit of Restoration comedy and presents a less cynical

and more moral attitude towards life which was to emerge more fully in eighteenth-century comedy. Congreve, therefore, is a creative artist who refines and expands the material of Restoration comedy as he anticipates that of the new comedy.

Because the terms "Restoration" and "eighteenth-century" will be used to distinguish many of the trends in Congreve's plays and to classify various dramatists, some attempt should be made to clarify and define these inclusive and elusive words and to justify the choice of dramatists selected to represent respectively the two comic modes.

It must first be acknowledged that the comedies of the two periods should not be regarded as monolithic in any respect. A play such as Dryden's Sir Martin Mar-All, or the Feign'd Innocence (1667) is an unadulterated farce. It was extremely popular not only with Pepys but with the audience for the next two decades, and it was revised frequently in the early eighteenth century.[3] This play serves as a warning to those who erroneously believe that Restoration comedy and the audience's taste were limited to polished and sophisticated wit. Furthermore, Restoration comedy is not without its elements of sentimentalism. Although Ernest Bernbaum in The Drama of Sensibility (1915) and Joseph Wood Krutch in Comedy

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3. John Dryden, Four Comedies, ed. L. A. Beaurline and Fredson Bowers (Chicago, 1967), 101.

and Conscience After the Restoration (1924) believe that Cibber's Love's Last Shift, or the Fool in Fashion (1696) marks the rise of sentimental comedy, Bernbaum, as well as Arthur Sherbo in English Sentimental Drama (1957), traces its influences back to beyond the Restoration tradition.

Similarly, many themes and conventions of Restoration comedy are retained well into the eighteenth century. As Allardyce Nicoll points out in A History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama 1700-1750 (1925), the comedy of manners becomes an important feature in the plays of Farquhar, Vanbrugh, William Burnaby and Henry Fielding, while the comedy of intrigues is developed in the works of Mrs. Susannah Centlivre and William Taverner (126). The works of these dramatists amply demonstrate the continuing tendency to utilize, if not the spirit, the material of the earlier tradition. Colly Cibber, always alert to the taste of his audience, retains in his sentimental comedies many Restoration characters and attitudes. When he read the draft of Steele's The Conscious Lovers (1722), he was fully aware that as it stood the play was "rather too grave for an English audience," and he recommended adding comic characters.[4] Steele then included the parts of Tom and Phillis, who resemble the witty servants of Restoration comedy, using from

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4. Theophilus Cibber, The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland (London, 1753), IV, 120.

"Guardian" No. 87 the episode of the mock-romantic window-washing. And although Goldsmith and Sheridan in the last quarter of the century are at best shadows of Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve, they attempted to revitalize the Restoration spirit and to discredit the sentimentalism of eighteenth-century comedy.

Any attempt to select dramatists who represent exclusively Restoration and eighteenth-century would be futile. This does not mean, however, that various plays and specific elements in them cannot be broadly categorized as one or the other. The plays of Etherege, Wycherley and Dryden differ in many important aspects from those by Cibber, Vanbrugh, Farquhar and Steele. These dramatists are, therefore, chosen because their plays manifest most clearly the essence of the two modes. Comedies which run counter to the prevailing current are not considered. For example, the comedies of that most prolific of Restoration dramatists, Thomas Shadwell, are not mentioned because they invariably revert back to the Jonsonian tradition, with the result that they do not always reflect that esprit associated with Restoration comedy.

The term "Restoration" comedy is retained to designate the comedies of Etherege, Wycherley and Dryden because alternative titles such as the "comedy of manners" and the "comedy of wit," while pointing to some of the major

preoccupations of the plays, are too exclusive for a thesis which aims to deal not only with the comedies' cynical and libertine attitudes, the gaiety and the wit, but also with the plots and themes. At the turn of the century, the comedies of Cibber, Vanbrugh and Farquhar reveal a distinct movement towards a kind of drama which was to culminate in the plays of Steele. To describe this comedy as "sentimental" or "exemplary" is to point to its benevolent emotions of pity and tenderness and to its overtly didactic tone, but such terms tend to eclipse the emphasis which is placed on the relationship between marriage and fortune and on bourgeois standards - both of which are significant deviations from the less mercenary and more aristocratic attitudes found in Restoration comedy. Consequently, the term "eighteenth-century" comedy is used because it includes all aspects of the changing sensibility which manifested itself in the last decade of the seventeenth century and which developed and extended well into the succeeding century.

In an article published in 1962, "Congreve at the Century's End," Clifford Leech comes closest to recognizing and dealing with the fusion of the two modes in the plays of Congreve. But because he sees the first signs of Congreve's subdued seriousness in the second play, the importance of his first, The Old Bachelor, in Congreve's development as a dramatist is diminished. Emphasizing mainly language and tone,

Leech gives no indication of what Congreve does with his plots and themes.

The following chapters show that Congreve's career as a dramatist has its origin in his first work, Incognita. An examination of the plays' plots, themes and characterization reveals that the predominantly Restoration spirit of The Old Bachelor and the eighteenth-century timbre of The Double Dealer exemplify respectively what is now referred to as Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy. As such, the first two comedies anticipate the fusion of the two comic modes which occur in the last two comedies, Love for Love and The Way of the World. I believe, therefore, that Congreve's development as a dramatist may be explained in terms of the plays' relationships to Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy.

II

THE EARLY YEARS: INCOGNITA

That Congreve had an early interest in the drama may be deduced from the scant information we have relating to his background in Ireland and London before the appearance in 1693 of The Old Bachelor. While at Trinity College, Dublin, he would have had the opportunity to visit the theater and to make the acquaintance of the comedian Joseph Ashbury and the Smock Alley group, members of which were later to appear in the London productions of his own plays. When Trinity College closed in 1689, Congreve went to England where it has been argued, by John C. Hodges in William Congreve the Man (1941), he began the first draft of The Old Bachelor (40). In 1691 Congreve entered the Middle Temple and, during his brief stay there, became friendly with Walter Moyle, a man of the town who was very much interested in the theater. He would also have been fully aware of the long dramatic tradition of the Inns of Court which had recently produced three such noteworthy dramatists as Etherege, Wycherley and Shadwell. The world of the theater and the beau monde would have been accessible to Congreve through his acquaintances at the Middle Temple and through his own family connections. It was not long in fact before he was to attract the attention of Dryden himself.

Incognita was published in February of 1692, and it reveals conclusively Congreve's latent interest in drama and dispenses with the idea that he lacks objectivity. From the Preface, it is already clear that a critical mind is at work. Congreve first distinguishes between the novel and the romance and, to capture the immediacy he expects of the former, he decides to "imitate dramatick writing, namely, in the design, contexture and result of the plot" (242). Allowing for the unity of time, which is extended to three days, the dramatic unities are followed closely - the incidents in the story take place in Florence and evolve around the marrying of "two couples so oddly engaged in an intricate amour" (242).

The novel may be seen, without undue distortion, to follow a five-act structure based on the traditional pattern of exposition, complication and denouement. The first "act" deals with the nocturnal festivities and ball celebrating the nuptials of the Duke, which lead to the meeting between the young men, Aurelian and Hippolito, and their respective partners, Juliana (Incognita) and Leonora. The raveling of the plot begins when Aurelian takes on the identity of his friend and when Juliana refuses to reveal her name to Aurelian. The subsequent confusion is developed in the next section when the two heroes defend the honor of their mistresses

at the lists the following morning. At the banquet that night, further complications arise when Aurelian's father proposes that his son should marry Juliana, both lovers being unaware of the true identity of the other. The fourth "act" takes place in a convent garden where Aurelian rescues Juliana, now in the guise of a young man, from a would-be assassin. In the meantime, Hippolito has informed Leonora of the change of identities and, despite the opposition of her father, they are married in a conveniently-situated monastery. The last section now deals with the denouement. After a breathless hue and cry, the parents meet their children and reveal their true identities to each other. With the quartet of lovers receiving the blessings of their parents, love and duty are thus reconciled.

Within this dramatic design there are the familiar conventions popular in Restoration comedy. The action of the novel is furthered by the use of disguises, and the subsequent mistaken identities occur not only between the heroes and heroines but also between the young men themselves; before the action of each section is allowed to develop, the mise-en-scène is visually presented to us; the scenes between the young lovers are replete with witty repartee; the two couples are nicely balanced and differentiated, with Aurelian and Juliana being slightly more witty and decorous than

Hippolito and Leonora; there is also the comic figure of the anxious father of Aurelian, Don Fabio, whose vanity does much to motivate the main action. As with the comedies of the period, the suspense arises not from guessing whether the resolution will be a happy one but from the masterly handling of the plot, from discovering how Congreve is going to resolve the complications without resorting to the more improbable incidents from the world of the romance. Only on one occasion, that of the chance meeting between Aurelian and Juliana in the convent garden, is the arm of coincidence stretched a little too far. But all the incidents, as promised by Congreve in the Preface, are subordinated to the main purpose, for all of them eventually lead to the marriages between the quartet of lovers.

Equally significant for an appreciation of the dramatic comedies is the critical detachment of the writer, seen particularly through his use of the dramatized narrator. Like many a contemporary writer of prose fiction, Congreve wants to give the impression that the narrator is merely the recorder of events which actually took place. This enables Congreve to preserve throughout an objectivity of which he makes full comic use. As the tale unfolds it becomes evident that Congreve is never so involved in the action as to be devoid of critical insight into the characters and the conventions under which he writes. Furthermore, much of the comedy arises directly

from the narrator's observations and interpolations such as later novelists were to use.

First, there is the personality of the narrator himself. With his disarming superiority he reflects the manner of those who speak the prologues to Restoration comedy as he, anticipating Tristram Shandy by some sixty years, explains to the reader the reason for his digressions:

> Now the reader I suppose to be upon thorns at this and the like impertinent digressions, but let him alone and he'll come to himself; at which time I think fit to acquaint him, that when I digress, I am at that time writing to please my self; when I continue the thread of the story, I write to please him; supposing him a reasonable man, I conclude him satisfied to allow me this liberty, and so I proceed. (250)

When he thinks he has to fill in what he considers to be the obvious facts, the narrator's arrogance is more explicit:

> In which interim, let me take the liberty to digress a little, and tell the reader something which I do not doubt he has apprehended himself long ago, if he be not the dullest reader in the world .... (260)

His pedantry is revealed when he explains to the reader how a profound silence could arouse Aurelian like a clap of thunder:

> Now because it is possible this at some time or other may happen to be read by some

> malicious or ignorant person, (no reflection upon the present reader) who will not admit, or does not understand that silence should make a man start; and have the same effect, in provoking his attention, with its opposite noise; I will illustrate this matter, to such a diminutive critick, by a parallel instance of light; which though it does chiefly entertain the eyes, and is indeed the prime object of the sight, yet should it immediately cease, to have a man left in the dark by a suddain deficiency of it, would make him stare with his eyes, and though he could not see, endeavour to look about him. (285)

The narrator's avowed deference is felt when he considers Aurelian's response to Juliana's tale of woe:

> Well, the learned say it was sympathy; and I am always of the opinion with the learned, if they speak first. (289)

But the narrator can also be as self-effacing as the most modest of men. In attempting to describe Juliana's gown at the ball, he apologises for his ignorance of such feminine matters:

> I should by right now describe her dress, which was extreamly agreeable and rich, but 'tis possible I might err in some material pin or other, in the sticking of which may be the whole grace of the drapery depended. (254)

By distancing himself through the persona, Congreve not only disarms the critic but also defends the way in which the story is related. The resultant irony, felt in the discrepancy between the personalities of the narrator and

Congreve, causes the reader to respond to the tale on both the serious and comic levels.

This ambivalent response is even more explicit when Congreve, again through the narrator, reveals a critical attitude towards his material. In describing the serenading and the languishing postures of the affected valet, he ridicules not only the servant but the custom as well (248). Even the quartet of lovers are not exempt from the writer's irony. When the sighing of Hippolito prompts Aurelian to do the same, the parenthetical comments of the narrator, "(For, by the way, sighing is as catching among lovers, as yawning among the vulgar)," gives immediately a different and more mundane perspective through which we view the heroes (268). Again, Aurelian's blustering attempts to address Juliana at the ball and his "fit of transport" which "lasted till she was gone out of sight" deflate the conventions of the genre (265).

But Congreve's attitude is not one of continual badinage, for he can admire the more positive aspects of the action and the characters. Despite the confusion of the young men at the lists, the description of the chivalric ritual is not without its splendor and charm (277). This dual effect is similar to that of Pope's "The Rape of the Lock," and such a

comparison becomes more valid in the description Congreve gives of Juliana. Congreve preserves the same admiration and ironic detachment that Pope maintains towards Belinda:

> But Aurelian (from whom I had every tittle of her description) fancy'd he saw a little nest of cupids break from the tresses of her hair, and every one officiously betake himself to his task. Some fann'd with their downy wings, her glowing cheeks; while others brush'd the balmy dew from off her face, leaving alone a heavenly moisture blubbing on her lips, on which they drank and revell'd for their pains; nay, so particular were their allotments in her service, that Aurelian was very positive a young cupid who was but just pen-feather'd, employ'd his naked quills to pick her teeth. And a thousand other things his transport represented to him, which none but lovers who have experience of such visions will believe. (264)

The immediate effect of this is to make the reader appreciate the beauty of Juliana, while the bathos of the last sentence gently mocks Aurelian and Juliana and the convention to which they belong. This does not mean, however, that the characters and the scene disintegrate under the force of the ridicule - the pervasive irony admits the validity of two finely-balanced points of view.

Incognita anticipates in many ways the more important aspects of the comedies and disposes of several critical assumptions about Congreve's achievement as a dramatist. The dramatic structure of the novel reveals a writer who believes that drama, as opposed to the novel, is a medium through which

he may communicate his ideas to his public with greater impact. The use of the dramatized narrator allows the writer to admire and satirize the characters and to recognize the fragility and the charm of the world to which they belong. It is such ambivalence which accounts for the nature of many of the characters in the comedies and the special effects of Love for Love and The Way of the World. Congreve's critical attitude towards the genre in which he writes and his creative use of traditional materials and ideas look forward to his treatment of the Restoration comic mode, particularly in The Double Dealer, and explain one aspect of his deveopment as a dramatist. This objectivity and the subsequent ability to recognize the validity of two apparently antithetical views also explain why it was so natural for Congreve, after the tentative experiments in the first two plays, to reconcile so successfully in the last two comedies, the techniques and values of Restoration comedy with those which were to emerge in eighteenth-century comedy.

It is also implicit in the conclusion of the novel that happiness for Aurelian and Juliana is all the more secure because it originates from the reconciliation between love and duty. Although these more serious implications are subordinated to the pleasures of following the intricate plot development, it is precisely these moral concerns relating to love and marriage

which become a significant aspect of the comedies. With these facts in mind, it is difficult to accept the conclusions of such critics as Palmer and Perry that Congreve's comedies betray an inability to penetrate beneath the glittering surfaces of life and that he lacks a point of view from which he could criticize his creations. Already in this early work, Congreve demonstrates a dramatic ability and sensitivity which are to be developed in the comedies; consequently, Incognita occupies an important place in Congreve's development as a dramatist.

III

THE OLD BACHELOR

Any misgivings that Congreve might have had about his literary ability when he published Incognita anonymously must have been quickly dispelled by the widening recognition he received later that year. After contributing to Charles Gildon's Miscellany Poems upon Several Occasions, Congreve had his translation of Juvenal's eleventh satire accepted for Dryden's Juvenal and Persius, to which were prefaced Congreve's lines "To Mr. Dryden." No doubt encouraged and flattered by the attention paid to him by the leading literary figure of the day, Congreve submitted to Dryden the draft of The Old Bachelor. As the play was written when Congreve was only nineteen years old, at a time when he was ignorant of the town and stage, it was not without its defects. But Dryden, together with Thomas Southerne and Arthur Mainwaring, helped to trim some of its rough edges. Even so, it obviously revealed Congreve's potentialities as a dramatist, for Thomas Southerne quotes Dryden as having said that "he never saw such a first play in his life ... the stuff was rich indeed, it wanted only the fashionable cutt of the town."[5]

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5. William Congreve: Letters and Documents, ed. John C. Hodges (New York, 1964), 151.

Keeping in mind that the play was written before Congreve was familiar with the stage and the town, it is not surprising that the young author took advantage of a well-established dramatic tradition, offering as it did a familiar and accepted frame of reference within which he could test and develop his ideas and techniques. In plot, theme and characterization The Old Bachelor follows closely the mode of Restoration comedy.

The plots of Restoration comedy are frequently discursive because the dramatists were expected to fulfil the insatiable demand for variety. The tastes of the audience are clearly revealed by Dryden, whose sensitivity accurately reflects the temper of the period. Neander, in "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668), is aware that the English, finding the more regular drama of the French unappetizing, "come to be diverted at our plays."[6] This is the prevailing attitude towards comedy until the turn of the century. As late as 1690 Dryden, in the Preface to Don Sebastian, King of Portugal, still maintains that the English are given to variety, "even to a debauchery of Pleasure" (23). Etherege's The Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub (1664) contains four separate plots mainly independent of each other.

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6. Essays of John Dryden, ed. W. P. Ker (Oxford, 1900), I, 72.

The first evolves around the serio-comic action of Beaufort and Lord Bevill, the second deals with Sir Frederick Frollick's pursuit of Widow Rich, the third traces the efforts of Dufoy, Sir Frederick's valet, to become a gallant, and yet a fourth relates the attempted gulling of the country knight, Sir Nicholas Cully, by the two city rogues, Wheedle and Palmer. Furthermore, such arbitrary titles as The Country Wife (1675) and The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter (1676) demonstrate the problem involved in giving appropriate names to plays with extremely diffuse plots, for these titles do little more than indicate one of many and equally prominent lines of action. In The Old Bachelor, the temptation, fall and redemption of the avowed misogynist share the limelight with the cuckolding of the impotent Non-conformist citizen, the gulling of the fools, and the two parallel courtships of the quartet of lovers. A synopsis of the play demonstrates how the attention is spread over these five strands of action and complicated by the customary intrigues, disguises and mock-marriages.

The first act centers around the two young men of the beau monde - Bellmour, who is ready to take his pleasures anywhere and at a moment's notice, and Vainlove, who quickly retreats from precocious females who show the least sign of taking the initiative in the love-chase. For these reasons,

Vainlove hands over his discarded mistress, Silvia, and his more recent admirer, Laetitia, to Bellmour. The result is that Silvia's attention is diverted first to Bellmour and then to Heartwell as she plans to vent her vengeance on Vainlove. This act also introduces Heartwell and establishes his antipathy towards women and hypocrisy as he inveighs against the immorality of the age. The following act sets up parallels and contrasts between Belinda and Araminta. The coquettish Belinda is an appropriate partner for the witty Bellmour, while the more serious-minded Araminta is as skeptical about Vainlove as he is of women.

Act III develops the Heartwell-Silvia line of action and shows his attempts to seduce her. The following act deals primarily with the unsuccessful marriage between Fondlewife and Laetitia and her illicit affair with Bellmour, and concludes with Fondlewife forcing himself to believe in his wife's fidelity. Meanwhile Sharper, the opportunistic friend to the two young men, plans to marry off Silvia and her maid Lucy to the fools Wittol and Bluffe, who believe they are going to marry Araminta. In the last act, Heartwell is "married" to Silvia in a mock ceremony officiated over by the disguised Bellmour, and later the two gulls are finally paired off with Silvia and Lucy. His "marriage" and Silvia's infidelity with Bellmour exposed, Heartwell is informed of the cheat and is

happy to see Silvia finally and safely married to Wittol. While Bellmour and Belinda gratuitously resign themselves to marriage, Vainlove and Araminta delay theirs until they see how their friends' marriage turns out.

Many of those who advocated a tighter structure frequently complained about this kind of looseness. In "A Short Discourse of the English Stage" (1664), Richard Flecknoe observes that the chief faults of the comedies are their "huddling too much matter together, and making them too long and intricate" so that the auditors are lost in a mist.[7] Three decades later, a year after the first performance of The Old Bachelor, Lawrence Echard in the Preface to Terence's Comedies might well be complaining about those plot devices in the Bellmour-Laetitia action when he states that "Our Plots go chiefly upon variety of Love-Intrigues ... Ladies Cuckolding their Husbands most dextrously, Gallants danger upon the same account, with their escape either by witty Fetches, or hiding themselves in dark Holes, Closets, Beds, etc" (x).

This tendency towards discursiveness, however, does not mean that the plays lack design. The usual pattern is composed of a series of parallel and/or contrasting attitudes towards love and marriage, but it is the more cynical view

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7. Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, ed. J. E. Spingarn (Oxford, 1908-9), III, 93.

which is emphasised. In The Comical Revenge, a contrast is set up between the disenchanted and libertine views of Sir Frederick and the other characters on the one hand, and the romantic and heroic values of Beaufort on the other. In Dryden's Marriage à la Mode (1672), the conflict between love and marriage in the two love triangles in the "minor" plots is juxtaposed against the romantic behavior of the quartet of lovers. To ignore the audience's demand for variety and the attendant plot complications could result in the dramatist exposing himself to the scorn of the critics. This was the case with Thomas Shadwell, who believed that the attacks made on The Sullen Lovers (1668) were due to what he describes in the Preface to that play as the lack of "Intrigue" and "want of design."[8]

It is from such designs that the themes of the plays emerge. The witty and cynical treatment of love and marriage dominates the more romantic attitude. Love is either expressed in terms of physical appetite or becomes the subject for a jeu d'esprit, while marriage is considered as a social imposition, a "sin" against Natural law. The locus classicus is the opening of "Absalom and Achitophel" where Dryden "defends" the promiscuity of Charles II, but the plays of the period are replete with such premises. Rhodophil in Marriage

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8. Spingarn, II, 149.

à la Mode dislikes the talented, beautiful and good-humored Doralice for no other reason than that she happens to be his wife (198). To Horner in _The Country Wife_, the marriage vow carries as much import as the oath of a penitent gamester who, "entering into bonds and penalties to stint himself to such a particular small sum at play for the future, which makes him but the more eager; and not being able to hold out, loses his money again, and his forfeit to boot" (263). Furthermore, as J. H. Smith remarks in _The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy_ (1948), when the young couples themselves are confronted with marriage it often comes as a surprise, as it does in Sedley's _The Mulberry Garden_ (1668) to Wildish and Olivia (78). The young couples enter marriage with as much enthusiasm as people giving up their freedom. Many of the male characters attempt to win their goals therefore without committing themselves to marriage but, because of the double-standard, the females can only achieve theirs within marriage. Such is the case in the conflict between Sir Frederick Frollick and Widow Rich in _The Comical Revenge_.

The Old Bachelor is representative of Restoration comedy in this respect also, for it presents many attitudes to love and marriage and reflects similar views to those mentioned above. These are now expressed through five different groups of characters - Heartwell and Silvia, Fondlewife

and Laetitia, Sharper, Wittol and Bluffe, Bellmour and Belinda, and Vainlove and Araminta. With the first four groups exemplifying the more negative values and overshadowing the more serious ones of Vainlove and Araminta, the tone of the play echoes the predominantly cynical spirit of Restoration comedy.

Heartwell and Silvia point to the salacious aspects of love and marriage as he attempts to avoid marriage as strongly as she tries to trap him into it. Heartwell is too much a creature of the age to confuse love with marriage, and he hopes to seduce Silvia without losing his cherished freedom. He argues with her that "in the old days People married where they lov'd; but that fashion is chang'd, Child" (73).[9] Overcome by passion,he succumbs to her demand for marriage only in order to reap the pleasures of her bed. But Silvia's demand for marriage is not based on a highly-developed sense of virtue, for her acceptance of Heartwell is merely the means by which she may taunt him and avenge herself on Vainlove. When, in fact, she finds that her marriage to Heartwell is not legally binding, she is equally content to find another husband in the person of Wittol. With Heartwell viewing marriage very much in the same way as Horner accuses Pinchwife of doing in The Country Wife (263), as a more permanent

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9. Quotations from Congreve's comedies are taken from Herbert Davis' edition, The Complete Plays (Chicago, 1967).

form of whoredom, and with Silvia using it for egotistical reasons, they both reflect the conflicting values between love and marriage.

The marriage of Fondlewife and Laetitia clearly demonstrates how the Heartwell-Silvia relationship might have developed. The impotent Fondlewife learns quickly that marriage to a treacherous beauty entails perpetual vigilance. The beauty that first attracted him to her now becomes the cause of his distress and, blinded by uxoriousness, he is no match for the slick dissembling of his wife and the clever maneuvers and wit of Bellmour. The only solution to his problem is to live in a fool's paradise, to believe the best even if this does not coincide with the facts, for

> No Husband, by his Wife, can be deceiv'd:
> She still is Vertuous, if she's so believ'd. (96)

Laetitia is proof of her husband's worst suspicions. She accuses Wittol of rape to prevent her husband discovering Bellmour, and while she makes amends to Fondlewife she flirts behind his back with Bellmour. As with Heartwell and Silvia, Fondlewife and Laetitia also manifest selfish and libertine attitudes towards love and marriage.

Similar views are expressed by Sharper and are also implicit in the behavior of the fools. Sharper believes that

"if whoring be purging ... then I may say Marriage is entering into a Course of Physick" (44). The offensive Wittol and Bluffe think that they are suitable husbands for the sensible Araminta and, urged on by the power of wine, they make their sordid addresses to her. Love is not considered by them to be a prerequisite for marriage, and their trivial views of it are well rewarded when they find themselves married to the equally gullible Silvia and Lucy.

Both Bellmour and Belinda display a cynical and a frivolous attitude towards love and marriage. The libertine Bellmour wittily justifies the adultery of a wife by affirming that the lover is merely the effigy of the husband (39). He is a "Cormorant in Love" (40) and rallies to the call of the flesh as readily and as automatically as one of Pavlov's dogs responding to the bell. He uses everyone and everything to fulfil his sexual needs - the discarded women of Vainlove, wit to justify infidelity, the cloak of the clergy to gain access to Laetitia, and the gullibility of Fondlewife to extricate himself from the compromising situation with his wife. His behavior and ideas are, therefore, a direct challenge to the orthodox and moral concepts of love and marriage. But he cannot be dismissed as amoral, for he is very much aware of the immorality of his acts. Planning the seduction of Laetitia, he states that he must be disguised because it "adds a Gusto to an Amour; gives it the greater resemblance of Theft; and among

us lewd Mortals, the deeper the Sin the sweeter" (39). It is only when he is confronted with Belinda's cynical attitude that he expresses a more positive point of view, when he tells her that "Courtship to Marriage, is but as the Musick in the Play-house, till the Curtain's drawn; but that once up, then opens the Scene of Pleasure" (107). But even here one cannot escape the feeling that this idea is put forward mainly to outwit Belinda and that it is the more sensual aspects of marriage which are emphasied. He finally promises to marry her not because he sees it as a happy and natural conclusion to his courtship but because it is the only thing left to do, because "there is a fatality in Marriage" (111). Entering gratuitously into marriage, he commits himself to what he ambiguously refers to with characteristic double-entendre as a "fall" and as a "lasting Durance" (112).

His fickle and gay partner, Belinda, echoes many of his sentiments. Amused by Vainlove's more idealistic protestations of love to Araminta, she ridicules the cliches of the platonic lover with his darts, flames and altars while, unconscious of the irony, she plays the role of the précieuse mistress with Bellmour. She affects boredom with Bellmour and demands variety in courtship, but when he tries to woo her in silence she petulantly relegates him to the status of an ape (59-60). She feels pestered by Bellmour's continual demands and considers marriage only because she hopes that it will reduce a troublesome lover to a "more than ordinary quiet

Husband" (106). Confronted finally with the prospect of marriage, she then perversely extols courtship which she now sees as a "very witty Prologue to a very dull Play" (107). It is with this disenchanted attitude towards marriage that she accepts Bellmour's proposal. Again the sentiments of both Bellmour and Belinda are such that they point to the view that love and marriage are diametrically opposed.

A more serious approach is taken by Vainlove and Araminta, whose views contrast with those of their friends. Unlike Bellmour, who seems to force his appetite, Vainlove dislikes love "when 'tis forced upon a Man" (39), and he refuses to accept Bellmour's witty justification of adultery. Love for Vainlove does not mean sexual joys but a pleasure less tangible and more refined. Whereas Bellmour is interested purely in the excitement of the love-chase and the subsequent rewards, Vainlove is more concerned with searching for an ideal marriage partner. Consequently, what would mean success to Bellmour would be failure for Vainlove. Vainlove believes that women are not objects to be used for purposes of self-gratification but are, he tells Araminta, "Temples of Love, and 'tis through you, our Devotion must be convey'd" (58). When he offends Araminta, by mistakenly believing that she has been too open with her affections, he does not want a pardon too easily won and does not wish to marry her until he feels he deserves her (63).

Marriage, particularly to Araminta, is considered by him as a blessing and a "Heaven" (63).

Araminta's sentiments are similar to those of Vainlove. To Belinda's assertion that love is a fever, she replies in a manner whichechoes Vainlove's more spiritual attitude: "If Love be the Fever which you mean; kind Heav'n avert the cure: Let me have Oil to feed that Flame and never let it be extinct, till I my self am Ashes" (54). Unlike Belinda, who affects boredom in order to provoke Bellmour, Araminta believes that love should be a natural response because "Favours that are got by Impudence and Importunity, are like Discoveries from the Rack, when the afflicted Person, for his ease, sometimes confesses secrets his Heart knows nothing of" (58). The song she selects to be sung, "Thus to a ripe, consenting Maid," endorses both her and Vainlove's demand for discretion in love and for the necessity to preserve a relationship based on true love and respect (59). At the same time, however, she is aware of the dangers inherent in Vainlove's tendency to place women on pedestals, and she warns him that such ideals are "Rather poor silly Idols of your own making, which, upon the least displeasure you forsake, and set up new - " (58). Her response to Vainlove's proposal of marriage is in keeping with their tenuous relationship and the only one which could please him. Living in a society characterized by cynicism and folly, she refrains from plunging

into marriage so that they may first take advantage of their friends' experience (112). The reply itself is a form of compromise, a promise of a Heaven to be attained in the indefinite future. Thus, in their own distinct manner, they achieve a sense of fulfillment by bringing their relationship a step further towards marriage.

Heartwell's concluding remarks on marriage bring together the major thematic ideas of the play:

> With gawdy Plumes and gingling Bells made proud,
> The youthful Beast sets forth, and neighs aloud.
> A morning-Sun his Tinsell'd Harness gilds,
> And the first Stage a Down-hill Green-sword yields.
> But, Oh, -
> What rugged Ways attend the Noon of Life!
> (Our Sun declines,) and with what anxious Strife,
> What Pain we tug that galling Load, a Wife.
> All Coursers the first Heat with Vigour run;
> But 'tis with Whip and Spur the Race is won. (112)

This final address to the audience clearly indicates what aspects of love and marriage are emphasised in the play. The first nine lines relate to the foolish and distorted attitudes towards marriage exemplified by the first four groups for whom the "rugged Ways" appear inevitable; the last line, suggesting the means by which the race may be won, refers to the serious efforts made by Vainlove and Araminta. But even for them, happiness remains more of a potentiality than a reality. The final impression, therefore, is that of a play which follows the usual emphasis on the more disillusioned attitude towards love and marriage.

The characters, as well as the plots and themes, cater primarily to what Dryden calls, in the Epilogue to the second part of The Conquest of Granada (1672), "an Age more Gallant than the last" (164). Dryden's comment, of course, refers specifically to the society of Whitehall, and the comedies reflect the tastes, if not the morals, of that exclusive world. Within the fashionable world of the comedies, profligacy is fully professed and practiced and conventional morality flouted. The characters reveal, either by their savoir-faire or lack of it, their exact position in this social hierarchy. Occupying the highest position are the truewits, and beneath them are those less successful in adapting themselves to the air of this refined society - the superannuated rake, the rejected mistress, the Non-conformist citizen, the young frustrated wife, the fools - all of whom in one way or another caricature the society to which they aspire. The characters in The Old Bachelor disclose immediately their affinity with their counterparts in Restoration comedy.

In "A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry, and the Causes of the Degeneracy of It," John Dennis states of the period that it was an "age of Pleasure, and not of Business" (294), and it is a life free from responsibility which is the occupation of the gallant. To Bellamy, in Dryden's An Evening's Love, or the Mock Astrologer (1668), business means "drinking and wenching" (252), and the only business that he has with women concerns their

beauty rather than their morals (276). Bellmour's opening remarks echo a similar point of view:

> Business is the rub of Life, perverts our Aim, casts off the Bias, and leaves us wide and short of the intended Mark .... leave Business to Idlers, and Wisdom to Fools; they have need of 'em: Wit, be my Faculty; and Pleasure, my Occupation .... Business is not my Element. (37-8)

And his attitude towards love and marriage manifests most clearly the libertinism and epicureanism which form part of the Restoration ideal of the gentleman.

The most important aspect of the gallant's life is the vigorous and unending pursuit of the opposite sex. Mrs. Pert in The Man of Mode believes that a "Modish Man is always very busie when he is in pursuit of a new Mistress" (211), and Lady Fidgett in The Country Wife takes such activity as "a sign of good breeding" (349). In An Evening's Love, Wildblood tells Jacinta that he is "none of those unreasonable lovers, that propose to themselves the loving to eternity" (262), and that he has "a Banque of Love, to supply every ones occasions; some for her, some for another, and some for you" (291). Similarly, Bellmour is a "Cormorant in Love" (40) and loves "all the Sex" (41), as demonstrated by his whirlwind affairs with Silvia and Laetitia. Such an ideal as constancy is not to be thought of. In The Man of Mode, Dorimant is shocked that his mistress, Mrs. Loveit, should expect it of him: "Constancy at my years! 'tis

not a Vertue in season, you might as well expect the Fruit the Autumn ripens i'the Spring .... Youth has a long Journey to go, Madame; shou'd I have set up my rest at the first Inn I lodg'd at, I shou'd never have arriv'd at the happiness I now enjoy" (215-16).

Another characteristic of the gallant is his wit. In Men of Letters and the English Public in the Eighteenth Century (1881), Alexandre Beljame states that the fashionable man of the Restoration "could not be a gallant without being a man of wit: the two epithets became synonymous" (9). And Dryden, contrasting the preceding age with the present, states in the Epilogue to the second part of The Conquest of Granada that:

> Our Ladies and our men now speak more wit
> In conversation, than those Poets writ. (164)

Courtall and Freeman, in Etherege's She Would If She Could (1668), captivate Gatty and Araminta by their witty speeches, Gerard in Wycherley's The Gentleman Dancing-Master (1672) has a reputation for it, and Lady Woodvil says of Dorimant in The Man of Mode that his tongue would "tempt the Angels to a second fall" (237). Bellmour reveals his affinity with his Restoration predecessors in his verbal tactics with Belinda and his friends, and he displays that kind of fanciful wit which, according to Hobbes' definition, perceives similitudes in things unlike. In order to overcome Belinda's affected antipathy towards him, he affirms that

"Importunity in Love, like importunity at Court; first creates its own Interest, and then pursues it for the Favour" (58), and to guile her into marriage he states that "Courtship to marriage, is but as the Musick in the Play-house" (107). In The Restoration Comedy of Wit, Fujimura rightly emphasizes that wit meant not only verbal dexterity but also decorum in conduct, and one aspect of the truewit is the discretion he uses when conducting his affaires d'amour. Ranger in Wycherley's Love in a Wood (671) assures Christina that he was "never so ill-bred as to brag of my reception in a lady's chamber" (98), and Laetitia hopes that Bellmour is enough of a gentleman not to prejudice her reputation (82).

Another means by which the gallant reveals his wit and his love for intrigues is through his behavior towards those who attempt in one way or another to ape his manners. In this respect the gallant serves not only as a satirical persona but as an agent for punishing the fools for their folly. As accurately as Horner describes the affectation of such fops as Sparkish in The Country Wife (257) so do Bellmour and Sharper expose the gullibility of Wittol and Bluffe (46-7). Sharper has no difficulty in cheating Wittol of a hundred pounds, and in The Comical Revenge Wheedle similarly cheats Sir Nicholas Cully. Just as Sir Simon Addlepot is forced into marrying Lady Flippant in Love in a Wood and as Sir Nicholas Cully is tricked into

accepting Mrs. Lucy, so do Bellmour and Sharper punish Wittol and Bluffe for their rude and presumptous behavior to Belinda and Araminta by gulling them into marrying Silvia and Lucy.

The heroine of Restoration comedy possesses similar qualities to those of the gallant, but because of the double-standard and the rules of courtship, based partly on the précieuse tradition and partly on the Restoration's skeptical attitude towards it, she affects disdain towards men and wittily ridicules those less sophisticated than herself. Dorimant's description of Harriet in The Man of Mode, that she is "Wild, witty and lovesome, beautiful and young" (244), applies equally well to Belinda. Sharper describes Belinda as being "too proud, too Inconstant, too Affected and too Witty, and too handsome for a Wife" (41). And when she first appears this impression is confirmed. She has an avowed distaste for "that filthy, two-leg'd Creature, Man" (54), but when Bellmour arrives to woo her she cannot bring herself to leave, pretending that she stays out of regard for Araminta's reputation. Conceited to the point of fastidiousness, she giggles about her appearance and yet immediately rails at those country visitors to town who show an equal amount of affectation in attempting to dress à la mode (83-4). True to type, Belinda directs her raillery at what she considers to be the follies of others - Vainlove's idealistic

protestations of love to Araminta (55), Bellmour's manner of courtship (58-60), and Heartwell's "marriage" to Silvia (108). So fond is she of railing that she also considers it to be the "best Qualification in a Woman's Man" (88). These aspects of Belinda's character aptly fit Edward Ravenscroft's definition of the comic heroine in The London Cuckolds (1681), that she is "a little, laughing, gigling, highty, tighty, pratling, tatling, gossipping" female (3).

The love-game between Bellmour and Belinda follows closely the conventional pattern. In The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy, J. H. Smith remarks that they are a "well-matched pair of the traditional sort, her coquetry offsetting his wildness (149). Keeping to the rules of the game, they both conceal their true feelings behind the masks which they are required to wear, with the result that they clash like "two Buckets" whenever they meet (57). With the emphasis on courtship and the battle of wits, it is not surprising that marriage comes as an anticlimax and that it is viewed by them with such indifference.

While Bellmour and Belinda represent the gay couple, Vainlove and Araminta are the serious couple whose values serve at best as a tentative norm. In a milieu which extols the type of gallantry and affectation illustrated by Bellmour and Belinda, Vainlove and Araminta are almost outsiders. Their literary

lineage may be traced back to Etherege's Young Bellair and Emilia in The Man of Mode and to Wycherley's Harcourt and Alithea in The Country Wife. In Etherege and the Seventeenth-Century Comedy of Manners, Dale Underwood believes that Etherege's young couple belong to the "honest man" tradition (80-4). But more significantly, they anticipate the more sentimental and exemplary couples in eighteenth-century comedy, such as Bevil Junior and Indiana in Steele's The Conscious Lovers. In The Old Bachelor, however, Vainlove and Araminta are subordinated to the more lively pair, and it is not until Congreve's later comedies that such moral sensibilities are allowed to gain greater dominance.

Vainlove is still very much the gallant, for he has just finished his affair with Silvia as the play opens, and he follows his own peculiar type of love-game with Araminta. Hypersensitive to women who take the initiative in the love-chase, he makes a hasty retreat because:

> All Naturally fly who does pursue:
> 'Tis fit Men should be coy, when Women woo. (80)

Because Araminta herself is "a kind of floating Island," the result is, as Heartwell points out, that Vainlove becomes one of "Loves April-fools," ever embarking upon adventures yet never coming to harbor (42). Bellmour points out to him that what he really wants to do is impossible to achieve, to marry Araminta without her consent (64). Torn between the desire to marry her

and the fear that she will accept too readily, he is the source of much of the comedy in the play. Despite the fact that both Vainlove and Araminta manifest less frivolity and more moral seriousness than the other characters, it is their quixotic courtship which dominates. Consequently, any potential contribution which they could have given to the establishment of a moral norm is undermined by the treatment accorded to their courtship. Their moral position in the play, in fact, is as tenuous as their own relationship, and it is precisely this effect which makes it difficult to discover the controlling moral idea of the play and which imparts to it that moral ambiguity characteristic of much of Restoration comedy.

The libidinous pursuits of the "surly old Batchelour" Heartwell relate him to the familiar figure of the superannuated rake, to Old Bellair in The Man of Mode and to Sir Timothy Tawdrey in Aphra Behn's The Town Fop (1676), while his purely physical reasons for marrying relate him to Pinchwife in The Country Wife. Because the wit of these elderly libertines is not as strong as their passion, they become easy victims for the cleverer tactics of the young heroes and the wilier maneuvers of the women. Blinded by his sexual desire, Heartwell becomes what he fears most, "a bearded Baby for a Girl to dandle" (72). Such a toy does he become that he wrongly attributes Silvia's reluctance to innocence (72).

Another aspect of Heartwell's character identifies him with Horner in The Country Wife and with Manly in The Plain Dealer (1676). This is the dual function that he serves in the play - that of the satirical malcontent who lashes the vices of his society and that of the parasite who preys on the vices of others and who, in turn, becomes the target of the dramatist's scorn. Congreve first allows Heartwell to expose the follies and the vices of others, and Bellmour's opening gambit with him points to this first role:

> How now George, where hast thou been snarling odious Truths, and entertaining company like a Physician, with discourse of their diseases and infirmities? What fine Lady hast thou been putting out of conceit with her self, and perswading that the Face she had been making all the morning was none of her own? for I know thou art as unmannerly and as unwelcome to a Woman, as a Looking glass after the Smallpox. (42)

And for the remainder of the scene Heartwell, with much justification, inveighs against the extravagance, affectation and immorality of the beau monde. He first deflates Vainlove's idealism and then, with Bellmour in mind, attacks those young gallants who "force Appetite" (43). He concludes by railing against the affected customs of courtship and the uncertainty of establishing proof of paternity (44-5). But Heartwell does not set himself up as a paragon of virtue nor does he condemn passion per se. He believes in waiting for the promptings of the flesh, stating that there is time enough to be lewd after

the temptation. What he expects of people is that they be what they pretend to be, a whoremaster to be a whoremaster (43).

But it is at this point in the play that Heartwell's actions begin to parallel those of the young men of the town. As soon as his desire to possess Silvia gains the upperhand, he becomes involved in a chain of events over which he has no control and which takes him deeper into a situation that forces him to resort to the dissembling and affectation he had earlier decried. His demand for plain dealing, in fact, only holds good for others and as long as his own reputation as a misogynist is not threatened. After his "marriage" to Silvia, he naively supposes that he can keep it a secret and so preserve his reputation, unaware that it was Bellmour who officiated over the mock ceremony. But it is not until he has experienced the anguish of finding that Bellmour has made him a "cuckold" and until he has become the butt of public ridicule that he is eventually told of the cheat.

The rejected mistress in Restoration comedy experiences similar remorse and torment because she too succumbs to her passion. Unlike the heroine, who refuses to yield to the gallant before marriage, she pays the penalty for attempting to fix her aim on an inconstant an elusive lover, with the result that she fails to establish a secure place in society. Forsaken

by the ruthless Dorimant, Mrs. Loveit in The Man of Mode attempts to revenge herself on her lover, but when she is outwitted by him she has no recourse but to accept stoically her fate, promising that she will lock herself in her house and "never see the world again" (286). Silvia also fails to revenge herself on Vainlove and tries to find solace in the arms of Bellmour while confessing to him her affection for Vainlove (38). She treats Heartwell as cruelly as she accuses Vainlove of treating her and, after discovering that she is not married to Heartwell, she finds the security that she has been looking for with Wittol.

The literary heritage of Fondlewife may be traced back to the impotent old husband married to a young and beautiful wife so familiar in classical comedy and to the canting Non-conformist from Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. But these are now given a contemporary flavor as Fondlewife becomes the London cit cuckolded by the young man from the beau monde. These aspects are also found in the figure of Gomez in Dryden's The Spanish Friar (1681) and in Dashwell in Ravenscroft's The London Cuckolds. The relationship between Fondlewife and Laetitia also recalls the jealous behavior of Pinchwife towards Margery in The Country Wife, for both husbands are driven by desperation to keep their wives locked up away from the attention of the young rakes, and both are finally deceived by their wives. Fondlewife's awareness of his impotency adds to his uneasiness and, despite all his precautions, he is finally outwitted by Bellmour and his own wife.

The fools, Bluffe and Wittol, are those senseless mimics who occupy the lowest rung in the social ladder and who only succeed in becoming grotesque versions of the gallants. Although Wittol and Bluffe are neither fops nor witwouds, their lack of decorum and wit identify them with those whom Manly in The Plain Dealer calls "apes and echoes of men only" (393). The figure of Bluffe originates from the miles gloriosus of Plautus, the Thraso of Terence and Bobadil in Jonson's Every Man in his Humour. Sir Joseph Wittol is the country gull who, in Restoration comedy, is invariably duped by the city sharks or truewits. His Restoration counterparts are Sir Nicholas Cully and Sir Simon Addlepot. Wittol and Bluffe, lacking decorum and manners, force themselves upon Belinda and Araminta. They pay their drunken respects to them and are so ignorant of themselves and so impervious to the feelings of the young Araminta, that they eventually believe that they are going to marry her. Unable to compete with the truewits, they are finally gulled into marrying Silvia and Lucy.

So far, the relationship between The Old Bachelor and Restoration comedy is unequivocal, but despite the predominantly Restoration spirit of the play, there are indications that Congreve is expanding upon the traditional material. Although these changes are implicit in this first play, they are significant because they anticipate those developments which occur in the later comedies. Evidence of these changes may be

found in the characterization of Bellmour, Heartwell and Fondlewife.

Bellmour does not appear to be as happy with his libertine way of life as are his predecessors. Despite the assertion that pleasure is his occupation (37) and that he is a "Cormorant in Love" (40), some signs of ennui may be detected when he half-complains that he is "not only forc'd to lie with other Mens Wives for 'em, but must also undertake the harder Task of obliging their Mistresses" (41). And one may argue that his tendency to live in castles in the air is caused by a disaffection towards his professed hedonism. In these illusory castles Bellmour is free to live according to his own rules and to ignore the uglier realities of life. It is not surprising, therefore, that he dislikes Araminta's choice of song because it reveals the mundane fact that all women, once having permitted the lover to be free with them, are the same (60). Such a blatant truism is a direct threat to the pleasure and excitement which Bellmour experiences in the game of love. Even his attitude to Belinda is one which minimizes reality. Reminded by Sharper that she is "excessively foppish and affected," he quickly depersonalizes and explains away her faults by attributing them to the rest of her sex and by concentrating upon the fortune she brings with her (41). But he also possesses a good nature, shown particularly in his concern for Heartwell. In planning the mock ceremony between the old lecher and Silvia, he

tells Lucy that "Heartwell is my Friend; and tho' he may be blind, I must not see him fall into the snare, and unwittingly marry a Whore" (98). T. H. Fujimura's statement that Bellmour, unlike Horner and Dorimant, bears no malice in his heart is valid, but the same critic's belief that Bellmour is without a trace of disillusionment is questionable (166).

A benevolent view of human nature is discernible in the treatment given to Heartwell, particularly in the scene which takes place outside Silvia's house. What is significant here is that Heartwell is fully aware of his folly and the nature of the internal conflict. It is this self-knowledge, when the ridiculous becomes inexorably part of the pathetic, which turns Heartwell into something more than the conventional superannuated rakes like Old Bellair and Sir Timothy Tawdrey. Heartwell struggles unsuccessfully to overcome his passion for Silvia and, torn like "an Old Lawyer, between two Fees," and a "young Wench, betwixt pleasure and reputation," he rushes headlong into the house to lose the apprehension of danger (63). At that moment, Heartwell is seen at once as the lecherous old hypocrite and the proverbial lamb being led to the slaughter. Congreve's ability to view Heartwell with this detachment enables him to include and acknowledge the validity of both responses. For one brief moment, Congreve captures the quintessential experience of life itself, what Bonamy Dobrée refers to as "the deepest disharmonies in man's nature" (126).

A humane attitude is also detected behind the characterization of the basically good-natured and naive Fondlewife, who contrasts with the odious and vicious Pinchwife. Vainlove points to the dual aspect of Fondlewife when he describes him as a "kind of Hungril Zealot, sometimes very precise and peevish: But I have seen him pleasant enough in his way; much addicted to Jealousie, but more to Fondness: So that as he is often Jealous without a Cause, he's as often satisfied without Reason" (40). As with Heartwell, he is aware of the traps which life presents and he, too, attempts to reconcile his reason with his passion. He realizes that he is unable to satisfy Laetitia's sexual needs and that she may be forced to seek pleasure elsewhere, and he wrestles between the necessity to leave her alone in order to further a business project and the desire to stay and protect her against would-be seducers. Although he is willing to forego the five-hundred pounds which the business entails, he is finally overcome by Laetitia's affected protestations of fidelity. Much of the ridicule is directed towards their incompatibility, but the main force of the satire is directed towards the lecherous pursuits of Bellmour and Laetitia. In a world where fondness is exploited and powerless against the cleverer tactics of the young, the only thing left for the helpless Fondlewife to do is to force himself into believing the best of his wife.

Congreve's first play, then, reveals the strong influence

of the Restoration comic tradition. The structure and the design of the plot, with the emphasis on variety and intrigue, and the predominantly witty and cynical attitude expressed towards love and marriage, follow closely the spirit of Restoration comedy. Heartwell's concluding speech succeeds in unifying the five different strands of action as well as the major thematic concerns, while the last line gives to the play a semblance of a moral purpose. But coming as this does at the end of a play which spreads the attention over different but equally prominent groups and which concentrates on so many different follies and vices, it all but fails to establish a moral norm. As such, the play fulfils Dryden's dictum, expressed in the Preface to An Evening's Love, that "the first end of comedy is delight, and instruction only the second."[10] But it must also be acknowledged that several of the characters indicate Congreve's critical and creative use of traditional material and reveal a less cynical and more benevolent attitude towards human nature. What Congreve gives us in The Old Bachelor is, therefore, not merely another Restoration comedy, but a play which suggests an almost imperceptible movement towards that kind of drama which comes into being in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

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10. Ker, I, 143.

IV

THE DOUBLE DEALER

The Double Dealer, first performed in November of 1693, is so different in plot structure, theme and characterization from The Old Bachelor that it soon becomes evident that Congreve is approaching comedy from a viewpoint more readily associated with eighteenth-century comedy. The success of the first play may be attributed to the fact that Congreve gave to the audience what it desired and expected - a series of different plots which deal with the witty and cynical exposé of love and marriage expressed by familiar Restoration characters. But the voice now heard in The Double Dealer is far more somber, for the play deals almost exclusively with "secret Villany" (203). The two main characters are thorough-going villains whose malignant treachery sharply differentiates them from the young couple's passive virtue. The result is that the ominous presence of evil and the severe satirical treatment of violent intrigue and ruthless passion tend to dominate the lighter comic scenes. Deviating as much as it does from the Restoration tradition, it is not surprising that its reception was not as favorable as that given to the first comedy. In his letter to William Walsh, Dryden states that the play "is much censurd by the greater part of the

Town .... The women thinke he has exposd their Bitchery too much; and the Gentlemen, are offended ... for the discovery of their follyes: and the way of their Intrigues under the notion of Friendship to their Ladyes Husbands."[11]

For more aesthetic reasons, later critics also feel uneasy with the play, believing that the comic framework is threatened by the presence of elements more conducive to tragedy - such as the treacherous behavior and melodramatic speeches of Maskwell and Lady Touchwood. Lord Macaulay complains in the "Comic Dramatists of the Restoration" that there is "something strangely revolting in the way in which a group that seems to belong to the house of Laius or of Pelops is introduced into the midst of the Brisks, Froths, Carelesses, and Plyants" (587). For similar reasons, Norman Holland in The First Modern Comedies calls the play "a sophomore slump" (149). It can also be argued that the moral flavor of the play may be partly explained in terms of the growing influence that the didactic theories concerning tragedy were to exert on comedy and which Steele was later to bring to bear on his comedies.

Yet The Double Dealer was vigorously defended by Congreve's literary contemporaries. Dryden, who obviously

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11. Hodges, Letters and Documents, 95-96.

experienced no sense of incongruity, refused to alter his opinion of the play after it had been attacked by the audience, affirming that "My verses, which you will find before it, were written before the play was acted. But I neither alterd them nor do I alter my opinion of the play ...."[12] In these verses Dryden acclaims Congreve as his successor and worthy heir to such great comic writers as Shakespeare, Jonson, Fletcher, Etherege and Wycherley (123). The author of A Comparison between the two Stages (1702) also defends the play in terms of the comic rather than the tragic genre, stating that he believes it "to be among the most correct and regular Comedies: Mr. C. intended it so, and it cost him unusual Labour to do't."[13] And the play's epigraph, "Interdum tamen, vocem Comoedia tollit," taken from that section of Horace's Ars Poetica which discusses stylistic decorum, indicates that Congreve himself was fully aware and felt justified in expanding the convention of comedy. A willingness to follow this flexibility and to exercise that moderation characteristic of Dryden's best criticism may solve many of these aesthetic "problems" which invariably arise from too rigid a preconception of the spirit and nature of comedy. Consequently, a more useful approach would be that which considers the play as a radical movement away from

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12. Hodges, Letters and Documents, 96.

13. [Charles Gildon], ed. S. B. Wells (Princeton, 1942), 38.

the Restoration mode. Once again, the plot, theme and characterization reveal to what extent Congreve's second comedy reflects and anticipates many trends associated with eighteenth-century comedy.

With the growing demand for a more overtly moral drama, the plot structure of eighteenth-century comedy becomes less diffuse. The titles now point to the central action of the plays and so relate directly to the moral problems raised in the major plots. A couple of Cibber's plays illustrate this tendency towards greater cohesion. The Careless Husband (1704) and The Lady's Last Stake (1707) deal with the moral relationship between husband and wife and with the husband's sudden reformation through the power of his wife's goodness. In the first, the title specifically refers to Sir Charles Easy's imprudent behavior with his wife's woman Edging and his discovery by his wife, asleep without his periwig alongside his mistress in two easy chairs. Taking a steinkirk from Edging's neck, Lady Easy lays it gently over her husband's head, and this leads to his final submission to the conquering virtue of his wife. In the second, the name relates to Lady Wronglove's last resort to sweetness and tenderness in her successful effort to win back her errant husband.

Similarly, the title of Congreve's play relates to the main action. It refers to the double-dealing of the

machiavellian Maskwell and to his attempts to discredit Mellefont and to marry Cynthia. The structure of the play follows Maskwell's rise and fall and the opposite movement in the fortunes of the young couple. Congreve's comments in the Dedication to the play indicate quite clearly the extent to which the didactic purpose governs the structure. He states that:

> I design'd the Moral first, and to that Moral, I invented the Fable .... I made the plot as strong as I could, because it was single, and I made it single, because I would avoid confusion and was resolved to preserve the three Unities of the Drama, which I have visibly done to the utmost severity. (119)

And he goes on to say that he has taken particular care to avoid "Smuttiness and Bawdy" (121). It is precisely such direction and emphasis and the eschewal of bawdy which are seen by Arthur Sherbo in English Sentimental Drama as important characteristics of eighteenth-century sentimental comedy, when the dramatist starts out with a clearly defined end in mind which is not "permitted to be eclipsed for any length of time by other considerations" (100).

The usual plot pattern of eighteenth-century comedy is composed of a serious main plot and comic subplot. A sharper differentiation than in Restoration comedy is made between the characters who move on the two levels of action, between the exemplary characters and their moral adversaries on the one hand, and the Restoration comic types on the other. The result

is that there is a greater clarity of moral focus and an intensification of the play's seriousness. In Cibber's Love's Last Shift, the main plot deals with the serious conflict between the virtuous Amanda and the errant Loveless, while the subplot involves the fop Sir Novelty Fashion and the witty quartet of lovers. Vanbrugh's The Provoked Wife (1697) deals with the marital troubles between Lady Brute and her husband, to which are subordinated the gay couple, Heartfree and Belinda. The distinction between the two levels of action is even more evident in Steele's The Conscious Lovers. The main action involves Bevil, the man of sense, and the virtuous Indiana who both, as Steele states in "Spectator" No.65, demonstrate "good manners, good sense, and common honesty" (I,342). Structurally related to them are the gentleman merchant Mr. Sealand, who is no longer the cit of Restoration comedy, and the honest and loyal servant Humphrey, who lacks the deceitful ways of his Restoration predecessors. The minor action includes a modified version of the gay couple, the spirited Myrtle and Lucinda, the pedantic coxcomb Cimberton, the parvenue Mrs. Sealand, and the humorous rather than witty servants, Tom and Phillis.

In The Double Dealer, the main plot deals with the conflict between the laudable Mellefont and Cynthia and the reprehensible Maskwell and Lady Touchwood. Such familiar

Restoration characters as the uxorious husband and belligerent wife, the foppish coxcomb and learned lady, and the witwoud, are found respectively in the Plyants, the Froths and Brisk - all of whom are relegated to the subplots. A résumé of the plot illustrates the concentration of the play's central issues and the subsequent subordination of the lighter comic elements.

The play opens with the final preparation for the marriage which is to take place the following day between Mellefont and Cynthia. But Mellefont's aunt, Lady Touchwood, plans to prevent the marriage in order to revenge herself on her nephew for spurning her amorous overtures. To counteract this, Mellefont has asked Maskwell to keep a close watch over his aunt, unaware that aunt and friend are lovers and intend to ruin him. Maskwell and Lady Touchwood first plan to work through Cynthia's stepmother, Lady Plyant, by making her believe that Mellefont has a secret passion for her so that she will oppose the marriage in order to keep Mellefont for herself. The next act finds the young lovers debating the possibility and nature of marriage, oblivious to Maskwell's treachery. Lady Plyant, now convinced of Mellefont's love, turns her husband against the match. His first plot successful, Maskwell then proceeds with his next. He now convinces Mellefont that he has become Lady Touchwood's confidant by plotting with her to disinherit Mellefont and by agreeing to marry Cynthia himself, a half-truth in that Maskwell hopes to marry Cynthia without

Lady Touchwood's knowledge. The act concludes with Maskwell's soliloquy which reveals his true intentions, and in which he praises cunning and hypocrisy and relegates wisdom and honesty to fools. The next step is to discredit Mellefont with Lord Touchwood, and this is accomplished in the following act by Lady Touchwood who affirms to her husband that she has been the innocent victim of Mellefont's wanton gallantry.

Meanwhile, Mellefont's friend Careless, through his affected admiration for Lady Plyant, has been successful in restoring Mellefont's good name with Cynthia's parents. Act IV then opens with Cynthia's remarks to Mellefont on their helplessness in the face of such intrigues, but he wrongly believes that he can still overcome the malice and hostility of his aunt with the help of Maskwell. Doubtful of Mellefont's success, Cynthia vows to marry him or nobody else. The scene ends with success for Mellefont as far as the Plyants are concerned but failure with Lord Touchwood, for Maskwell successfully gains his favor by trapping Mellefont into a compromising situation with his aunt. Lord Touchwood then promises to disinherit Mellefont and begins to arrange a marriage between Maskwell and Cynthia. With Mellefont's fortunes at their lowest and Maskwell's at their highest, the last act resolves the complications and brings to a close the intrigues of the two villains. Maskwell plans to elope with Cynthia as he realizes that Lady Touchwood will never consent to the marriage. It is

at this point that he over-reaches himself. Cynthia's suspicions are aroused by his last-minute alterations in planning her elopement with Mellefont, and she now confides in Careless who has always entertained doubts about Maskwell's loyalty. From behind a screen, Cynthia and Lord Touchwood overhear Maskwell and Lady Touchwood discussing their plots and, consequently, Maskwell's last plan misfires, and his villainy, together with that of his partner, is exposed. After blessing the impending marriage between Mellefont and Cynthia, Lord Touchwood concludes with the moral:

> Let secret Villany from hence be warn'd;
> Howe're in private, Mischiefs are conceiv'd,
> Torture and shame attend their open Birth:
> Like Vipers in the Womb, base Treach'ry lies,
>
> Still gnawing that, whence first it did arise;
> No sooner born, but the Vile Parent dies. (203)

The themes of eighteenth-century comedy are also governed by the desire to combat the moral ambiguity of Restoration comedy. The main plot of Cibber's Love's Last Shift is designed to show to advantage "Neglected virtue" (310). Even Vanbrugh's The Relapse (1696), written to parody Cibber's play, concludes by revealing the power that Amanda's constancy has over her would-be seducer Worthy. Congreve's comments in the Dedication to The Double Dealer, already quoted, reflect this movement away from the ambiguously moral comedy of the earlier tradition. At the opening of the eighteenth century,

the dramatists demonstrate an increasing tendency to moralize their plays. In the Preface to The Twin Rivals (1702), Farquhar states that the play shows that "an English Comedy, may Answer the strictness of Poetical Justice" (286). In the Preface to The Lying Lover (1703), Steele claims that he has written a comedy "which might be no improper entertainment in a Christian Commonwealth" (101), and in the Dedication to The Tender Husband (1705), he states that his aim was not to be offensive (193). Such views continue well into the century. The Conscious Lovers was written to teach by "example and precept," and in the Dedication to The Man of Taste (1735), the Rev. James Miller remarks that the play is "to entertain the Town, without giving Offence either to Virtue, Decency, or Good-Manners."

With the greater emphasis placed upon virtue, the thematic conflicts tend to be between moral absolutes. Amanda's strict virtue opposes the libertinism of her husband Loveless in Cibber's play and Worthy's gallantry in Vanbrugh's. In Vanbrugh's The Provoked Wife, the fidelity of Lady Brute contrasts sharply with the debauched behavior of her husband, as does that of Lady Easy with her husband in Cibber's The Careless Husband. As a result of such conflicts and the subsequent stress placed on the patient suffering of the wives and on the monstrous treatment they receive from their respective husbands or potential seducers, there is evoked the requisite amount of pity for distressed virtue, admiration for innate moral excellence, and indignation for villainy. It is on such occasions when virtue confronts immorality

that the comedies tend towards sentimentality and that the dramatist offers the maximum opportunity for the audience to experience the joy at witnessing the sudden reformation of the rake and the rewards due to goodness - even if this means sacrificing plot and character consistency.

Many of these plays exemplify such sentimentalism, but Farquhar's The Beaux Stratagem (1707) may serve as a classic example. At the end of the play, Aimwell suddenly stops being a rake and becomes a man of feeling. Converted by the beauties of Dorinda's mind and person, he feels repentant for his earlier life and regrets having deceived her. By virtue of his conscience he develops from fortune-hunter and philanderer to sentimental hero, and as a result of female virtue he moves from cynicism to benevolence. Although Dorinda had earlier hesitated to accept him, she now rushes into his arms when he confesses that he had only been interested in her fortune. The sudden announcement that his elder brother is dead means that he is heir to an estate that he had earlier pretended to possess and, despite their sentimental display to each other, they remain incongruously impervious to the news of the death. "Virtue" is immediately rewarded, for Aimwell gets the rich and beautiful wife he had been searching for, and Dorinda has a real lord for a husband. Truth is, therefore, dispensed with in order to extol morality and to produce sentimental effects.

The theme of The Double Dealer is also governed by the play's didactic purpose, which is to show the self-destructive nature of "secret Villany" and the rewards awaiting "Virtue and wrong'd Innocence" (203). The main conflict is between moral blacks and whites, between the "base Treach'ry" of Maskwell and Lady Touchwood and the innate goodness of Mellefont and Cynthia. Sentimental effects are produced at the conclusion of the play. Although Maskwell does not repent, he "hangs down his head" as he leaves the stage, an action which suggests shame. And Mellefont and Cynthia achieve happiness not because of their ability to outwit their adversaries but because the thematic development of the play is governed by the questionable dictates of poetic justice. In intensifying the moral focus and the play's seriousness in this way and in his treatment of the two opposing groups, Congreve reveals his critical and creative treatment of the Restoration mode; and in veering sharply from the earlier tradition, he reflects and anticipates many characteristics and attitudes of eighteenth-century comedy. An examination of these four characters in the serious plots readily demonstrates further affinities with eighteenth-century comedy.

Both Maskwell and Lady Touchwood exemplify the monstrous power of malignant evil. Maskwell's behavior is controlled by the intellect while Lady Touchwood's is motivated

by blind passion. It would be perverse to ignore their affinity with the villains of Restoration tragedy, but many of their traits are also those found in the figures of the rake and rejected mistress of Restoration comedy, and Congreve's attitude towards them is less ambiguous than was that of his predecessors. Wit and gaiety, the more attractive qualities of the rake, and the valid motive for revenge which usually justifies the hostility of the rejected mistress to her erstwhile lover, are noticeably absent. Consequently, the innate viciousness of Maskwell and Lady Touchwood are thrown into focus, and the moral indignation which they evoke is not tempered by any other considerations. By using two of the character-types familiar in Restoration comedy and turning them into personifications of vice, Congreve points directly to those invidious qualities which had been for so long part of the earlier comic tradition. Congreve strips these two characters of their charm, gaiety, and sympathy and reveals their latent immorality, their ruthless passion, their lechery and their cruel egotism.

This change in attitude towards the characters of Restoration comedy also typifies the comedies written at the turn of the century and indicates a change in moral sensibilities. Gallantry, which was the chief preoccupation of the Restoration hero, is now unequivocally condemned as vice. Vizard, in Farquhar's The Constant Couple (1699), complains that "We are all

so reform'd, that Gallantry is taken for Vice" (96), and in the same play Angelica carefully distinguishes between gallantry and love (120). Another of Farquhar's rakes, Roebuck in Love and a Bottle (1699), suprisingly complains that "I begin to think Whoring Scandalous, 'tis grown so Mechanical" (55). For John Palmer, writing in The Comedy of Manners, Roebuck is the "Restoration gentleman at point of being redeemed to a reluctant and uncertain belief in the virtues of monogamy" (258). And now, referring specifically to the plays of Vanbrugh, Palmer states that:

> Promiscuous gallantry is no longer a matter of course - the proviso of a well-regulated career. In the plays of Vanbrugh it is a yielding to temptation. Adultery is no longer treated in the dry light of comedy. It is passionate; it takes to itself fine names. It is a comedy of heaving bosoms, and seductive phrase. Vanbrugh, in fact, killed the comedy of sex for the English theatre .... the comic treatment of adultery was doomed from the moment when in The Relapse, Berinthia was borne off by Loveless, faintly protesting, in a bed-chamber scene which persists to this day as the scène à faire of English comedy. (224)

Similarly, Maskwell's career is no longer viewed as one of carefree libertinism and epicureanism, but one of great callousness. Through Maskwell's double-dealing, the egotism, libertinism and cynicism of the rake are exposed to reveal their terrible power to destroy and corrupt. There is very little in Maskwell of the verbal wit, charm and vivacity of Etherege's Dorimant or of Congreve's own Bellmour. Only on one occasion with

Mellefont does he partake in anything resembling raillery, and then it is used to deceive Mellefont (156). All his intellectual ingenuity is channeled into outwitting friend and foe alike, his high spirits are affected to dupe Mellefont, and his vivacity is a devilish delight in causing anguish and agony among his companions.

Maskwell's philosophy is expressed in his soliloquy which concludes the second act (150): "who searches strictly his own mind,/May so much Fraud and Power of Basness find." So prevalent is this belief and so familiar is he with his own nature that "he walks unstartled from the Mirrour, and streight forgets the hideous form" (136). The only way to succeed in the world is to meet mankind on its own terms, with cunning and hypocrisy, for "dissimulation is the only Art, not to be known from Nature" (150). His success comes from the fact that his face, words and accents are the same whether he lies or speaks the truth. Honesty is seen by him as an enemy because it betrays the person who has it. Those who have it, he argues, are gudgeons to be exploited so that he may thrive. All those virtues upon which an orderly society is based - duty, piety, gratitude, and fidelity - must be dispensed with, particularly in the game of love, for love is like death, the universal leveller of mankind, it "sets Men right upon their first Foundations" (150). And so he is able to destroy in one minute "What, to Rebuild, will a whole Age

Employ" (138). The world which he in fact represents, closely resembles that visualized by Hobbes in Book III of the Leviathan, a world in which men "are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man" (113).

Maskwell's awareness of his own baseness facilitates his understanding of Lady Touchwood's character and his manipulation of honest people like Mellefont and Lord Touchwood, both of whom are turned into unwitting victims of his selfish desires. All of this is accomplished by his ability to confuse truth with falsehood so that the victims believe he is lying when he is speaking the truth and vice versa. Only too well aware that his mistress Lady Touchwood is using him to satisfy her own thirst for revenge and love, he gains the upperhand by making her the unwitting accomplice in his plans to marry Cynthia, for Lady Touchwood is only party to the first half of his plot to discredit and disinherit Mellefont. Whenever Lady Touchwood begins to doubt his motives and goals, he has no difficulty in appeasing her by referring her to their mutual interest in Mellefont's ruin. But having lost his appetite for her, when pleasure has become a duty, he does not hesitate to cheat her in order to further his own plans. Maskwell so fully comprehends her that when he is confronted with her accusation and anger over his affected "Ardor and Ecstasy," he knows full well that the dagger she threatens him with will not be used. To the end of the play, he is able to convince her of his undying

love and devotion.

In his relationships with Mellefont and Lord Touchwood, Maskwell pretends to sacrifice himself and his own reputation in the name of friendship and loyalty. He takes advantage of the honest Mellefont by frankly revealing to his unsuspecting victim the plot he is contriving with Lady Touchwood, believing that there is:

> No mask like open Truth to cover Lies,
> As to go naked is the best disguise. (190)

Consequently, when he reveals to Mellefont his plans to discredit him and to marry Cynthia, he is speaking the truth, but Mellefont is made to believe that this is only part of Maskwell's plan to gain Lady Touchwood's confidence. In turn, Maskwell also works upon Lord Touchwood's doubts and anger at Mellefont's alleged gallantry to his wife; and so he, too, becomes an easy tool for Maskwell to manipulate. In a series of contrived soliloquies, Maskwell makes sure that Lord Touchwood believes that he dislikes betraying Mellefont's "treachery" and overhears his desire to marry Cynthia. This wish is finally granted by the disappointed but grateful uncle and is received by Maskwell with the requisite amount of false humility and ingratiation.

Lady Touchwood has the same cunning as Maskwell, although she distinguishes it from his calculated villainy:

> O I have Excuses, Thousands for my Faults; Fire in my Temper, Passions in my Soul, apt to every provocation; oppressed at once with Love, and with Despair. But a sedate, a thinking Villain, whose Black Blood runs temperately bad, what excuse can clear? one, who is no more moved with the reflection of his Crimes, than of his Face; but walks unstartled from the Mirrour, and streight forgets the hideous form. (156-36)

But her own moral depravity is well exemplified in the Iago-like method she employs to fill her husband's mind with doubts and suspicions of Mellefont. Her quick wit is seen when Mellefont, unaware that the scene is planned to give the "Ocular Proof" to Lord Touchwood, discovers her alone with Maskwell. As soon asshe realizes that her husband is present, she quickly moves from the role of the penitent, which she has been playing to deceive Mellefont, to that of the wronged and innocent victim of his incestuous passion. By this means she extricates herself from a highly unexpected and dangerous situation. It is, in fact, Lady Touchwood's "damn'd penetrating head" which momentarily unnerves Maskwell, for she quickly detects his changed attitude towards her, and she realizes that his ready answers to her justified accusations show only too well that he is prepared for them. But blinded by her passion for revenge, she succumbs to his protestations of love.

Just as Maskwell's wickedness has no specific motivation other than inborn baseness, so Lady Touchwood's

villainy springs from a morally unjustifiable desire to ruin Mellefont. She has not even the excuse of the rejected mistress in Restoration comedy, such as Mrs. Loveit in The Man of Mode or Silvia in The Old Bachelor, that she has been used and then discarded by her lover, because Mellefont has rebuffed her addresses. When Mellefont attempts to reason with her, pleading "Honour and nearness of Blood," she can only resort to violence and curses (130). Her feelings for him, in addition to being incestuous, do not arise from anything that may be termed love. Confiding in Maskwell, she reveals the nature of her passion: "Yet my Soul knows I hate him too: Let him but once be mine, and next immediate Ruin seize him" (137). It is to this end that she allows Maskwell to become her lover, and he is quick to point out to her that she only does so to accomplish her own plan: "Your Zeal I grant was Ardent, but misplac'd; there was Revenge in view; that Womans Idol had defil'd the Temple of the God, and Love was made a Mock-Worship" (137). Driven by their egotism, both Lady Touchwood and Maskwell use each other and others to satisfy their own desires until they over-reach themselves and are exposed.

Using the traits of the rake and rejected mistress of Restoration comedy as the bases for the characterization of Maskwell and Lady Touchwood, Congreve turns them into the villains of the piece and uses them to portray the vicious

impulses which inhabit the mind and heart of man. Diametrically opposed to them are the passive goodness and virtue of Mellefont and Cynthia, whose thematic function is not to illustrate so much the active principle of goodness as to evoke pity for distressed virtue and to sharpen the moral focus. As such, they relate to the men and women of sense which were to become so prevalent in eighteenth-century comedy.

It has already been shown in connection with Maskwell's character that the change in taste produced a different attitude towards gallantry and to the figure of the Restoration rake. At the turn of the century, there is also discernible a less cynical and more benevolent concept of human nature. The reformation of those husbands mentioned in earlier paragraphs indicates the increasing tendency to move away from the character of the libidinous and incorrigible young gallant of Restoration comedy. The Elder Worthy in Love's Last Shift is honorably in love with Hilaria, as is Lord Morelove with Lady Betty in The Careless Husband. In The Provoked Wife, Heartfree declares that "to be capable of loving one" is doubtless better than possessing a thousand (176). Worthy, in Farquhar's The Recruiting Officer, remains loyal to Melinda, and the hero Captain Plume states that "I am not that Rake that the World imagines; I have got an Air of Freedom, which People mistake for Lewdness in me, as they mistake Formality in others for Religion" (82).

An important contributing factor to the new attitude towards women was the change in the tastes of the female members of the audience. In "Shadwell, the Ladies, and the Change in Comedy" (1948), J. H. Smith states that the period between 1660 and 1675 offered no evidence that the ladies found fault with the offerings of the comic writers (27), but by the late 80's, the dramatists became aware that their plays should avoid much of the bawdy characteristic of Restoration comedy in order to please the ladies. In the Prologue to The Banditti (1686), Thomas D'Urfey assures them that he has avoided lewdness and smuttiness, and in the Prologue to The She-Gallants (1696), George Granville feels that he has to apologise to them for the play's briskness. The Dedication to The Double Dealer also indicates Congreve's attempts to avoid "Smuttiness and Bawdy" and his awareness that he has offended some of the ladies (121). In the Dedication to The Careless Husband, Cibber says that the play was written to provide fit entertainment for the ladies (3-4). As a result of this influence, eighteenth-century comedy manifests a new attitude towards women, for it places less stress on their frailty and greater emphasis upon their virtue. In The Provoked Wife, Constant affirms that "Women are not naturally lewd" (175), and the "new" females confirm this belief. Belinda in the same play is admired by Heartfree not for her cynicism and wit but for her humility (162). The new heroine does not always possess that esprit of her predecessors, for she is more consciously moral,

more aware of her right to admonish others, as is Angelica in Farquhar's The Constant Couple when she reprimands Sir Harry Wildair (120) and Alderman Smuggler (151).

Both trends culminate in Steele's The Conscious Lovers where the young couple represent "good manners, good sense, and common honesty." Both Bevil Junior and Indiana display a sensibility which lacks both humor and gaiety as they sententiously give vent to their feelings about friendship (301), the difference between love and esteem (306), the pleasure of giving and doing good deeds (310), and conscious honor and innocence (312). Bevil, as Indiana points out, makes virtue fashionable (304), and he is so self-conscious of his honor that he feels that he is not very good at even "honest dissimulation" (288). Steele's sentimental morality continues up to the comedies of Goldsmith and Sheridan. Despite the fact that these influences are now relegated to the subplots in The Good Natur'd Man (1768) and The Rivals (1775), their presence indicates the tenacious hold that these values had on both the dramatists and the audience in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

Although Mellefont and Cynthia are not as vapid as Steele's young couple, they nevertheless possess a moral sensibility which relates them to eighteenth-century comedy. In many respects, Mellefont is the antithesis of the Restoration rake. So different is he from earlier heroes that the audience took him to be a gull and a fool. In defending the character

against the audience Congreve, in the play's Dedication, states that Mellefont is an "Open-hearted Honest Man" (120). He has, in fact, none of the ingenuity and immorality of the Restoration gallant. He lacks the artfulness and resourcefulness of Bellmour in The Old Bachelor, and his attempts to combat the wiles of Lady Touchwood meet with disaster. He is successful in outwitting Lady Plyant only with the help of Careless. His ability to discern the follies of his acquaintances extends to those which are overt, such as Lord Froth's perverse and nonsensical attitude towards laughter and wit (133). Confronted with the more subtle treachery of Maskwell, he is both an innocent and naive individual. In his scene with Lady Plyant, dumbfounded virtue is faced with hypocrisy, and although he sees through her affectation he is powerless to act (146-48). Neither has he sufficient wit to extricate himself from the compromising situation with Lady Touchwood. He is left speechless and frustrated by her superior ingenuity and has to be content with being dismissed as a madman (186-87). Although Bellmour in The Old Bachelor is not dealing with a Maskwell or a Lady Touchwood when he fools Fondlewife, one feels that he would have little trouble in slipping out of the trap set for Mellefont by Lady Touchwood. But Mellefont is basically an honest man who is out of his depth in such intrigues, an individual who is more inclined to see only the good qualities in people. He sees Brisk as a "good natur'd Coxcomb" (129) and Sir Paul Plyant as "an old fond Husband" (130).

It is his essentially good nature and his inability to affect partness or formality which attract Cynthia to him (139). Cynthia's own goodness is seen most evidently in her defence of Mellefont against Lady Froth's accusations that he lacks the "Belle-air or Brilliant of Mr. Brisk" (139), in her sincere devotion to Mellefont, and in her refusal to believe the false charges made against him. In this respect she is more perceptive than Mellefont. Her moral sensibility enables her to see through those who, because of their quality and education, deceive the world. If the world does not approve, she argues, they find satisfaction in and amongst themselves. The tone of regret detected in the conclusion of her soliloquy reveals her reluctant acceptance of the world she knows:

> If Happiness in Self-content is plac'd,
> The Wise are Wretched, and Fools only Bless'd. (167)

She regrets too her father's uxoriousness and stupidity (172), and condemns those, like the Froths and Brisk, who "render other people contemptible in exposing their Infirmities" (165). In these frequest asides, there is not found that smugness discerned in the speeches of Indiana because Cynthia's remarks originate from a feeling of disappointment and sorrow rather than from a sense of moral superiority. But they do point to a more benevolent and a less cynical attitude towards human nature. As J. H. Smith remarks in The Gay Couple, with reference to her soliloquy at the end of the third act, Cynthia is brought perilously close to the "woman of sense" type (151).

With the exception of the relationship between Rhodophil and Doralice in Dryden's Marriage à la Mode, there is in Restoration comedy little effort expended on seriously discussing the problems of post-marital life. The hostility of the males towards marriage expresses itself in their ridiculing the social convention and in their viewing it as an obstacle to their freedom. As a result of the double-standard, the antrimatrimonialism of the heroines, as Jean Gagen states in The New Woman: Her Emergence in English Drama, 1660-1730 (1954), is "simply an expedient pose - a necessary weapon to be used to capture males who glory too much in their own elusiveness" (145). But whether these attitudes are genuine or affected, the result is that the main emphasis is placed upon the battle of the sexes during courtship. Tired of the pre-marital love-chase by the end of the seventeenth century, the dramatists turned to concentrate more on the relationship between husband and wife, particularly the situation which deals with the errant husband returning to the straight and narrow path through the patience and virtue of his long-suffering wife. The debauched Loveless is reformed by the strict virtue of Amanda in Love's Last Shift, Sir Charles Easy is reclaimed through the kindness and understanding of Lady Easy in The Careless Husband, and Lord Wronglove through the tenderness of his wife in The Lady's Last Stake.

The relationship between Mellefont and Cynthia is one

which also differentiates them from the gay couple of Restoration comedy. Because they are already bethrothed, persuasion is not his aim and neither is evasiveness hers. Consequently, the customary battle of wits between the gay couple is noticeably absent. Except for two very brief scenes where they discuss their impending marriage and the apparent hopelessness of their situation, they rarely come together. But as their comments relate exclusively to marriage rather than to courtship and as their attitude towards marriage is based on mutual respect and love, they relate more readily to eighteenth-century comedy than to Restoration comedy.

Implicit in Mellefont's comments on marriage is the belief that its success or failure depends upon the individuals themselves.. Marriage only makes people foolish "when Two Fools meet, and their follyes are oppos'd" (142), but he never ridicules or questions the institution itself. Consequently, there is no trace in Mellefont of the cynicism which leads Wildblood, in An Evening's Love, to warn Jacinta that "if we were once married: those [premarital] gayeties are all nipt, and frost-bitten in the Marriage-bed" (263). And because Mellefont believes that success in marriage, as in the game of bowls,"depends entirely upon Judgment" (143), he experiences none of Bellmour's fears that he is committing himself to anything resembling a "lasting Durance" (112). What also distinguishes him from his predecessors is the conviction that postmarital life is not one of continuing struggle. For him, it is "a Friendly Tryal of Skill," after which the winnings

are shared, and so he does not share Vainlove's apprehension, and he has no desire to postpone his marriage, for he is quite prepared to elope with Cynthia (168). The song he has sung for her echoes his sentiments as it tells of another Cynthia who loses everything by not making the most of her chances (143). The song follows the popular "carpe diem" argument, but because of its context in the play, arising from their discussion on marriage, it relates less to the customary sexual pleasures of premarital love and more to marriage itself.

Cynthia's remarks on marriage are initially tinged with a pessimism which, however, springs not from a basically cynical or frivolous attitude towards life, but from a reflectiveness which is all too sensitive to the folly and villainy which surround her. It is directly after the scene in which the pert coxcomb, Brisk, spuriously flatters the self-centered Froths that Cynthia first reveals her doubts about marriage. She affirms that even a marriage between wits can render them as ridiculous as it does fools (142), and it is in this disenchanted frame of mine that she requests Mellefont, as Araminta asks Vainlove, to postpone their marriage. Success depends on accident, as in a game of cards, she states, when one must be the loser. In her second scene with Mellefont, her apprehension is seen to originate from the over-powerful sense that goodness is powerless in a world characterized by villainy; and her distress that Lady Touchwood's power will prevail leads her to declare that "it will never be a Match" (167).

Even the fact that they agree so well appears to be an ominous sign to her. Using a familiar conceit, she describes their situation as one which resembles parallel lines that never meet, and so she tells Mellefont that "we Hunt in Couple where we both pursue the same Game, but forget one another; and 'tis because we are so near that we don't think of coming together" (168).

But it is her sensitivity which also leads to the realization that it is the love relationship between them which is the determining factor in their marital fortunes. She suddenly becomes aware that there is no obstacle between them but their own fears, that they have "looked through the wrong end of the Perspective all this while" (168). And she finally comes over to Mellefont's belief that they should forget such matters as "Portion, Settlements and Joyntures" and that they marry for love. Despite Cynthia's initial doubt, her comments never approach Lydia's view in Love in a Wood, that marriage is an "insupportable bondage" (123), and her desire to delay their marriage is never an expedient pose used to trap Mellefont. Cynthia's seriousness and hesitation, therefore, are motivated by a moral awareness that allows her to question and then to accept marriage as a satisfactory conclusion to their courtship.

The conclusion of The Double Dealer also points to a less cynical attitude towards marriage. In Restoration comedy,

marriage is used as an arbitrary means to bring the play to a comic resolution, while the characters themselves view it with alarm, apprehension or indifference. In eighteenth-century comedy, marriage is viewed in more positive terms and is seen as a blessing rather than as an "insupportable bondage" or a "lasting Durance." In The Provoked Wife, Constant believes that marriage can be "the only Heaven on Earth" (176), and Mrs. Sullen in The Beaux Stratagem affirms that wedlock is "ordain'd by Heaven's Decree" (159). Lady Easy in The Careless Husband presents the extreme view when she states that while "a deserving husband is certainly our best happiness," marriage to even the worst husband has its advantages (90). In The Double Dealer, this more emotional and sentimental attitude is also found. As soon as Maskwell and Lady Touchwood have been exposed and suitably threatened with punishment, Lord Touchwood rewards the young couple's "Virtue and wrong'd Innocence" by bestowing upon them his blessings: "Unwearied Nights, and wishing Days attend you both; mutual Love, lasting Health, and Circling Joys, tread round each happy Year of your long Lives" (203). With marriage seen in terms of a reward for goodness, the more positive attitude towards marriage which is characteristic of eighteenth-century comedy is immediately recognized.

This investigation of the structural and thematic elements and the characterization of the main plot in The Double Dealer leads to the inescapable conclusion that the play bears

a marked resemblance to eighteenth-century comedy in both concept and effect. Its calculated plot and overtly didactic purpose, its simplified view of life expressed through the conflict between moral absolutes, its greater emphasis upon virtue and subsequent rewards, and its reversal of many Restoration donnés, particularly those involving the rake and marriage, all differentiate the play from the Restoration comic tradition.

Similar to the practice of eighteenth-century dramatists, Congreve divides the serious and the comic material. This division is felt by the distinction made between the characters who move on the two different levels of action. It has been seen that the main plot involves the conflict between couples who exemplify the two extremes of the moral scale. The subplot includes the familiar characters of Restoration comedy whose follies and actions afford a humorous counterpoint to those which take place in the main plot. All of these characters are based on stereotypes from Restoration comedy, but several of them also reveal a more indulgent attitude than is found in those of Congreve's predecessors.

Sir Paul and Lady Plyant illustrate that unnatural relationship between husband and wife in which the normal roles are reversed, that of the uxorious husband and the belligerent wife. In Etherege's She Would If She Could, Sir Oliver Cockwood is forced to wear his "Penitential Suit" following his evening's carousal in the town and to submit to being locked at home by

his wife as an added part of his punishment. Their incompatibility also extends to their sexual life, for Lady Cockwood complains that while her husband may play "the Spark abroad" he is "an abominable hypocrite at home" (100). Although Sir Paul is more tractable than Sir Oliver and Lady Plyant more inclined towards affectation than Lady Cockwood, the Plyant's marriage follows a similar pattern.

Sir Paul is made to allow his wife to manage his finances, to open his correspondence, and he undergoes her reprimands in private and in public. When he attempts to assert his own independence and authority, she is amazed at what she considers his "impertinence" (163). He erroneously believes that his wife's attitude towards sex stems from an austere idealism, and so he surrenders to her merest whim. Careless and Mellefont relate the indignities and humiliation that he has to experience in order to satisfy his wife:

> Careless. ... he has lain for whole nights together upon the Stairs, before her Chamber-door; and ... the first Favour he receiv'd from her, was a piece of an old Scarlet Petticoat for a Stomacher; which, since the day of his Marriage, he has, out of a piece of Gallantry, converted into a Night-Cap, and wears it still with much Solemnity on his anniversary Wedding-night.
>
> Mellefont. That I have seen, with the Ceremony thereunto belonging - for on that night he creeps in at the Bed's Feet like a gull'd Bassa that has married a Relation of the Grand Signior's, and that night he has his arms at liberty. Did she not tell you at what distance

> she keeps him. He has confess'd to me that but at some certain times, that is I suppose when she apprehends being with Child, he never has the privilege of using the familiarity of a Husband with his Wife. He was once given to scrambling with his hands and sprawling in his Sleep; and ever since she has him swaddled up in Blankets, and his hands and feet swath'd down, and so put to bed; and there he lies with a great Beard, like a Russian Bear upon a drift of Snow. (157-58)

Sir Paul is torn between the desire to respect his wife's wishes and the need to father an heir. Unable to make any headway with his "impenetrable Wife" (145), for he is allowed no more familiarity with her person than with his own mother (162), he is forced to ask Careless to plead his case to her. But the response to him is made more complex because any inherent sympathy which his relationship with his wife may evoke is tempered by his grossness and selfishness. Cynthia's sensibility is offended when he directs at her his unseemly remarks about her becoming the mother of the heir which he cannot sire (173-74). And he is so intent on marrying Cynthia off for this purpose that Lord Touchwood foresees no difficulty in persuading him to agree to substitute Maskwell for Mellefont (189). But generally, Congreve's attitude is more tolerant to Sir Paul than is Etherege's contemptuous one to Sir Oliver. And similar to the treatment accorded to Fondlewife in The Old Bachelor, the main force of the satire is directed away from the husband to his wife, in this case to the intolerable and intolerant Lady Plyant.

Lady Plyant's indifference and insolence to her husband lead her to refuse Sir Paul his conjugal rights. She vowed when she married to die a maid (174), but her "nicety" does not extend beyond her husband, for she is an easy prey for any would-be lover. In this respect she may be identified with the vain and hypocritical superannuated coquettes of Restoration comedy who believe that they are irresistible to the young men of the beau monde. Lady Cockwood believes that the young Courtall and Freeman take her interest in them seriously, and Lady Flippant in Wycherley's Love in a Wood pretends an aversion to marriage which belies her interest in the opposite sex. All three also become objects of ridicule for the heroes. Unlike her predecessors, however, Lady Plyant is, as Mellefont observes, actually handsome and knows it (130); but while her fastidiousness fools her husband, her affectation is discerned by others. Mellefont knows that she is very silly although she thinks she has sense (130), and Lord Touchwood states that:

> I know my Lady Plyant has a large Eye, and wou'd centre every thing in her own Circle; 'tis not the first time she has mistaken Respect for Love, and made Sir Paul jealous of the Civility of an undesigning person, the better to bespeak his security in her unfeigned Pleasures. (151)

In the brilliantly comic scenes with Mellefont, Lady Plyant betrays her latent passion and hypocrisy, which she attempts to conceal behind a mask of decorum as she plays the

role of the honorable wife. In a manner and method which belies her concern for honor, virtue and religion, she discreetly offers herself to the dumbfounded Mellefont. But her attention is then quickly diverted to Careless who now plays the role of the whining lover to her précieuse mistress. To satisfy her conceit, she is willing to sacrifice her step-daughter's happiness and future and to cuckold her husband. As deceitful as she is conceited, she accuses her husband of disloyalty and unwarranted suspicion when he mistakenly reads a love-letter sent to her by Careless. She is thus able to turn to her own advantage an affair that might have been ruinous to her authoritarian hold over her husband (179-81). In many respects, Lady Plyant is a "lighter" version of Lady Touchwood. Both are driven by a desire that will, if necessary, dispense with all moral and marital principles. But while the extravagant manner of Lady Touchwood is part of her nature, to Lady Plyant it is the means by which she may artfully imply her looseness without overstepping the bounds of decorum.

The Froths bring together many characteristics of the fop and the learned lady who had become by the 1690's well-established character types. Lord Froth exemplifies most of the grotesqueries associated with foppery. His affected solemnity closely resembles the rigid formality of Lord Plausible

in Wycherley's The Plain Dealer, and he becomes as foolish as that "strached fop" (231) Don Diego in The Gentleman Dancing-Master. Similar also to Lord Plausible, who is attacked by Manly for his "decorums, supercilious forms, and slavish ceremonies" (375), Lord Froth is slave to rather than master of his ideas of gentility. His perverse attitude towards laughter stems from a false sense of "la belle air." He believes that "there is nothing more unbecoming a Man of Quality, than to Laugh ... 'tis such a Vulgar Expression of the Passion!" (132). He visits the theater only to distinguish himself from the "Commonalty, and mortify the Poets" who grow "so Conceited when any of their foolish Wit prevails upon the side Boxes" (133). Foolish vanity is another significant characteristic of the fop. In The Country Wife, Dorilant says of Sparkish that his opinion of himself is so good that "he can no more think the men laugh at him than that women jilt him" (256). Just as Sir Fopling Flutter, that "Pattern of modern Foppery" (200), does not like to be seen with "the rabble of the Town" (240), so Lord Froth disdains to be "pleased with what pleases the Croud!" "When I laugh, I always Laugh alone," he states, for "I laugh at no bodies Jest but my own, or a Lady's" (132).

Lord Froth's high opinion of himself is encouraged by his wife, who believes him to be the epitome of the truewit.

To her, he is a fine gentleman, a man of quality who has "nothing at all of the Common Air" (139). She proudly declares of him to Cynthia that "I may say he wants nothing, but a Blue Ribbon and a Star, to make him Shine, the very Phosphorous of our Hemisphere" (139). He kisses, for her sake, his own reflection in the pocket glass which he so assiduously carries about with him, and his wife describes this absurd gesture as "Gallantry to the last degree" (140). When she is faced with the sincerity of Mellefont, she only sees the mediocrity of a man who lacks "some distinguishing Quality, as for example, the Belle-air or Brilliant of Mr. Brisk; the Solemnity, yet Complaisance of my Lord, or something of his own, that should look a little Je-ne-scay-quoysh; he is too much a Mediocrity in my mind" (139).

Lady Froth's own foppishness and bad taste are accentuated by her pretense to learning and, because of it, she may be identified with the learned lady of Restoration comedy. In Aphra Behn's Sir Patient Fancy (1678), there is Lady Knowell, a caricature of the type, who knows her Greek, Latin and Italian and who cannot endure the "divine Homer" in translation (14), and in Thomas Wright's The Female Vertuoso's (1693), there are Lady Meanwell, Mrs. Lovewit and Catchat - all of whom are interested in psuedo-science. It is by virtue of her"learning" that she assumes superiority over the modest and sensible Cynthia. She composes "Songs, Elegies, Satyrs, Encomiums,

Panegyricks, Lampoons, Plays, or Heroick Poems" (138), and so fails to understand how Cynthia can be in love and not write (139). Her own compositions follow rigidly and blindly the rules of literary decorum gained, no doubt, from her reading of such fashionable critics as Bossu, Rapin and "Dacier upon Aristotle and Horace" (142). The result of such knowledge, however, is an offensive and puerile Heroic Poem (163-64) which refers to her coachman as a Charioteer and to her dairymaid as Thetis. Lord Froth is as proud of his wife's literary talents as she is of his foolish little gallantries. Excessively fond of each other, they are capable of judging themselves and others only in terms of their own false standards and bad taste. It is Cynthia who accurately sums up their relationship when she states to them that she thinks that they are "the happiest Couple in the World, for you are not only happy in one another, and when you are together, but happy in yourselves, and by your selves" (141).

But once again Congreve brings to the Restoration stereotypes a warmth which is not found in their predecessors. This is seen particularly in the Froth's domestic rather than in their public roles. Their affection for each other is genuine, and both are proud of their child Sapho, to the extent that Lady Froth is "accused" of spoiling the child and sending for it as many as seven times a day so that she may see the child and exhibit it to others (166). This surprising parental dimension in

their relationship helps to mitigate their follies. They offer a contrast to the baser follies and vices demonstrated in the main plot and, in their narrow but happy marriage and their pride for their child, they may be distinguished from their Restoration counterparts.

The Froths' pretence to wit closely relates them to the witwoud Brisk, whom they admire very much. Brisk shares with Sparkish in The Country Wife the belief that he is extremely witty, and with Dapperwit in Love in a Wood and with Major Oldfox in The Plain Dealer a pride in possessing literary talents. After making what he considers to be a pleasant turn, he smugly comments: "that's pretty and Metaphorical enough" (128), and his suggestions to Lady Froth for improving her poem only result in turning a bad piece of verse into a worse one (163-64). His erroneous concept of wit leads him to confuse it with malice (133), and so he commits the same mistake that Manly sees Novel and Oldfox as doing (493).

Lastly, there are Careless and Lord Touchwood, whose actions are motivated by a concern for fidelity and honor. Careless possesses the true wit that goes with the hero and his close friends, such as Dorimant's Medley in The Man of Mode and Horner's Dorilant in The Country Wife. But unlike his predecessors, Careless' "libertinism" is now one which is affected in order to serve Mellefont's honorable cause with

Cynthia and whose role as the whining lover, adopted to fool Lady Plyant, reveals her affectation and shallowness. The innate common sense, honesty and sense of justice of Lord Touchwood also distinguish him from the usual figure of the cuckold such as Sir Jasper Fidgett in The Country Wife and Fondlewife in The Old Bachelor. Lord Touchwood's fairness to Mellefont is exemplified when he first refuses to believe Lady Plyant's accusations against Mellefont, realizing as he does that Mellefont has "better Principles" and that she has a "large Eye" which mistakes "Respect for Love" (50-51). Even when his own wife insists that Mellefont has been disloyal, he demands "Ocular Proof" before taking action against him. His initial disappointment and anger over what he considers to be Mellefont's deceit, gives way to a strict sense of right and wrong as he exposes the villainy of his wife as readily as he sues for Mellefont's forgiveness. And the blessing which he bestows upon the young couple at the end of the play confirms his basically moral nature.

The moral distinction between the generations also points to another aspect of the play which deviates from Restoration practice. The conflict between the old and the young is, of course, as old as comedy itself. Aristotle states in the Rhetoric that the characteristics of old men are, for the most part, opposite to those of the young (134). But as Elisabeth Mignon points out in Crabbed Age and Youth, it is

the concentration of this conflict and the universal lack of reverence shown to the old which distinguish Restoration comedy from earlier comedy (4-5). The parents and the superannuated rakes and coquettes in Restoration comedy are inevitably as immoral as their younger counterparts whom they attack. But occasionally, older characters are introduced who exemplify a pre-Restoration world of moral values antithetical to the lax code advocated by the young people of the beau monde. When, in The Man of Mode, Dorimant assumes the role of "Mr. Courtage" to fool the elderly Lady Woodvil, it is his professed admiration for the "Forms and Civility of the last Age" which appeals to her (193). Congreve reverses the situation so that it is the offspring who exemplify a more moral attitude towards life. In The Double Dealer, the distinction between the two age groups is clear in the contrast which is established between the sensible young couple who represent a world which will gradually overshadow and finally eclipse the Restoration world inhabited by their foolish elders. And one may, without taking the analogy too far, perceive that the younger Froths are less immoral than the older Plyants. There is also the feeling that Congreve's attitude towards the older member, Lord Touchwood, anticipates the dignity which is going to be found later in eighteenth-century comedy. Cibber's Sir Friendly Moral, in The Lady's Last Stake, as his name implies, represents the fundamental goodness and understanding of human nature. By the time The

Conscious Lovers was written, the relationship between the two generations, between Sir John Bevil and Bevil Junior, is once again based on paternal and filial respect, such as Cynthia always shows to her parents.

It may be concluded, then, that The Double Dealer offers a marked contrast with Restoration comedy and with The Old Bachelor, and bears a close resemblance to eighteenth-century comedy in concept and effect. Any faults which the play may have are those which do not arise from the blending of the comic and tragic genres, but are those which mar much of eighteenth-century comedy and which originate from the dramatists' allowing all aspects of the play to be governed by the didactic purpose and by the principles of poetic justice. It is only in the subplots that the Restoration spirit is maintained, but subordinated as these are to the serious conflict and ideas expressed in the main plot, the play fails to cohere into an aesthetic unity. As a second play, it offers an interesting example of what Congreve does with the Restoration mode, and it points to a further development, not necessarily for the better, in Congreve's career as a dramatist. After what may be considered as an experiment in The Double Dealer and no doubt influenced by the hostility extended towards it, Congreve reverts back to the Restoration tradition in Love for Love while retaining the moral and sentimental aspects which come to characterize eighteenth-century comedy. The third comedy, therefore, represents a definite step forward towards a fine

and precarious balance between the old and the new.

V

LOVE FOR LOVE

While Congreve's first two plays exemplify respectively the spirit of Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy, Love for Love (1695) demonstrates a fusion of the two modes. It has already been stated that the success of The Old Bachelor may be partly explained in terms of its adherence to the familiar themes and conventions of Restoration comedy and the hostility extended to The Double Dealer in terms of its deviation from the earlier tradition. Congreve's defence of the second play indicates the audience's aversion to the strong satirical force of the moralist-dramatist who exposes "Women Vicious and Affected" and to the witless but exemplary hero who, vastly unlike the typical Restoration buck, was considered by them to be a gull and a fool. Despite Congreve's attempt to justify a new hero, there is no doubt that Love for Love attempts to cater to the audience, reverting back as it does to the more traditional elements of The Old Bachelor, while keeping the moral and sentimental elements of The Double Dealer. The result is a fusion not only of the two comic modes but also of the first two plays.

The last section of the play's Prologue evidences such a synthesis, for it acknowledges the necessity for humor,

variety in plot and the satirical force of Wycherley. But now there is to be a tempering of tone so that the play will contain no ill-manners and will affront no one:

> We hope there's something that may please each Taste,
> And tho' of Homely Fare we make the Feast,
> Yet you will find variety at least.
> There's Humour, which for Chearful Friends we got,
> And for the thinking Party there's a Plot.
> We've something too, to gratify ill Nature,
> (If there be any here) and that is Satire.
> Tho' Satire scarce dares grin, 'tis grown so mild;
> Or only shews its Teeth, as if it smil'd.
> ...
> Since the Plain-Dealers Scenes of Manly Rage,
> Not one has dar'd to lash this Crying Age.
> This time, the Poet owns the bold Essay,
> Yet hope there's no ill-manners in his Play:
> And he declares by me, he has design'd
> Affront to none, but frankly speaks his mind. (213-14)

The last couplet indicates a more relaxed dramatist, independent of formula plays, who is gradually finding a suitable mode through which he may express his ideas. The result is that Congreve both ridicules and reforms, delights and teaches. Therefore, Love for Love, marks a significant development in the career of Congreve the dramatist.

The preceding two chapters have shown that the earlier demand for plot variety and diversion and that the increasing tendency to move towards a clearer design and moral purpose characterize respectively the first two comedies and the two comic modes. The structure of Love for Love now avoids the discursiveness of Restoration comedy and the sharp division between the serious main plot and the comic subplots of

of eighteenth-century comedy. In The Old Bachelor, the moral focus is frequently obscure because the sensible couple is subordinated to a larger pattern, but it is now intensified because Valentine and Angelica are situated in the main plot and dominate the action of the play. As they are themselves a blend of the gay and the serious couple, the distinction between them and their opponents is not so contrived as it is in The Double Dealer, where the virtuous pair is part of a rigorous design controlled by the conflict between moral absolutes. Such familiar Restoration figures as the hypocritical woman, the foolish elders, the hoyden, the plain-dealing sailor, and the witwoud, are relegated to the subplot, but because Valentine and Angelica still retain many Restoration traits the difference between the two levels of action, although evident, is not so sharp as it is in The Double Dealer. The result is a more overtly didactic comedy than The Old Bachelor, which avoids the moral absolutes of The Double Dealer. By allowing the attention to be divided equally between the development of the serious courtship of the young lovers in the main plot and the variety of intrigues and follies in the subplots, Congreve is also able to cater to a changing audience which demanded both instruction and delight. Synopses of the various plots will indicate the fusion quite clearly.

The main plot deals with the attempts of Valentine to win the apparently reluctant Angelica, which is accomplished

only after he acknowledges the wrongness of his mercenary attitude towards marriage. The action opens with the impoverished Valentine, having spent his entire fortune in trying to win the affection of Angelica, seeking solace in the works of the stoic philosophers. His father, Sir Sampson Legend, intends to disinherit him and to transfer the estate over to the younger brother, Ben, who has just returned from sea. Valentine agrees to this proposition so that the four-thousand-pounds compensation will solve his immediate financial difficulties, ignoring for the moment the warning of his friend, Scandal, that there is very little likelihood that Angelica will accept him without his estate. But he is determined to try to win her and to reconcile himself with his angry father. The father, however, refuses to listen to the penitent son, and Valentine fares no better with Angelica who refuses to be pushed against her inclinations. At the suggestion of Scandal, Valentine feigns madness in an attempt to postpone his father's plans and to force a confession of love out of Angelica. The first plan succeeds, but Angelica suspecting a trick, is further alienated from him because she believes that he is mainly concerned about gaining her with his fortune rather than without it - an attitude which offends her sensibility. Valentine, not knowing exactly what he has done wrong, is now left to his confusion while Angelica, taking the initiative into her own hands, fools Sir Sampson into believing that she will marry him rather than his son. Believing that all his lost, Valentine is now fully

prepared to sign away his inheritance. It is precisely this lack of interest in his estate for which she has been waiting. Tearing up the bond, she confesses that she has loved him all along and that her indifference to him and her plans to marry Sir Sampson have been a trial of his virtue and of his generous and faithful passion. Before the play concludes, she reprimands Sir Sampson for his unnatural behavior, and with Valentine surrendering himself to her moral superiority and with Scandal radically changing his attitude towards women, Angelica closes with the moral that:

> The Miracle to Day is, that we find
> A Lover true: Not that a Woman's Kind. (314)

The sensibilities of the lovers, with their sincere attempts to reconcile their different attitudes, contrast sharply with the follies and grasping materialism demonstrated in the subplots. Furthermore, the changing relationship between Valentine and Angelica and his precarious position as potential heir of the Legend estate, motivate the actions in the subplots. Consequently, the play's structural coherence and moral focus differentiate it from the arbitrary plot relationships and moral ambiguity of Restoration comedy.

The subplots concern the search and confusion involved in finding prosperous marriage partners, and implicated in these are Mrs. Frail, Ben, Prue, and Tattle. Mrs. Frail, sister to the

second wife of Angelica's uncle, is first interested in Valentine, but as soon as he loses favor with his father she engages the attention of the new heir, Ben. As long as Valentine remains "mad" however, there is little hope of Ben inheriting the Legend fortune. With this in mind, she casts aside Ben and re-directs her attention to Valentine. She is fooled by Jeremy into believing that she will be able to marry Valentine by taking Angelica's place in a clandestine ceremony which he is supposedly planning. At the same time, two other lines of action involving the Prue-Tattle and Ben-Mrs. Frail action develop, which will result in Mrs. Frail's discovering that she has married not Valentine but the man she dislikes most - Tattle.

The plan to marry Ben off to Prue is initially thwarted by the scheming of the sisters to pair Ben off with Mrs. Frail. As Prue is already interested in Tattle, it is not long before she and Ben quarrel, with the result that she and Tattle pair off temporarily as Mrs. Frail persuades Ben to marry her. But because of Valentine's "madness" the situation is drastically changed so that Ben is rejected by Mrs. Frail and left alone to return to sea. Tattle then rejects Prue as Jeremy now leads him to suppose that he will be able to substitute for Valentine who, in the guise of a frair, is to marry Angelica, who is to be dressed as a nun. And so with Tattle and Mrs. Frail in their respective disguises, they are married. Yet another liaison is established and broken off between Scandal and Mrs. Foresight. Scandal wants to help Valentine's

plan to be reconciled with his father. But first it is necessary for him to gain the confidence of Foresight. To accomplish this, he pretends to be a student of astrology and makes his addresses to Mrs. Foresight. In both he is successful, but after meeting Mrs. Foresight that evening, she dismisses him the following morning with great aplomb.

With this tighter plot structure, the main theme is emphasized, and it also brings together the two comic modes. It deals with the conventional Restoration courtship between the young lovers and involves the customary battle of wits, during which the hero's tenacity is tested by his persistent attempts to win the reluctant heroine. But Angelica's testing of Valentine has little to do with sexual infidelity, for she is more concerned with his mercenary attitude towards marriage. She will not accept him until he has put aside every vestige of materialistic thinking, until he is ready to sacrifice interest to constancy and prepared to acknowledge her own more sentimental values. Until the end of the play, Valentine's confusion results from the inability to separate in his mind marriage and money; what he has to learn is that Angelica is not primarily interested in his estate and that she will only exchange love for love. But it is equally significant to note that she does marry him with his estate intact and that she goes to great lengths, and by devious means, to secure his right to inherit the Legend estate. This theme of anti-materialism is also carried over in the subplots, particularly through the

fortune-hunting sisters, Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail, and through the powerfully-drawn portrait of the grossly mercenary Sir Sampson Legend. But as the synopses of these plots illustrate, several other characters are in one way or another motivated by their cupidity. Tattle is interested in Angelica because of the fortune she possesses (302), and Scandal believes that she is primarily interested in Valentine's estate (225). It is this preoccupation with the materialistic aspects of marriage which is one of the most important themes of eighteenth-century comedy.

In Restoration comedy, such cupidity is either condemned or subordinated to more important ideas. In The Country Wife, it is the coxcomb Sparkish who interests himself in Alithea's fortune and who would marry her only for her portion (345). As a woman, Aphra Behn was probably more sensitive to the insidiousness of forced marriages, particularly those motivated by economic considerations, and she never tires of attacking them. Through the character of Lucia in Sir Patient Fancy and Sir Cautious Fulbank in The Lucky Chance, or an Alderman's Bargain (1686), she condemns mercenary marriages as both a social and a moral evil. In The Old Bachelor, Bellmour is not oblivious to the twelve-thousand pounds that Belinda brings with her (41), but this is subordinated to his basic philosophy that business should be left to idlers (37). In The Double Dealer, the idea becomes more dominant through Maskwell's attempts to disinherit Mellefont. In this respect, he seems closer to the enterprising middle-class

than to his more aristocratic and less mercenary-minded Restoration counterparts.

In eighteenth-century comedy, the consideration of fortune becomes a more prevalent and acceptable attitude towards marriage, and one that is not always condemned. Many of the plays, in fact, evoke a bourgeois environment rather than the more aristocratic one of Restoration comedy. The mercantile atmosphere of Love for Love was admirably suggested in the 1967 London production at The National Theatre. The characters no longer wore those costumes familiar in Restoration comedy, the frills, powdered wigs, and ivory combs, but the more austere and sober dress of the middle-class, while the backgrounds and interiors suggested the vicinity of Lombardy Street rather than Whitehall. Lombardy Street is the background to Steele's The Tender Husband, while the characters distinctly belong to the bourgeoisie with all their talk about investments and marriage settlements. The settling of an estate and the material benefits of a prosperous marriage become significant aspects in eighteenth-century comedy.

Again one may point to the change which was gradually taking place in the audience at the turn of the century. It has been customary to see this change in terms of a movement from an aristocratic audience to the predominantly middle-class one of the early eighteenth century. But a recent critic, John Loftis in Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding (1959), has

pertinently remarked that the change was not so obvious and as drastic as the earlier theories seem to imply. He states that:

> The important changes seem rather to have been in the components of the beau monde one the one hand and the citizenry on the other. Many of the merchants attending the theater, no longer considered "citizens," were accepted in the audience as gentlemen; many of the prominent financiers, performing functions that earlier were performed by citizens, belonged to gentle or even noble families. The citizens recognized as such in the early-eighteenth-century theater were not the leading members of the business community, the exporters and financiers, but rather the petty traders, the shopkeepers, and the apprentices. The social relationships of the audience, then, remained constant on the surface; but the substance of the relationships, especially as they affected the business community, underwent an important change. (15-16)

The characters, especially the young "rakes," in the comedies also appear to share in this change. In Cibber's plays, the young men reveal a surprising amount of interest in the wealth of their prospective wives. In Love's Last Shift, Young Worthy believes that the dose of matrimony may be sweetened with a "swinging portion" (312), and finding no fault in Narcissa's one-thousand-pounds annual income, he concludes that "She's only worth that brings her weight in gold" (317). In the comedies of Farquhar, love appears even more an economic affair, rather than the distraction it was in Restoration comedy. In Love and a Bottle (1698), Lyrick's definition of a hero sums up quite clearly this new dimension

given to the activity of the gallant. He states that a hero is:

> A Compound of practial Rake, and speculative Gentleman, who always bears off the great Fortune in the Play. (51)

The problems confronting Plume and Worthy in The Recruiting Officer arise directly over the newly-acquired fortunes of Silvia and Melinda. Silvia's father admonishes his daughter to be aware of her value: "you must set a just Value upon your self, and in plain Terms, think no more of Captain Plume" (57). The plot of The Beaux Stratagem evolves around the attempts of the fortune-hunters Aimwell and Archer. Both are more interested in the fortunes of their respective mistresses, Dorinda and Mrs. Sullen, than in their beauty. Archer's advice to Aimwell, that he should rivet his eyes upon a fortune rather than upon beauty, and Aimwell's reply, that "no Woman can be a Beauty without a Fortune" (138), reveal the changed sensibilities of the heroes of eighteenth-century comedy. Even the heroine sometimes reflects the same attitude. In Vanbrugh's The Provoked Wife, Belinda complains that she cannot marry Heartfree because he has no fortune (151), and she only decides to marry him because she realizes that she has enough money for both of them (169). In Cibber's The Careless Husband, Lady Betty affirms that no woman wants beauty that has a fortune (32).

Steele's comedies continue the trend to equate marriage with wealth. In The Tender Husband, Captain Clerimont possesses no trace of the libertinism of his Restoration predecessors but, similar to the heroes of Cibber's and Farquhar's comedies, he too is primarily concered with the economic advantages to be obtained from a prosperous match. Unlike Aimwell in The Recruiting Officer, who turns into a man of feeling, Captain Clerimont remains a thorough-going materialist, and his interest in Biddy remains unequivocally mercenary. And from the main plot down to the subplots, the discussion focusses upon marriage settlements and the need to preserve the family wealth. In The Conscious Lovers, Bevil Junior senses no incongruity between his own rigid moral code and the fact that he sees his proposed marriage to Lucinda as a means by which a fortune may be added to his family (289). Similarly, Lucinda accepts the idea that marriage now takes place "but for increase of fortune" (319), but as a female she is more sensitive to the unhappiness involved in being "born to great fortunes!" (320). The extreme view, similar to that of Love for Love, is carried over into the subplots, in this case through Cimberton and Mrs. Sealand.

Although some moral distinction must be made in Love for Love between the common-sensical motivations of Valentine and Angelica on the one hand, and the cupidity of Mrs. Frail, Sir Sampson and Tattle on the other, both groups indicate the propensity to view marriage in terms of wealth.

And although having enough money was no guarantee for a successful marriage, the dramatists seem to consider it as a prerequisite for one. G. M. Trevelyan's statement, in Illustrated English Social History, The Eighteenth Century (1942), that in the eighteenth century the "Bible had now a rival in the Ledger" (3), may be a slight exaggeration. But the view of a more recent historian, H. J. Habakkuk, expressed in his article "Marriage Settlements in the Eighteenth Century" (1951), that calculations of material interest in marriage play a more important part in the early eighteenth century than in the preceding two, is indisputable. Undoubtedly, the tendency discerned in these plays would seem to indicate a movement towards what Ian Watt call, in The Rise of the Novel (1957), "economic individualism" (63).

What Congreve implies in Love for Love is that a marriage without financial support may be as foolish as one which subordinates love to materialistic considerations. Both points of view are expressed by Valentine and Angelica and by the characters in the subplots. This tension between a realistic and sentimental approach to marriage lends the play its seriousness, but it is a seriosness which is situated between the ambiguous morality of much of Restoration comedy and the sometimes offensively overt morality of eighteenth-century comedy. The tension and balance between the two modes are also found in the young couple themselves and between them and the minor characters.

Valentine and Angelica possess the traits of both the gay and the serious couple. They have the wit and vivacity of Bellmour and Belinda, without their trivial and flippant attitude towards love and marriage. They have the moral sensibility of Vainlove and Araminta, without their blind idealism and without the ineffectual and passive virtue of Mellefont and Cynthia. Whereas in the earlier two plays the young couples are an equal part of, or significantly subordinated to, a larger pattern, Valentine's and Angelica's presence is the dramatic and moral focal point by which the follies of the others are judged. Consequently, Love for Love has a greater and more substantial moral basis than The Old Bachelor, and it lacks the clear-cut issues found in The Double Dealer, because both Valentine and Angelica each have one foot firmly implanted in the world of the Restoration and the other rooted in the eighteenth century.

Congreve's own comments best describe Valentine's dual personality. To Jeremy Collier, who sees in Valentine only the rake's prodigality, profanity and obscenity, Congreve affirms in his "Amendments to Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations" (1698), that Valentine is a "mix'd Character; his Faults are fewer than his good Qualities; and, as the World goes, he may pass well enough for the best Character in a Comedy."[14] This

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14. The Complete Works of William Congreve, ed. Montague Summers (London, 1923), III, 200.

mixture is revealed through the two different perspectives we are given on him. His past and some of his present actions illustrate distinct Restoration traits,and his present relationships with Angelica and others express a sensibility more in accord with the heroes of later comedy.

When the play opens, Valentine's libertine days are already over, but sufficient information is given in the first scene to indicate that his past life, with its promiscuity and wild extravagance, firmly sets him within the tradition of the Restoration rake. A glimpse of his earlier sexual escapades and their consequences are afforded when Jeremy tells him that a "nurse with one of your Children from Twitnam" (221) have come to see him. When confronted with the responsibility of siring a bastard, he reveals an ill-nature even more callous in its import than is Dorimant's to Mrs. Loveit in the rejection scene of The Man of Mode (267-72). To Jeremy announcement, Valentine complains:

> Pox on her, cou'd she find no other time to fling my Sins in my Face: here, give her this, Gives money. and bid her trouble me no more; a thoughtless two handed Whore, she knows my Condition well enough, and might have overlaid the Child a Fortnight ago, if she had had any forecast in her. (221)

A less reprehensibe fault is his prodigality, which estranges him from his father and causes his present impoverished

state. Jeremy remonstrates with him for his lavish tastes:

> I was always a Fool, when I told you what your Expences would bring you to; your Coaches and your Liveries; your Treats and your Balls; your being in Love with a Lady, that did not care a Farthing for you in your Prosperity; and keeping Company with Wits, that car'd for nothing but your Prosperity; and now when you are poor, hate you as much as they do one another. (217)

But Valentine's extravagance is significantly played down, originating as it does from his sincere but wrong-headed desire to win Angelica by ostentatious display and to rival "the rich Fops, that made Court to her" (217).

As a truewit, Valentine is able to distinguish between Scandal and Tattle who, to him, "are light and shadow, and shew one another; he [Tattle] is perfectly thy [Scandal's] reverse both in humour and understanding" (225-26). The truewit's perception is also evidenced in his impatient but judicious reply to Angelica's ambiguous statement that feminine ill-nature is nothing more than affectation:

> I shall receive no Benefit from the Opinion: For I know no effectual Difference between continued Affectation and Reality. (254)[15]

The rake's frequent recourse to subversive action in order to

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15. This speech is given to Scandal in other editions, but that does not change the substance of the argument because Scandal is also a Truewit.

gull the fools is well outlined in his plan to fool Mrs. Frail into a mock marriage with himself and then, at Scandal's suggestion and with Jeremy's help, to dupe her into a marriage with Tattle - a trick somewhat similar to the one played on Silvia by Bellmour in The Old Bachelor. Valentine's delight in dissembling is best witnessed by the trick he uses, the feigned madness, in the hope of winning both the estate and Angelica. But despite his past misdemeanors and his penchant for intrigue, he is seen to be a well-meaning, generous and sincere lover, qualities which differentiate him from his wilder and more hedonistic predecessors. His courtship of Angelica also brings out these qualities, for his lack of success arises purely from the inability to separate his material concerns from his affections. It is precisely this mercenary attitude and his subsequent submission to the more sentimental aspects of love which now relate him to the heroes of eighteenth-century comedy.

Already reformed by the virtue and beauty of Angelica, Valentine directs all his efforts to bring their relationship to a happy and natural conclusion in marriage. His goal is, therefore, an honorable one with no ulterior motives to mar it. At first, he believes that his poverty will enable him to "pursue Angelica with more Love than ever" (217), but his concern for his estate keeps intruding upon his

desire to win her, with the result that he makes very little progress in either direction. His plan to see Angelica is quickly put aside when he meets his father and makes his unsuccessful bid for his rights of inheritance (243-46). When he assumes madness, it is not only to force a confession of love from Angelica but also to postpone the signing over of the estate to Ben. It is not surprising, therefore, that Angelica is upset and annoyed that his "madness" is adopted for what she calls "mercenary Ends and sordid Interest" (294). When he attempts to defend himself, he does so in terms which betray his confused and mixed values:

> Nay, now you do me Wrong; for if any Interest was considered, it was yours; since I thought I wanted more than Love, to make me worthy of you. (295)

Ultimately, of course, Valentine's myopia is more than compensated by his fidelity to Angelica, by his generosity and willingness to sacrifice everything to his love. When he is finally in danger of losing his mistress, everything seems worthless. And so, having come to the realization through his own experience, he puts aside his mercenary concerns and prepares to sign the bond. Only when he is able to sacrifice interest to constancy, when he is ready to exchange love for love, does Angelica confess her affection for him and accept his proposal (312). Progressing gradually from materialist to sentimentalist, a progress similar to the development which takes place in Aimwell

in Farquhar's The Beaux Stratagem, and experiencing the conflicting demands of both, Valentine learns the limitations of the former as he recognizes the importance of the other. It is his preoccupation with the more mercenary aspects of marriage and his incipient sentimentalism which differentiate him from the Restoration rake and which reveal his affinity with the new heroes.

In playing the role of Truth in his relationship with his father, Valentine's moral awareness and soft nature are demonstrated. The purpose of Valentine's madness, apart from furthering the plot, serves to give a new dimension to Valentine's character. As Congreve states in the "Amendments," it gives a liberty to the satire without breaking character decorum.[16] But although Valentine may be "out of character" when "mad," the final effect is to give, by way of his satirical comments on the immorality of the times, evidence of values based on stable and moral foundations and of flaws which are temporary aberrations rather than innate and permanent failings. That this is so, is fully expressed by his patient attitude towards the tyrannical behavior of his father. Valentine's honesty is first detected in his willingness to agree to his father's hard bargain to forego his estate, an act performed so that he may honorably discharge his debts. It is, in fact, the father who proves to be unnatural

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16. Montague Summers, III, 187.

and undutiful to the son. In pressing his claim, Valentine only wants his right (246), and his attitude to his father is at all times respectful and just. It is not surprising that he fails to satisfy a father who is as ready to disinherit his other son as off-handedly as he does Valentine. It redounds to Valentine's credit that he can still retain some shred of filial loyalty after his father's abusive treatment, confessing as Valentine does at the end of the play to his error and begging his father's forgiveness in the posture of a penitent son. His consistent loyalty to his father anticipates the extreme filial duty which is witnessed between Bevil Junior and his father in The Conscious Lovers, and although Valentine does not exhibit the blind loyalty of Bevil Junior, his kindly and considerate nature relate him more readily to the men of sense than to the invariably egotistical rake.

One other aspect of Valentine's character which distinguishes him from the Restoration gallant is his introspective and thoughtful temper. Thomas H. Fujimura points out in The Restoration Comedy of Wit that:

> What makes Valentine a more subtle and attractive figure than most Truewits is the suggestion of this latent reflectiveness, of a mind sensitive enough to have some apprehension of the undercurrents of human existence. In one of the most poetic passages in the play, he says to Angelica: "You're a Woman, - One to whom Heav'n gave Beauty, when it grafted Roses on a Briar. You are the Reflection of Heav'n in a

> Pond, and he that leaps at you is sunk. You are all white, a Sheet of lovely spotless Paper, when you first are born; but you are to be scrawl'd and blotted by every Goose's Quill. I know you; for I lov'd a Woman, and lov'd her so long, that I found out a strange thing: I found out what a Woman was good for ...." For one moment, Valentine puts his finger on the inscrutable and eternally feminine quality in the woman he loves. But almost immediately, his wit reasserts itself; and he tells us what a woman is good for: to keep a secret, because, though she should tell, no one would believe her. (179-80)

And one may add that his temper is such that it enables him to see not only the roses and the briars of life but one which demonstrates in words and actions a spontaneity and liveliness which does not ignore or exclude the more tender and moral facets of existence, one in which both gaiety and wit are harmoniously reconciled with a moral sensibility.

What is significant about the dual aspect of Valentine's character and the way in which Congreve deals with it, is the function it serves within the context of the whole play. Because Valentine's life as a rake is firmly relegated to the past, his final submission to Angelica, despite its suddenness, is logical and plausible. Congreve, therefore, avoids the exaggerated sentimentality of those plays in which occur the artificial and incongruous fifth-act repentances. As Allardyce Nicoll points out in A History of Restoration Drama, 1660-1700 (1923), in plays like Cibber's The Careless

Husband and The Lady's Last Stake, the last-minute reforms and their subsequent resort to sentimentalism are nothing more than "artistic clothing assumed to counter puritan prudery" (265), with the result that the moral conclusions are felt to be forced and even irrelevant. But what happens in the last scene of Love for Love has been prepared for by Valentine's earlier rejection of his past mode of behavior and by his development from wrong-headed materialist to sentimental lover. Furthermore, his mixed character and the significance given to it in the action of the play make for a hero less morally ambiguous than Bellmour, more realistic than Vainlove, and less passive than Mellefont.

Angelica's character is also a mixed one, but she is even more complex than Valentine because her natural traits are frequently concealed by the assumed role she adapts with him. It becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish, as he complains, between "continued Affectation and Reality." Confronted with a lover whose past cannot be easily forgotten, and unable to openly acknowledge her love for him until he is willing to accept her own values, she has to make absolutely certain that his reformation and protestations of love are sincere and that he is able to acknowledge the validity of her point of view. To successfully accomplish this, she has to draw upon her own natural sagacity, to play with Valentine at his own game and to

match trick for trick. The different aspects of her character are, therefore, best discerned when she engages in the love-chase and when she affects the role of a fickle, inconstant and indifferent mistress, for she then reveals the traits of a typical Restoration heroine - true wit, deceit, and an egotism which does not hesitate to exploit and fool those who threaten to thwart her plans. But at the same time her good nature, materialism, strong sense of, and an unquestioned belief in, her own moral superiority, relate her to the sentimental comedy of the eighteenth century. Poised as she is between the two worlds, her complexity may also be explained in terms of the fusion of the two comic modes.

The part that Angelica plays in public requires all the native wit and shrewdness that characterize her Restoration predecessors. That she is worthy of them becomes evident as the play progresses. When she is first seen with her follish uncle, Foresight, she shows that she is very much aware and contemptuous of the folly which surrounds her, an attitude which justifies her skepticism of Valentine. To old Foresight's insistence that the omens require she stay at home to prevent misfortune falling on the house, Angelica responds with ridicule, and tries to warn him that he should pay more attention to the natural than to the supernatural:

> but I can neither make you a Cuckold, Uncle, by going abroad; nor secure you from being one, by

> staying at home .... You know my Aunt is a little Retrograde (as you call it) in her Nature. Uncle, I'm afraid you are not Lord of the Ascendant. (236-37)

It is when she is with Valentine and Scandal that she comes into her own as a truewit and shows her superiority over them. At first, all three join together in baiting the witwoud, Tattle, but it is Angelica who pertinently reveals Tattle's hypocrisy when she asks: "But whence comes the Reputation of Mr. Tattle's secresie, if he was never trusted?" (256). When Scandal attempts to turn this appraisal to her disadvantage by calling into question the value of her own virtue with a similar adage, "she is chaste, who was never ask'd the Question," she quickly offers her own experience with Valentine to disprove his barbed attack. To which Valentine can do nothing but painfully concur and Scandal acquiesce. Seeing through Valentine's ruse to force a confession of love from her, she confirms the superiority of her tactics and morality when she reminds him that she is not the fool he takes her for and that he is mad and does not know it (296).

It is precisely this superiority which is used to test Valentine, to make him realize the wrongness of his values, and to oppose those who threaten their future together. So successful is she in fooling the truewits, Valentine and Scandal, that they do not comprehend that she is defeating them at their own game. Her fickleness is not now an inherent trait as it is with Belinda, but a mask adopted for the purpose of

converting Valentine to her own standard of values. The confused Valentine has no option but to believe that she is indifferent, and Scandal wrongly supposes that she has an "airy temper" (225). Keeping up the dissembling until the very end of the play, she has little difficulty in convincing Valentine of her apathy. When Valentine complains of his desperate uncertainty, Angelica replies in a manner befitting Vainlove, but this time the sentiments are alien to her real nature and anathema to Valentine:

> Wou'd any thing, but a Madman complain of Uncertainty? Uncertainty and Expectation are the Joys of Life. Security is an insipid thing, and the overtaking and possessing of a Wish, discovers the Folly of the Chase. Never let us know one another better; for the Pleasure of a Masquerade is done, when we come to shew Faces. (296)

Before she leaves him, he is forced to admit that she does, indeed, appear to be "a Medal with Reverse or Inscription; for Indifference has both sides alike" (297). And so dissembling with him in this way to gain her goal, she leads Valentine to acknowledge the validity of her own values.

Neither does Angelica hesitate to use those who attempt to force her will and stand in her way. When her "Inclinations are in force" (237), no one can deter her from her preordained course. This aspect of her character is first intimated when old Foresight tries to prevent her from leaving his house. It is this determination which Valentine has to

battle with when she consistently tells him that she cannot be forced to love him against her natural feelings:

> But I have consider'd that Passions are unreasonable and involuntary; if he loves, he can't help it; and if I don't love, I can't help it; no more than he can help his being a Man, or I my being a Woman; or no more than I can help my want of Inclination to stay longer here. (278)

Her treatment of Foresight is partly exonerated by his foolishness, and her game with Valentine by his own trickery and myopia; but more ambiguous in its effect is her exploitation of Sir Sampson's gullibility. Certainly, he is to blame for believing that Angelica is capable of feeling any affection for him, but her attitude and behavior towards him are completely self-centered and ruthless. Only if the end, a happy marriage with Valentine, is considered are her means justified. But any analysis of her character should not overlook those traits which clearly identify her with the egotism of her Restoration counterparts.

Angelica relates to Congreve's earlier and more laudable heroines as well, such as Araminta and Cynthia, while her implied materialistic attitude and her unquestioned belief in her own values connect her more readily with the heroines of eighteenth-century comedy. Her fundamental good-nature and concern for Valentine are sometimes disclosed through the facade of indifference which she affects. When she first believes that

Valentine is mad, Jeremy rightly remarks that "She's concern'd, and loves him" (276). Soon afterwards, she reprimands Jeremy for what she considers to be his unseasonable wit on the "mad" Valentine. After Valentine is prepared to sign away his estate, she readily acknowledges his generosity and rewards it with an immediate confession of love. But her attitude towards marriage is complex. She censures Valentine for his mercenary views but, at the same time, she goes to great lengths and by devious means, to win him with his estate intact. Although the fooling of Sir Sampson and the tearing of the bond are motivated by her affection for Valentine, it is difficult to ignore the bourgeois assumptions implied in her actions, for they reveal an attitude which closely resembles the cupidity of Mrs. Frail, to whom "Marrying without an Estate, is like Sailing in a Ship without Ballast" (273). The difference between Angelica and Mrs. Frail at this point in the play is one of degree rather than kind.

It is in the last scene of the play that Angelica is unequivocally related to the sentimental characters of eighteenth-century comedy. When Valentine shows that he is ready to sign away his fortune in the name of love, she tears up the bond and confesses to Valentine that her dissembling is at an end, that she has always loved him and "struggl'd very hard to make this utmost Tryal of your Virtue." Between "Pleasure and Amazement," Valentine falls on his knees before her to take her blessing. She then turns towards his father and reprimands him

for his tyrannous and barbarous usage, pointing to the moral to be gained from it:

> Well, Sir Sampson, since I have plaid you a Trick, I'll advise you, how you may avoid such another. Learn to be a good Father, or you'll never get a second Wife. I always lov'd your Son, and hated your unforgiving Nature. I was resolv'd to try him to the utmost; I have try'd you too, and know you both. You have not more Faults than he has Virtues; and 'tis hardly more Pleasure to me, that I can make him and my self happy, than I can punish you.

Valentine acknowledges the justness of her actions and promises to "doat on at that immoderate rate, that your Fondness shall never distinguish it self enough, to be taken notice of. If ever you seem to love too much, it must be only when I can't love enough." But Angelica patronizingly and belligerently, and mindful of his past, warns him to "Have a care of large Promises; you know you are apt to run more in Debt than you are able to pay." And so acknowledging her superiority, he submissively yields his body to her as a prisoner.

Now it is Scandal's turn to come within the ambience of her graces as he, too, acknowledges her "Exemplary Justice" in punishing an inhuman father and rewarding a faithful lover. The "Third good Work" which Angelica accomplishes is his conversion:

> I was an Infidel to your Sex; and you have converted me - For now I am convinc'd that

> all Women are not like Fortune, blind in bestowing Favours, either on those who do not merit, or who do not want 'em.

But Angelica cannot accept this without once more moralizing upon Scandal's earlier mistaken view:

> 'Tis an unreasonable Accusation, that you lay upon our Sex. You tax us with Injustice, only to cover your own want of Merit. You would all have the Reward of Love; but few have the Constancy to stay till it becomes your due. Men are generally Hypocrites and Infidels, they pretend to Worship, but have neither Zeal nor Faith: How few, like Valentine, would persevere even unto Martyrdom, and sacrifice their Interest to their Constancy!
>
> The Miracle to Day is, that we find
> A Lover true: Not that a Woman's kind.

It is on this highly moral and sentimental note that the play concludes. With all the foregoing facts in mind, it becomes evident that Angelica has finally confirmed her affinity with her counterparts in sentimental comedy, with those characters who display much benevolence and who forgive and moralize with much gusto on the faults of others.

In an article entitled "The Sentimental Mask" (1963), Paul E. Parnell discusses the nature and the role of several sentimental characters in the plays of Cibber, Steele and Lillo. Parnell's account of the attitudes and actions of such sentimentalists as Amanda in Love's Last Shift, Lady Easy in The Careless Husband, Bevil Junior in The Conscious Lovers, and Maria in The London Merchant (1731), has a direct bearing on Angelica's function in the last act of Love for Love, and his remarks are pertinent

enough to be quoted at some length, Parnell states that:

> ... sentimental thinking is balanced delicately between hypocrisy and sincerity, simplicity and duplicity, self-consciousness and spontaneity. Unquestionably, the sentimentalist sees himself as sincerely simple, and spontaneously virtuous, but only achieves this belief at the cost of a constant demonstration that his mask of virtue and his face are one .... [This] mask .... can take many forms, but all are clearly related to the assumption of moral perfection .... sentimentalists often invoke the relationship between parent and child, with its similar indications of love and discipline. And as love in this relationship may be spontaneously felt, or may be a means of concealing naked advantage, so the sentimentalist may play a game of spiritual coercion while seeming to exude nothing but love .... [Consequently] there seems to be a parallel between virtue and superiority of tactics .... [The] erring person does not primarily or emphatically ask forgiveness of God; he really humiliates himself before the leading sentimental character. This behavior is in keeping with the sentimentalist's assuming the part of Christ, or at least Christ's viceregent; he feels himself able to dispense forgiveness and is happy when someone confirms his judgment of himself .... [The] sentimentalist is at once more sensible, more practical, and more virtuous .... But the pleasures of bestowing forgiveness, with its richly satisfying heightening of self-esteem, cannot be indulged without someone to forgive. Hence the value of the sinner to the sentimentalist .... Thus the virtuous person in sentimental plays enjoys the satisfaction of humiliating his opponents, and of taking them captive by converting them to his own ideas .... [The] dramatist encourages [us] by always showing the hero or heroine in a favorable light, no matter how unsavory the implications of his actions might appear to an unbiased judge .... he can be malicious towards those who oppose his ideas or labor to defeat his ends .... Sentimentality [then] is a state of mind based on the assumption that one's own character is perfect, or as near perfection as necessary, or if certain grave faults seem to emerge, they must not be regarded as inherent .... He may share with the hypocrite a determination to keep his opportunism intact; but, unlike the person of conscious duplicity, he feels obliged to wear at all times his sentimental mask. (530-35)

These remarks apply well to Angelica and her little group of "sinners." It has been shown how doggedly sincere and determined Angelica is in her testing of Valentine, yet she may also be considered a hypocrite if her own dissembling with Valentine, her exploitation of Foresight and Sir Sampson, and her ambiguous interest in winning Valentine with his estate, are taken into consideration. But these faults are not regarded as inherent because they are used as temporary means to honorable ends. The "immorality" of her actions is, therefore, concealed by favorable motives. Furthermore, she does not question her own values, and in the last scene, it is difficult to avoid the feeling that she believes herself to be morally superior to those whom she forgives as they pay deference to the justness of her actions. The "sinners," particularly Valentine and Scandal, enforce her superiority as they are converted to her point of view. But on closer examination, it also becomes evident that much of Angelica's virtue may be explained in terms of her superior tactics which are used to outwit those who, in one way or another, challenge her moral sensibilities and goals. This does not mean, of course, that Love for Love is a "sentimental" comedy in the sense that the plays of Cibber, Steele and Lillo are. But Angelica is well on the way to becoming a purely sentimental character. As yet, however, her sentimentalism is balanced by her Restoration traits, and it is only in evidence in the last few moments of the play. But Congreve's tendency toward

elements which come to characterize eighteenth-century comedy cannot be ignored.

In relation to Congreve's earlier heroines, Angelica is not so naturally inclined towards inconstancy and fickleness as Belinda, for these traits are now part of the role she adapts to win Valentine. Unlike Araminta, Angelica is freer with her confessions of love - the nearest she comes to echoing Araminta's sentiments is when she uses them to tease Valentine. But she shares with both of them a penchant for plotting and an exuberance of wit. Angelica also possesses the eighteenth-century characteristics of Araminta and Cynthia - a refined moral sensibility and a superiority over her lover. All these aspects of her character result in a highly complex heroine who, like Valentine, stands midway between the two comic tradtions, and in whom the elements of the two comic modes are fused without a sense of incongruity or loss of character consistency found in the play's of Congreve's contemporaries.

Scandal is yet another of the main characters who demonstrates the fusion of the two modes. Friend and confidant to Valentine, he echoes the cynicism and skepticism of Sharper in The Old Bachelor as well as the more positive qualities of Careless in The Double Dealer. The former is evident in his summary of Angelica"s "airy temper" (225), and in his belief that she is more interested in the estate than in Valentine. Scandal

unquestionably accepts Angelica's facade of indifference because he believes that:

> ... Women are like Tricks by slight of Hand,
> Which, to admire, we should not understand. (297)

As a defamer of reputations, he fulfills part of the function of the truewit, exposing the folly of those with whom he comes into contact. He is also a "Libertine in speech, as well as Practice" (272), as witnessed in his brief affair with Mrs. Foresight. Like Horner and his ilk, Scandal deflates the traditional virtues of honor and conscience to justify his own moral laxity. To Mrs. Foresight, he claims that:

> Honour is a publick Enemy; and Conscience a Domestick Thief; and he that wou'd secure his Pleasure, may pay Tribute to one, and go halves with the t'other. As for Honour, that you have secur'd, for you have purchas'd a perpetual opportunity for Pleasure. (271)

But as with Careless, Scandal's loyalty to the hero absolves him from much censure. His affair with Mrs. Foresight, as is Careless' with Lady Plyant, is motivated by the desire to help a friend. And he is not so blinded by his cynicism as to be impervious to the display of Angelica's benevolence and justice at the end of the play, prepared as he is to reassess his earlier opinion of women. It is here that Scandal closely resembles the new "rakes" of eighteenth-century comedy. Captain

Plume in Farquhar's The Recruiting Officer has been shown to be not really a rake at all; he himself claims that "I am not that Rake that the World imagines; I have got an Air of Freedom, which People mistake for Lewdness in me, as they mistake Formality in others for Religion" (82). And Plume, following the example of Scandal with Angelica, is so overcome by the virtuous Silvia that he, too, recants his opinion of the female sex in a manner which echoes Scandal's comments on Angelica. Attacking the Restoration cynical attitude towards women, Plume now praises their virtue:

> By some the Sex is blam'd without Design,
> Light harmless Censure, such as yours and mine,
> Sallies of Wit, and Vapours of our Wine.
> Others the Justice of the Sex condemn,
> And wanting Merit to create Esteem,
> Wou'd hide their own Defects by cens'ring them.
> But they secure in their all-conq'ring Charms
> Laugh at the vain Efforts of false Alarms,
> He magnifies their Conquests who complains,
> For none wou'd Struggle were they not in Chains. (93-94)

The characters in the subplots contrast greatly with those in the main plot, for they follow more closely the well-defined Restoration stereotypes. It is here, in the manner of the structure of much eighteenth-century comedy, that the main force of the satire is felt, and this now enables Congreve to confine the more overtly moral and sentimental aspects in the main plot. Despite the fact that the characters have an individuality all their own, there is little of the complexity that is found in Heartwell, Fondlewife and the Froths. So while

Valentine and Angelica may have appealed to the newer elements in the audience, these minor characters no doubt pleased those who still demanded to see on the stage the familiar figures, ranging as these do in Love for Love from Jonsonian humors to Restoration stereotypes.

Both Foresight and Sir Sampson oppose the young couple and produce the customary conflict between "crabbed age and youth." But as in The Double Dealer, the old no longer represent a moral world in opposition to the beau monde, for the two old men exemplify a world more closely associated with the Restoration and which is now challenged by the more moral world of the young couple. The literary origins of Foresight may be traced back through Aphra Behn's Mr. Gazer in The Counterfeit Bridegroom; or The Defeated Widow (1677) to Jonson's Subtle and Face in The Alchemist. According to Dr. Johnson, in his Life of Congreve, the character was then common on the stage (228). Foresight remains what he is purported to be, "an illiterate Old Fellow, peevish, and positive, superstitious, and pretending to understand, Astrology, Palmistry, Phisiognomy, Omens, Dreams, &c" (215), and whose senility and folly serve as a butt for others. He remains ignorant of the events which take place under his nose, while he ironically attempts to control the future by pursuing the supernatural.

Sir Sampson is more of a libertine than his son. His ruthless exploitation and egotism, his exclusively physical attitude towards marriage, all relate him to the figure of the superannuated rake, although he has not yet reached the last stages of impotence. "His exuberant self-confidence is a last protestation before the onset of real senility," observes Elisabeth Mignon, and though he has "not reached his dotage, he is old by contrast with those characters whom he attempts to victimize. Conforming to a pre-established pattern, he tries to marry a girl half his age and assumes himself to be a possible husband for Angelica, whom his son is to marry" (115). He attempts to disinherit Valentine, and when Ben, with must justification, refuses to marry Prue, he also disowns him. When Collier attacks Valentine for his lack of filial respect in A Short View, Congreve's reply in the "Amendments" indicates exactly with whom the sympathy should lie:

> That he [Valentine] is unnatural and undutiful, I don't understand: He has indeed a very unnatural Father; and if he does not very passively submit to his Tyranny and barbrous Usage, I conceive there is a Moral to be apply'd from thence to such Fathers.[17]

It is to the credit of both Angelica and Valentine that they do not allow themselves to be influced by the examples of their

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17. Montague Summers, III, 200.

morally inferior elders, who demonstrate a standard of values antithetical to that of the young couple.

The two sisters, Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail, also attempt to thwart their juniors and belong in the same moral category as the old men. Apart from several new touches given to their behavior, they stay within the boundaries set by their predecessors in Restoration comedy - those women who affect honor and virtue while basically remaining easy to any would-be lover. What Horner says of Lady Fidget and the Squeamishes in The Country Wife is also true of them: these "women of honour ... are only chary of their reputations, not their persons; and 'tis scandal they would avoid, not men" (254). Similarly, to Lady Cockwood in She Would If She Could, honor means only reputation, a word which she reiterates to justify her attempts to gratify her sexual desires outside marriage.

Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail first try to conceal from each other their amorous exploits in the more notorious sections of the city (247), but neither being able to discover the other without betraying herself, they form a pact in "token of sisterly secresie and affection" as Mrs. Foresight promises to help find a prosperous match for her sister. To accomplish this, Mrs. Frail first directs her attention to Valentine and then to Ben, would move to Sir Sampson himself

if he did not hate her so much (288), and then back to the "mad" Valentine, all the while pursuing the seemingly ubiquitous but elusive Legend fortune. She ends up marrying the penniless Tattle, whom she despises, concluding that "nothing but his being my Husband could have made me like him less" (310). Her sister succumbs to Scandal's seductive advances as soon as she is certain that he is "sound." This hypocritical view enables her to airily dismiss him the next morning with poise and style, blithely stating that "last Night was like the Night before" (284). She possesses what Scandal describes as that "admirable quality of forgetting to a man's face in the morning, that she had layn with him all night, and denying favours with more impudence, than she cou'd grant 'em" (284).

As a witwoud, Tattle is a suitable partner for the equally hypocritical Mrs. Frail and an apt foil for the truewits. His literary heritage may be found in Brisk in The Double Dealer and in such notable counterparts as Crowne's Sir Courtly Nice in the play of that name (1685), in Wycherley's Sparkish in The Country Wife, and in Etherege's Sir Fopling Flutter in The Man of Mode. He shares with them the same inability to distinguish true from false wit. Tattle sees no difference between the wit of Angelica and the Frail sisters, a blindness which is delightfully demonstrated in his

belief that the veiled Mrs. Frail is Angelica. He shares with Sparkish the same mercenary attitude towards marriage, and he is deservedly, after his flirtation with Prue, paired off with the women he likes least.

Miss Prue, "a silly awkward, Country girl" (215), is again a conventional character - the ingenue. Part of her function in the play, like Margery's in The Country Wife, is to expose through her naivete the shallowness and hypocrisy of city mores, particularly those demonstrated in the courtship scene between herself and Tattle, a scene which anticipates the one between Lord Foppington and Miss Hoyden in Vanbrugh's The Relapse. But Prue is more malicious that Wycherley's Margery. In her petulance and rudeness she is closer to D'Urfey's Miss Jenny and Miss Molly in Love for Money; or The Boarding School (1689), and more particularly to his Margery in The Marriage-Hater Match'd (1692) who, similar to that "Land Monster" Prue, is a "Raw, Ignorant, Skittish Creature ... awkerdly confident."

Ben is also a character who follows the traditional concept of the sailor as being a plain-dealer. Wycherley's Captain Manly in The Plain Dealer is perhaps the most obvious example. There is again Poruss in D'Urfey's Sir Barnaby Whigg (1681), a "blunt Tarpawlin, Captain, and one that uses his

Sea-phrases and terms upon all occasions." Ben is also outspoken and expects the same of others. To Prue, he states that:

> it's but folly to lie: For to speak one thing, and to think just the contrary way; is as it were, to look one way, and to row another. Now, for my part d'ee see, I'm for carrying things above Board, I'm not for keeping any thing under Hatches, - so that if you ben't as willing as I, say so a God's name, there's no harm done. (263)

As Montague Summers points out in his edition of Congreve's plays, Ben is a "more elaborate and closely studied picture of the honest tarpaulin than is found heretofore" (81). Also the proposal scene between Ben and Prue becomes something more than an attempt to couple a booby with a hoyden, something more than the patronizing farce provided by D'Urfey between Poruss and his Welsh friend, Winifred. In the hands of Congreve, it becomes a small masterpiece of comic observation on the affectation of town and country alike. More significantly also, Ben's presence in the subplot helps to establish a norm, a common-sense attitude which contrasts with the follies of the other minor characters.

Jeremy, the clever servant, is more than usually witty; his wit is acknowledged both by Valentine and Scandal, the truewits. The scenes in which Jeremy appears, particularly those with Valentine, seem to be contrived purely for the marvellous display of repartee. In these cases, one may be

inclined to agree with Walpole who, in "Thoughts on Comedy," complains that Congreve's characters "seem to meet only to show their wit" (317). Jeremy's fondness for similitudes anticipates Petulant's in The Way of the World, and one feels the need, along with Millamant, to cry out a "truce with your Similitudes: For I am sick of 'em -" (419). But Jeremy's witticisms are not so laborious as those of his predecessor, Sharper in The Old Bachelor. They frequently contain much common sense, and Norman Holland refers to his type of wit as a "skeptical naturalism which rejects philosophy, poetry, love and other intangibles in favor of belly-knowledge" (169). In the opening scene, Jeremy's practical attitude towards poverty is contrasted with Valentine's more philosophical flights. He also shares with Sharper a fondness for hoisting the fools with their own petards, as witnessed in his plans to marry Tattle off to Mrs. Frail. And through his implied references to a father's duty to his children, he serves to reveal the unjustness of Sir Sampson's behavior to Valentine (245).

Apart from the few brilliant strokes of individuality and life which Congreve brings to these minor characters, they are all firmly planted within the Restoration tradition. Consequently, there is still felt that dichotomy, characteristic

of eighteenth-century comedy, between the personages of the main and secondary plots. It is this division, coupled with the contrived scenes of wit, that make for a less than perfect comic structure. But Love for Love is Congreve's first play which demonstrates quite clearly a fusion of the two comic modes. The plot variety of Restoration comedy is now held in a tighter cohesion, for all the plot elements relate directly to Valentine's attempts to keep his estate. The theme is one which deals with conventional follies, but they are now more intrinsically associated with materialism. And the characters, particularly those in the subplots, belong to Restoration comedy, while the young couple, themselves a compound of Restoration and eighteenth-century characteristics, give the play greater clarity of focus which avoids the excesses of much of sentimental comedy. For these reasons, the play provides fare for the older and newer elements in the audience at the turn of the century. In The Way of the World, an even more successful synthesis is achieved which reveals Congreve's highly comprehensive and complex vision of life.

VI

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

In 1698 Jeremy Collier published his Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage and, although it is dangerous to over-estimate the influence of this work on the drama, it demonstrates the increasing dis-satisfaction with the apparent immorality of the Restoration comic tradition. In the Prologue to The Way of the World (1700), Congreve refers to the growing morality of the times, but then he wittily reverts to Dryden's dictum on comedy. By this means, Congreve justifies his own approach to comedy while disarming Collier and his disciples:

> Satire, he thinks, you ought not to expect,
> For so Reform'd a Town, who dares Correct?
> To please this time, has been his sole Pretence,
> He'll not instruct, lest it should give Offence. (393)

Despite this implicit snub at Collier, the play is too much of its time to exclude the didactic element altogether, and it certainly belies Congreve's assertion, also in the Prologue, that he is a "Passive Poet." Both statements are, in fact, examples of the frequent and familiar deference paid to the audience, which is contradicted by the contents, for the play reveals, and may be partly defined as, the fusion between the two comic modes.

The Way of the World, notwithstanding its retention of intrigue, variety and moral focus, has not the loose-knit structure of The Old Bachelor nor the contrived plot development of The Double Dealer. Even after allowing for the temporary difficulty in ascertaining the familial ties within the Wishfort menage, the plot is not as complexnor as deliberately confusing as Norman Holland affirms (176). In dealing with this play, it is easier and more germane to talk of the plot in terms other than those of the conventional horizontal levels of action. As the title indicates, the play deals with the microcosm of society, and the perspective we are given of this world may best be explained in terms of a still center - the young lovers - and the ever-expanding concentric circles of action involving the Fainall triangle, Lady Wishfort and her nephew, the servants, and the witwouds. This gives the play a coherence, inclusiveness, and evenness of tone not found in the earlier comedies.

This still center focuses attention on the relationship between Mirabell and Millamant, with its courtship and attempts to marry without losing half of her dowry. Unlike Love for Love, it is now the hero's turn to outwit those who threaten his plans, and it is he, rather than the heroine, who is responsible for bringing their courtship to the satisfactory and successful brink of matrimony. Part of Mirabell's

difficulty arises from the apparent reluctance of Millamant to accept him, but after cataloguing their respective provisos they agree to marry. The next step is to gain the approval of her aunt, Lady Wishfort, without which Millamant stands to lose half her dowry, six-thousand pounds, and to thwart the plans of Fainall and Mrs. Marwood, who are also interested in it. After a series of setbacks, Mirabell succeeds in exposing the villains and gaining the aunt's blessing.

Those who are closest to the young lovers and who present the greatest threat to them are Fainall and his mistress, Mrs. Marwood. Disliked and spurned by Mirabell, Mrs. Marwood first does all she can to prevent him from marrying Millamant. She reveals that his gallantry to the aunt is a plot to conceal his affection for the niece. Lady Wishfort, angered by this discovery, now becomes adamant that he shall not have her consent. When Fainall points out to Mrs. Marwood that such a match would mean that his wife, Lady Wishfort's daughter, would then be entitled to the six-thousand pounds, the two attempt to further the marriage plans. At the same time, Fainall also wants to secure the rest of his wife's estate so that he may enjoy its financial rewards with his mistress. The opportunity to do this comes when Mrs. Marwood tells him that his wife had earlier been Mirabell's mistress.

Using this to blackmail Lady Wishfort, threatening to make the affair public by divorcing his wife, Fainall and his accomplice work on the confused aunt who is only too ready to agree to sign over her daughter's fortune to the grasping husband. When they are about to achieve their goal, Mirabell exposes their own adulterous relationship and reveals that, as trustee to Mrs. Fainall's estate, the transfer cannot be made without his consent. Frustrated at the last moment and humiliated and defeated by Mirabell's superior tactics, the two villains make their exit. The actions of the Fainalls and Mrs. Marwood are, therefore, inexorably tied up with, and motivated by, Mirabell's past relationship with Mrs. Fainall, with his rejection of Mrs. Marwood's advances, and with Millamant's relationship with Mirabell and her aunt.

At a further remove from the young couple are Lady Wishfort and her nephew, Sir Wilfull Witwoud. Lady Wishfort, furious at being used as a tool to further Mirabell's courtship of Millamant, opposes the match and profers her rustic nephew as a suitable husband for the sophisticated heroine. Still passionately inclined to Mirabell but equally determined to revenge herself on him, Lady Wishfort becomes an easy tool for Fainall and Mrs. Marwood to manipulate. She is completely blind to their insidious machinations and, too late, she realizes that she has become a puppet to her tyrannous

son-in-law and treacherous friend. When she is faced with the threat of public scandal and ostracism, she readily agrees to accept Mirabell's offer of help, and she promptly breaks off the assumed match between Millamant and Sir Wilfull, not too difficult a task because the nephew had no mind to marry and had, in fact, volunteered his services to fool the villains and to further the lover's cause. Lady Wishfort then gives Millamant to Mirabell with much joy, while Sir Wilfull pursues his plans to travel abroad.

The action involving the servants, Waitwell and Foible, are also a result of Mirabell's attempts to win Millamant. To counteract Lady Wishfort's plan to alienate him from Millamant, Mirabell uses his servant Waitwell, who is to be disguised as Mirabell's imaginary uncle and benefactor, Sir Rowland. As Sir Rowland, he is to propose to Lady Wishfort who, after being caught in a marriage contract with him and informed of the imposture, will then agree to any demands that Mirabell may care to make. To prevent any possible attempt by Waitwell to turn the situation to his own advantage, Mirabell makes quite certain that he marries Lady Wishfort's woman, Foible. The plan is later exposed by Fainall and Mrs. Marwood just before the contract is signed, and this line of action comes to a close before the end of the play. Lastly, there are the false wits, Witwoud and Petulant, whose share in

the action is minimal. They serve more as observers and as foils to the truewits than as participants, but they are given an important structural role because they had earlier served as witnesses for the conveyance of Mrs. Fainall's estate to Mirabell.

The play concludes with the appropriate rewards and punishments, and an optimistic chord in struck when the idea is established that the villainous Fainall may be ultimately reconciled with his wife through Mirabell's persuasion and through his wife's repossession of the deed of trust. Mirabell's brief moral on marriage unifies these different orbits of action involving his courtship of Millamant, the Fainall-Marwood triangle, the Lady Wishfort-Sir Wilfull conflict, and the servants' intrigue. Consequently, the plot of The Way of the World has the variety, but not the loosely-knit structure, of The Old Bachelor; it has the tighter pattern, but not the contrived plan, of The Double Dealer. As in Love for Love, the plot allows the moral to develop naturally and plausibly, while also avoiding the dichotomy between main plot and subplots. Mirabell and Millamant, at the structural center of the play, serve as the centrifugal and centripetal force around which all the other actions evolve, with the result that the play is a tightly-knit complex which coheres the action and material into an aesthetically-satisfying whole.

The theme of marriage and its relationship to wealth is also a major concern in The Way of the World, and as Mirabell and Millamant are the pivotal points of the action, they emphasize this theme, while their serious approach to marriage also serves as a norm by which we judge the attitudes of the other characters. Between them and individually, with their tentative movement towards marriage and their earnest desire to make a successful and happy union, Mirabell and Millamant effect a compromise between the attitudes of the gay couples in Restoration comedy and the more sensible pairs in eighteenth-century comedy.

Millamant, at first, is extremely reluctant to commit herself to marriage and fears that she will dwindle into a wife, but she is eventually overcome by the reasonableness of Mirabell's attitude. Her provisos stem from the desire to preserve liberty of thought and action after marriage, while his are more concerned with emphasizing the potential threats to marriage, such as cuckoldry and feminine affectation. In A New View of Congreve's Way of the World (1958), Paul and Miriam Mueschke give the most satisfactory account of the scene and mention other pertinent aspects of the young couple's views. They state that Millamant's demands result from her desire to prolong and increase the

prenuptial glamour, and so she bans the despotism and prying curiosity which lead to disillusionment. Mirabell's, on the other hand, come from the awareness of the potential disaster inherent in hers, and so he separates the permanent values from the transitory and limits and qualifies her more fanciful provisos (30-31). These demands are not trivial or cynical, for beneath the gaiety and the wit is discerned a hard-headed and realistic approach to marriage. It is one which never under-estimates the importance of Millamant's fortune. Both are determined to marry with the aunt's approval, not primarily to please her, but in order to obtain the fully dowry of twelve-thousand pounds. And like the heroes who pursue Miss Hoyden in The Relapse, Silvia in The Recruiting Officer, and Mrs. Sullen in The Beaux Stratagem, Mirabell makes no attempt to conceal his interest in Millamant's fortune. This materialistic view towards marriage is even more explicit in Mirabell's concluding remark to Mrs. Fainall, that her fortune "may be a means well manag'd to make you live Easily" with Fainall (478). Here is an open indication of the tendency to see fortune as a prerequisite for a successful marriage.

A less laudable view of marriage becomes obvious in Finall, Mrs. Marwood, and Lady Wishfort, for they are all closely identified with characters from Restoration comedy. As libertines, Fainall and Mrs. Marwood examplify a cynical attitude. Fainall relates marriage to cuckoldry, the latter

being as honorable as the former (443), and his own marital condition indicates how the marriages of such rakes as Dorimant and Bellmour may have materialized, and what the outcome would be of Horner's view of the marriage vow. Mrs. Marwood never considers marriage while carrying on her illicit affair. If she were to wed, it would be to make her husband suffer the pains and agony of jealousy and suspicion (411). Both violate the marital laws and ruthlessly exploit those who threaten to come between them and their adulterous passion. Like Sir Sampson and Mrs. Frail in Love for Love, they are motivated by economic considerations - he by the desire to marry a fortune and to wheedle away his wife's estate, she by the urge to share in his lucrative plans to secure the rest of Mrs. Fainall's fortune and Millamant's six-thousand pounds. Lady Wishfort's marital views are controlled by the strong desire to obtain a husband at all costs. She would "marry any Thing that resembl'd a Man, tho' 'twere no more than what a Butler cou'd pinch out of a Napkin" (418), and so her indiscretion and passion make her a ready dupe for any would-be gallant.

Mrs. Fainall, on the other hand, demonstrates a more moral point of view. Her own marriage a failure and her life a misery, she endures patiently the tyranny and inconstancy of her husband. She remains true to the marriage vow and does not seek solace in the arms of a lover. Consequently,

she may be identified with the wronged but virtuous wives of eighteenth-century comedy. Implicit in her behavior is Mrs. Sullen's comment in The Beaux Stratagem, antithetical to the Restoration view, that marriage is "ordained by Heaven's Decree" (159). Although Mrs. Sullen is liberal enough in her thinking to declare that when nature "has set tempers opposite, not all the golden Links of Wedlock, nor iron Manacles of Law can keep 'em fast" (159), she does not advocate adultery but divorce, and she only threatens to cuckold her brutal husband. Amanda in The Relapse also remains faithful to her ungrateful spouse, despite the advances made to her by Worthy. Mrs. Fainall's fidelity to her husband and to the laws of marriage relate her directly to these other loyal wives.

The final moral, that true marriages are not based on "mutual falsehood" and that "marriage frauds too oft are paid in kind" (478), point respectively to the highly serious efforts of the young lovers to prepare a solid foundation for a happy marriage and to the deceit of the Fainall-Marwood affair. The moral also underlines the theme without imposing too didactic a tone and brings together the major ideas expressed earlier in the play. The result is that Congreve both instructs and delights. The moral ambiguity of The Old Bachelor and the heavy-handed didacticism of The Double Dealer are now balanced as in Love for Love, and without last-minute recourse to sentimentalism.

The reason why there is not such a sharp division between the different levels of action as in Love for Love is that all the characters now appear to inhabit the same ambivalent world made up of elements from Restoration comedy and those which were to prevail in eighteenth-century comedy. In Congreve's earlier plays, the serious young lovers, by virtue of their respective sensibilities, are alienated from their society. The result is that happiness for Vainlove and Araminta is more potential than real, for Mellefont and Cynthia an end contrived by the external dictates of poetic justice. Valentine and Angelica succeed because they are forced to resort to temporary dissembling and to play the game according to the rules of their society. But Mirabell and Millamant succeed not only because they are able to fool their adversaries but because they earn their right to happiness. Consequently, the cynical world-view of the Restoration dramatists, in which goodness becomes hopelessly confused or passive, is now blended with the eighteenth-century idea of a more balanced and benevolent universe. Furthermore, the other characters in the play also represent ambivalent aspects of life, manifesting as they do the characteristics of Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy. They are, therefore, less clearly demarcated from each other, and their traits are fused together in such a way that they take on the complexity of human nature itself. If some

individuals relate more readily to Restoration comedy, a balance is quickly achieved by including in their group characters who belong to the more moral and reasonable world of later comedy.

Mirabell has been viewed as both a treacherous rake and a gentleman. In The Comedy of Manners, John Palmer states that "if we invoke the moral of a later period," Mirabell's behavior with Mrs. Fainall is "inexcusable, perfidious villainy" (194). To John Wain, in "Restoration Comedy and its Modern Critics" (1956), Mirabell is an "unmitigated cad" (384). At the other extreme, Jean Gagen, in "Congreve's Mirabell and the Ideal of the Gentleman" (1964), very convincingly absolves him from all blame by explaining his actions in terms of the contemporary ideal gentleman who were "often encouraged not only to polish their manners in the company of ladies but to carry on amorous intrigues with them" (424). It is extremely difficult to agree with any one of these views for they all carry some validity. It is the Mueschkes who, offering a compromise, come closest to reconciling the two sides of Mirabell's character. They see him as a rake who suffers for his former transgression before being permitted to marry a wealthy virgin (26). This hint given by them relates directly to the ambivalence which once again may be explained in terms of Mirabell's relationship

to Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy, and which is best demonstrated in his attitude to Mrs. Fainall, his plot involving Lady Wishfort, his wit, and his relationship with Millamant.

At first, Mirabell may seem to exemplify all the vanity and heartlessness characteristic of the rake in his behavior with Mrs. Fainall. Having been her lover after the death of her first husband, he arranges for her to marry Fainall "To save that Idol Reputation" should there be any consequences to their familiarities (417). Mirabell selects whom he considers the best man for the purpose - Fainall - because he is, as Mirabell states:

> a Man lavish in his Morals, an interested and professing Friend, a false and designing Lover; yet one whose Wit and outward fair Behaviour have gain'd a Reputation with the Town, enough to make that Woman stand excus'd, who has suffer'd herself to be won by his Addresses. A better Man ought not have been sacrific'd to the Occasion: a worse had not answer'd to the Purpose. (417)

But Mrs. Fainall, it should be added, does not marry him without some "partial Opinion and Fondness" (476). Neither is she wretchedly abandoned by Mirabell to become the butt of society's scorn and ridicule for he becomes her friend and confidant. She respect and trusts him enough to convey the whole of her estate to him because she has received some hint about her husband's

"Inconstancy and Tyranny" (476). Consequently, Mirabell's conduct can hardly be seen in the same light as that of his Restoration predecessors, such as Dorimant in The Country Wife, who mercilessly leaves Mrs. Loveit to her own misery. But Mirabell's affair with Mrs. Fainall cannot be as easily forgotten as Valentine's past libertinism because her presence throughout the play and their frequent discussions on their relationship link the past to the present in a stronger and more immediate way than in Love for Love. The result is that Mirabell's moral development and stamina are clearer and his winning of Millamant all the more commendable and plausible.

No character belonging to the Restoration world is complete without revealing a penchant for plotting, and Mirabell is no exception. First, there is his plan to win Millamant by playing the gallant with Lady Wishfort and then, after making sure that Waitwell and Foible are married, his attempt to fool her by having her contract herself to "Sir Rowland." But as with Mellefont and Valentine, his lack of success helps to underline his failure to qualify as a true-blooded rake. Another aspect of his character which further distinguishes him from his Restoration counterparts is his sensibility. In recapitulating his failure with Lady Wishfort, he affirms that:

I did as much as Man cou'd, with any reasonable

> Conscience .... The Devil's in't, if an old woman is to be flatter'd further, unless a man shou'd endeavour downright personally to debauch her; and that my Virtue forbad me. (397)

With these references to conscience and virtue, Mirabell comes close to the newer type of hero. In Vanbrugh's The Relapse, Young Fashion's initial scruples and "qualms of conscience" make him hesitate in cheating his elder brother, Lord Foppington, as Mirabell's conscience prevents him from taking the initiative to its inevitable conclusion. And from what Fainall says to Mirabell about his slighting of Mrs. Marwood, it is clear that Mirabell's concept of "gallantry" is rather different from what it is for the rake in Restoration comedy:

> You are a gallant Man, Mirabell: and tho' you may have Cruelty enough, not to satisfie a Lady's longing; you have too much Generosity, not to be tender of her Honour. (397)

As with Valentine, Mirabell's dissembling is partially diminished because it is done for true love and because Lady Wishfort is foolish enough to believe that the younger Mirabell is interested in what she herself refers to as "an old peel'd Wall" (429).

As a truewit of the Restoration school, Mirabell sees through the falsity of the witwouds. While Fainall believes that Witwoud "does not always want Wit," Mirabell

realizes that his comparisons are commonplace, that "He is a Fool with a good Memory, and some few scraps of other Folks Wit" (401). When Petulant tries to justify his own malicious strain of wit which he uses to attack women, by saying that "I always take blushing either for a sign of Guilt, or ill Breeding," Mirabell reponds to him in a manner which echoes Manly's reprimand of Novel and Oldfox in The Plain Dealer (493). Mirabell pertinently and wisely replies:

> I confess you ought to think so. You are in the right, that you may plead the error of your Judgment in defence of your Practice.
>
> Where Modesty's ill Manners, 'tis but fit
> That Impudence and Malice, pass for Wit. (409)

It is because Millamant mixes with these coxcombs that Mirabell becomes jealous of her "Understanding" (399). Yet he is also capable of the kind of wit which delights the ear more than the sense, as when he states that to enquire of a husband for his wife is like asking after an old fashion (419); but this is the exception rather than the rule.

Mirabell's attitude to and relationship with Millamant also demonstrate his kinship with and difference from the Restoration witty hero. His perceptiveness is not restricted to exposing the fools. Fainall genuinely feels that Mirabell is too discerning in the failings of his mistress but, unlike Bellmour with Belinda, Mirabell accepts

Millamant's faults as he acknowledges them. At the same time, his comments wittily condone her faults as they reveal his. He says that Millamant's failings are "now grown so familiar to me as my own Frailties; and in all probability in a little time longer I shall like 'em as well" (399). In his first encounter with her, when he shows her that a lover is more necessary to a woman's beauty than a mirror, it is he who has the last word:

> For Beauty is the Lover's Gift; 'tis he bestows your Charms - your Glass is all a Cheat. The Ugly and the Old, whom the Looking-Glass mortifies, yet after Commendation can be flatter'd by it, and discover Beauties in it: For that reflects our Praises, rather than your Face. (420)

In fact, Mirabell's wit exemplifies much judgment. As the Mueschkes have noted, his wit is predominantly judicial (32). It modifies Millamant's fanciful provisos and reveals his dislike of affectation. Millamant recognizes his sound judgment and realizes that "If Mirabell shou'd not make a good Husband, I am a lost thing" (453).

But Mirabell's wit comes dangerously close to the sententiousness of Bevil Junior. When we first see him, he is grave and reserved. Both Fainall (397) and Millamant (422) feel threatened, for different reasons, by his censorious comments. At one point, Millamant begs him not to "look with that violent and inflexible wise Face, like Solomon at the

dividing of the Child in an old Tapestry-hanging" (422), and she finds it impossible to share his melancholy. It is because his wit is not trivial but moral and realistic that he barely avoids becoming as tedious as Millamant finds his countenance. He may also be identified with his eighteenth-century counterparts in his attempts to win Millamant, not as Valentine tries with Angelica, but by "plain-Dealing and Sincerity" (422). He may be compared with the heroes of Steele's comedies who are patterned after the dramatist's belief, expressed in "Lover" No.7, that a "Man of Love shou'd address himself to his Mistress with Passion and Sincerity; and that if this Method fails, it is in vain for him to have recourse to Artifice or Dissembling" (27), a view of course which dispenses with the battle of wits and intrigues so important in Restoration comedy.

But Mirabell is never as heavy-handed in his moralizing and as overt in his sentimentality as the full-blown heroes of Cibber and Steele. Nor does he reveal, as does Angelica in the last moment of Love for Love, those traits which ally her to eighteenth-century comedy. This makes Mirabell a more consistently drawn character and the tone of the play more even. His brief moral on marriage comes after the action of the play is over, and there is not the implied but invidious relationship between morality and superiority of tactics. In fact, Mirabell is only too well aware of his own follies (399), and he knows that in trying

to pin down the elusive Millamant and to "continue to be in Love, is to be made wise from the Dictates of Reason, and yet persevere to play the Fool by the force of Instinct" (423). Lastly, Mirabell proves by virtue of his wit and moral stability to be a worthy husband for Millamant.

Millamant is as elusive as Mirabell is stable. From the very first moment when she appears "full sail, with her Fan spread and her Streamers out, and a shoal of Fools for Tenders" (418), she becomes the epitome of the gay and witty heroine of Restoration comedy. She passes through the play like a whirlwind, establishing her power over everyone. She believes that one may make "Lovers as fast as one pleases," and that "they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases: And then if one pleases, one makes more" (420). Her hair is pinned and curled with their verse letters and her followers flutter around her "Like moths about a Candle" (418). It is not surprising to learn that "it is almost a Fashion to admire her" (407). She is as self-willed as Araminta and Angelica, mixing with fools and truewits alike, and her self-regard is such that it is reluctant to acknowledge wit in others (408), particularly that of the witwouds (419). She refuses to be reprimanded and instructed by Mirabell and Mrs. Marwood, who attempt to bring her down to their mundane level. But it must be agreed that her "Follies are so natural,

or so artful, that they become her; and those Affectations which in another Woman wou'd be odious, serve but to make her more agreeable" (399).

Like the truewit that she is, this vivacious facade belies her powers of perception. She sees through Mrs. Marwood's hypocrisy (433), and she is able to cast aside the latter's malice with good-humored frivolity (434). The song she has sung is an indirect and delightful rejoinder directly aimed at Mrs. Marwood's consuming envy. It tells of "the Glory to have pierc'd a Swain/For whom inferior Beauties sigh'd in vain," and of the delight in seeing "That Heart which others bleed for, bleed for me" (435). But Millamant is also very much aware that the power to assert her feminine prerogative does not extend to Mirabell, that she cannot command him to be other than what he is (433); and she knows only too well that he is the only husband for her, for "If Mirabell shou'd not make a good Husband, I am a lost thing; - for I find I love him violently" (453).

Traits which ally her more closely with the heroine of sense in eighteenth-century comedy are her bascially good nature, politeness to those less sophisticated than herself, a serious attitude towards marriage, and her dislike of foolish affectation. From Mirabell it is learned that cruelty is not part of her nature, that her true vanity

is in the power of pleasing (420). To her gauche country cousin, Sir Wilfull, she exemplifies a wit that is not restricted to verbal eloquence but one which extends itself to social behavior, and so she is able to reject his advances without his realizing that he has been dismissed (448). In the contract scene she demonstrates a fanciful wit which balances Mirabell's judicial comments. She expects to retain her freedom and wants to preserve that respect so easily lost after marriage. Similar to Lady Sharlot in Steele's The Funeral (1701), who attempts to resist the vain and affected customs of her society, Millamant wants to avoid the nauseous cant of name-calling between husband and wife in public, which has little resemblance to actuality.

Even after her acceptance of Mirabell, Millamant retains her earlier attitude to him, a mixture of Restoration and eighteenth-century qualities. At the end of the play, when he is still hesitating to take her, she frustratingly but good-humoredly asks, "Why do's not the man take me? wou'd you have me give my self to you over again" (477). In her is refined and fused the gaiety and wit of her predecessors with the sensibility of her successors; in her the respective traits of Congreve's earlier heroines, from Belinda and Araminta to Cynthia and Angelica, are given consummate expression. But she does not submit to Mirabell as Valentine does to Angelica, and she makes no attempt to moralize. Nor is there any hint in her

of Angelica's incipient sentimentalism. These aspects are now kept firmly in check by her continuing vivacity and wit. Consequently, Congreve achieves, as he does with Mirabell, character consistency and a sureness and an evenness of tone.

As Mirabell is more directly responsible for the comic resolution, Millamant's role is more important in terms of the challenge she presents to him as a witty lover. She appears to be the opposite in temparament to Mirabell, for she refuses to be weighed down by his gravity, and she frequently ridicules his attempts to play the lover. In this respect, they may be considered to demonstrate the changes that were taking place in the relationship between the gay couple at the turn of the century, changes that have been dealt with by J. H. Smith in The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy. Smith points out that the heroine of early eighteenth-century comedy, while retaining the gaiety of her Restoration predecessors, belongs to the "difficult" rather than to the "pursuing" type, while the hero becomes more obviously moral and serious. With the heroine using the hero as a butt for her wit, a conflict is set up between the gay heroine and the man of sense (196-97). Although Mirabell still has the ability to meet Millamant on her own terms and is more than equal to the witty love-game in which she indulges, there are many indications that Mirabell anticipates those heroes who fail to meet the expectations

of the witty heroine.

Millamant experiences much trouble with Mirabell because he does not fulfil her demands that a witty lover should be less serious. She complains that he is too coy, that he should display more gallantry, for "'Tis hardly well bred to be so particular on one Hand, and so insensible on the other. But I despair to prevail, and so let him follow his own way" (434). Millamant's comments, in fact, come close to the description and dis-satisfaction expressed by Clarinda of Colonel Trumore in James Miller's The Humours of Oxford (1730), who is "one of your bashful Fellows, that approaches a Woman with as much Reverence as he would an Angel, and courts his Mistress out of Plutarch's Morals" (8). Of course, Mirabell is not as passive as Trumore, but Millamant is forced to tell him that "If ever you will win me wooe me now" (422), a demand echoed by Hillaria in Thomas Baker's Tunbridge Walks (1703), when she advises her lover to "neither fawn nor flatter, but use a generous Courtship, and assert the Prerogative of your Sex" (27). But Mirabell's censoriousness is too much for Millamant, and so she resorts to making good-humored fun of his solemnity before and after accepting him, just as Clarinda does with Trumore, and as Maria does with Mr. Heartly in Cibber's The Non-Juror (1717).

For Mirabell and Millamant, happiness and success in marriage become a greater possibility than for Congreve's earlier couples. With the cynical view of life dominating The Old Bachelor, the success of Bellmour's and Belinda's marriage is seen to be extremely doubtful, while for Vainlove and Araminta it remains more of a potentiality than a reality. For Mellefont and Cynthia in The Double Dealer, happiness is implausibly achieved through the way in which the play is governed by a simplified and artifical view of the world, a view which is controlled by the principles of poetic justice. In Love for Love, Valentine and Angelica achieve happiness by the devious means of dissembling and by ultimate recourse to sentimentalism. But now in The Way of the World, happiness in marriage is seen to be more substantial and plausible as Congreve's concept of life is a more comprehensive and balanced one than in the earlier comedies, and because the young couple approach marriage without excessive cynicism or sentimentalism. The happy resolution comes not from any arbitrary method or sudden vision, but by the means of the deed of conveyance which springs from Mirabell's earlier concern for Mrs. Fainall, when at her request he becomes trustee to her estate. Consequently, a direct connection is made between past goodness and present rewards. With Mirabell and Millamant also possessing sound wit and values, and with his judgment compensating for her fancy, they are seen

to be admirably matched. It is extremely difficult to agree with Clifford Leech that there is an undertone of melancholy in the play (293). A comparison with the earlier comedies reveals quite readily that Mirabell and Millamant approach marriage cautiously and wisely, and that they are eventually willing and prepared for what Bellmour refers to as the "Journey for Life" (112).

Although Fainall and Mrs. Marwood are similar to Maskwell and Lady Touchwood, they are not conceived in such absolute terms of personifications of evil, so they fit more naturally into the comic framework and remain a plausible part of the play's social fabric which illustrates the vagaries of the way of the world. Consequently, the contrived conflict of The Double Dealer is absent. This effect is achieved by many factors. The presence of the two villains never dominates the action, and the wit of the young lovers presents more of a challenge to their treachery. Unlike Maskwell, Fainall has some redeeming features, while Mrs. Marwood's adulterous affair does not involve her own husband. But it should be emphasized that the difference is one of degree rather than kind. And lastly, Mrs. Fainall's relationship to them as a group helps to balance their more negative qualities. In terms of their kinship to Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy, the villain's treachery relates them both to the two comic modes, while Mrs. Fainall's generosity, humility, and patience identify her with the virtuous wives of eighteenth-century comedy.

Fainall's cynical view of the world and his subsequent jaundiced interpretation of the motives of others, place him firmly within the milieu of Restoration comedy. When he is informed of his wife's affair with Mirabell, he is at first angry, but then he sees that for a husband and wife to be both errant and rank are "all in the way of the world" (422), and that "All Husbands must, or pain, or shame, endure;/ The Wise too Jealous are, Fools too secure" (444). With this attitude, it is not surprising that he regards Mirabell's indifference to Mrs. Marwood as affected and negligent (397). As a Restoration rake, he believes that Mirabell is too discerning in the faults of his mistress, and he wilfully ignores his own wife's failing, her friendship with Mirabell, only in order that he might continue in his pleasures unsuspected (414).

His actions and moral standards may also be related to the newer rakes of eighteenth-century comedy, for they spring from a gross preoccupation with fortune. He marries so that his wife may keep him, and he now hopes to wheedle away her estate. The reason he is angry with his accomplice for revealing to Lady Wishfort Mirabell's plan, is that he stands to lose the six-thousand pounds which would have gone to his wife if Millamant had married without her aunt's approval. He soon reveals that the little moral principle he does possess is influenced by economic considerations, for

he is quite prepared to accept cuckoldom so long as it is the means by which he may gain half of Millamant's dowry. To possess this and the rest of his wife's estate, he schemes to further the match between Mirabell and Millamant and to force Lady Wishfort into a situation where she will have no alternative but to sign over her daughter's estate to him. With such a heart and constitution, Fainall hopes "to bustle thro' the ways of Wedlock and this World" (415). His few redeeming points are his belief that Millamant would not marry for mercenary reasons (408) and his open acknowledgment that Witwoud "has something of a good Nature" (401). But for the most part, he remains the same cynic and materialist throughout the play. With his infidelity with Mrs. Marwood exposed and his chance lost of gaining Millamant's dowry, he still believes that these reversals are, to use is own recurrent phrase, the ways of the world(474), and he goes on demanding his wife's estate, unaware that Mirabell is about to perform the coup de grâce.

Mrs. Marwood shares Fainall's distorted and mercenary motives. She believes that the world is treacherous (416), that love is a tyrannical force (410), and that marriage is a means by which the wife may torture the husband with the suspicion that he is a cuckold. To her, the Devil is an ass, for "Man shou'd have his Head and Horns, and woman

the rest of him" (431). As a result of this neagtive view of life, she assumes that Mrs. Fainall's reserved relationship with Mirabell stems "not from a want of Appetite ... but from a Surfeit," and that Mrs. Fainall is attempting to procure Millamant for him (431). Torn between the passion to avenge herself on Mirabell for his indifference and the desire to lay her hands on Millamant's six-thousand pounds, she decides to channel her efforts into obtaining the latter, at the same time suggesting to Fainall how he could disinherit his wife as well. As cynics and libertines, Fainall and Mrs. Marwood look back to Restoration comedy, as materialists they relate to eighteenth-century comedy.

As mentioned earlier, Mrs. Fainall makes more immediate Mirabell's past, underlines his moral development, and balances the more negative qualities of the other two members of her group, Fainall and Mrs. Marwood. In fulfilling these functions, she reveals her kinship with the two comic modes. Her characterization as a "rejected mistress" demonstrates, however, a marked deviation from the Restoration tradition. Not experiencing the customary thirst for revenge, as do Mrs. Loveit in The Man of Mode and Silvia in The Old Bachelor, she, on the contrary, defends her past lover against Mrs. Marwood's accusation that he is proud (412), and she makes him her confidant and trustee to her estate. The manner in which she behaves towards both Mirabell and Millamant

deserves Foible's praise that she is "the Pattern of Generosity" and confirms the maid's belief that she still has a place in Mirabell's heart (430). In suffering the tyranny and inconstancy of a husband who believes it scandalous to talk in public with his wife (412), and in remaining loyal to the marriage vow, Mrs. Fainall is similar to Cibber's heroines, Amanda and Lady Easy, and to Farquhar's Mrs. Sullen.

Congreve avoids the sentimentalism which usually accompanies such a character and domestic relationship. She is not given the prominence in the play which is extended to her counterparts in eighteenth-century comedy, and there is no smugness detected in her virtuous conduct. When she comments on the frailty of women, she not only refers to her mother but includes herself in the moral generalization (418). And despite her laudable conduct and attitude and the potential pathos of her situation, she never becomes insipid. Furthermore, as there is no definite reconciliation between husband and wife, the happy resolution to her marital problems being implied, the moral and sentimental elements so dominant in those fifth-act repentance scenes in the plays of Cibber, Vanbrugh and Farquhar are avoided. Within the context of the play as a whole, Mrs. Fainall represents another aspect of human nature, and so she is identified with the less cynical world of the young couple. Pointing to a more moral

and benevolent universe, she also helps to give a more comprehensive view of life. Consequently, the character of Mrs. Fainall, her situation with her husband, and her thematic function, all serve as an excellent example of how Congreve draws on the older comic mode and contributes to the development of a new one, while avoiding the excesses of both.

Congreve lavishes the same geniality on Lady Wishfort as he does on Heartwell in The Old Bachelor, and with similar results. She is the feminine counterpart of the old rake, the superannuated coquette, but the stereotype is developed and enlarged to make way for a more humane attitude on the part of the dramatist. Consequently, little of the cynical and mocking tone of Congreve's predecessors is detected in this highly complex and subtle creation.

Lady Wishfort's Restoration traits are revealed in her attitude towards Mirabell. Fooled by his sham addresses, she is determined to oppose his plans with her niece, and she hopes that by marrying his benefactor and uncle, "Sir Rowland," she will be able to starve him to death. For this reason, she describes Mirabell as a précieux lover which, of course, does not come anywhere near the Mirabell we see in the play (458). But so desperate is she to find a husband that she will resort to anything, even to the extent of ignoring "Integrity to an Opportunity" (426), for only importunity, she argues, can

surmount decorums (429). Her folly is underscored by her diction, which is as circumventory as her attempts to preserve decorum without giving the impression of "Complacency" or "Lethargy of Continence" (458). Desperate to preserve her appearance of integrity, yet eager not to lose an opportunity, she rehearses how best she can meet Sir Rowland, what air and posture she should affect (429). She finally decides to receive him with tenderness, a "sort of dyingness," seated on a couch (429), neither lying nor lolling, but leaning "upon one Elbow; with one Foot a little dangling off, Jogging in a thoughtful way." And then she will rise to meet him in a pretty disorder, for "nothing is more alluring than a levee from a couch in some confusion. - It shows the foot to advantage, and furnishes with Blushes, and re-composing Airs beyond Comparison" (445). The Shandean desceiption captures the whole psychological depth and subtlety of the character in this brief but very revealing reverie.

It is precisely at this juncture that Lady Wishfort transcends type, surpassing the treatment accorded to Lady Cockwood by Etherege in She Would If She Could and to Lady Flippant by Wycherley in Love in a Wood, for both these characters are treated by their creators with much derision and scorn. Furthermore, Lady Wishfort is not so foolish as

to be unaware of her physical deficiencies. Confronted with her looking-glass, she admits that she is "absolutely decay'd" (428), and "arrantly flea'd" like an "old peel'd Wall" (429). There is also something disarming in the manner and tone in which she reveals the very real need she has for a husband. Her last words to Sir Rowland are to "Bring back what you will; but come alive, pray come alive!" (461). And when Fainall demands of her the harsh ultimatum that she is never to marry, she tentatively and anxiously enquires, but what "in case of Necessity; as of Health, or some such Emergency" (468). There is also discerned, beneath this wreck of a woman, an individual who can still love (469), and who can be hurt by Foible's betrayal of her confidence (464). It is not surprising that John Palmer, seeing the play purely as a Restoration comedy, finds it difficult to "recover the mood in which Congreve conceived her" (194). By taking into consideration Congreve's growing tendency to draw characters which relate more readily to later comedy, Lady Wishfort's complexity may be explained in terms of the satirical treatment accorded to her type in Restoration comedy and with reference to the greater tolerance towards human nature which occurs in eighteenth-century comedy. The character of Lady Wishfort is a superb piece of observation and realism and, as such, she fits naturally into a play which illustrates the complex nature of the ways of the world.

Sir Wilfull Witwoud, the robust country squire and half-brother to the fop Witwoud, also deviates from the Restoration tradition and points to a more sympathetic treatment of the country which, as Nicoll points out in Early Eighteenth Century Drama, "may be intimately associated with that genre [comedy of sensibility] which rose under Cibber and Steele (182). Although Congreve does not actually take us into the country as do Vanbrugh and Farquhar, he does make us realize that his attitude towards it is not so cynical and satirical as his predecessors'. At first, there is established, through the ridicule of Mirabell and Fainall (400), the idea that Sir Wilfull, over forty and prepared to do the grand tour, belongs to the same tradition as Etherege's Sir Oliver Cockwood and Sir Joslin Jolly in She Would If She Could, and who spend their time in London "Wenching, and swearing, and drinking, and tearing" (100). Sir Wilfull gets drunk, "grows very powerful," and smells so much that Millamant is forced to leave his presence (456). He becomes an embarrassment to his aunt who, along with her guests, shares an aversion to the country which is typical of Restoration comedy. In Wycherley's The Gentleman Dancing-Master, the heroine Hippolita prefers to be a prisoner in the town than to be carried off by her lover into the country (169).

To Alithea in The Country Wife, being sent into the country is "the last ill-usage of a husband to a wife" (309). Similarly, Etherege's Harriet in The Man of Mode can "scarce indure the Country in Landskapes and in Hangings" (222), and she believes that there is "musick in the worst cry in London" compared to the noise of rooks (287).

But in The Way of the World, Congreve balances this attitude with others. Millamant, for example, detests the town as much as she does the country (448), and Sir Wilfull's drunken state results directly from the attempts of Fainall to make him incapable of proposing to her. Furthermore, Sir Wilfull is aware of the differences between the town and country, and so he fully realizes that the sophisticated heroine would not be a suitable wife for him. In fact, he volunteers to help the lovers in their plot against Fainall and Mrs. Marwood. Sir Wilfull displays a common-sense that deflates the affectation of the witwouds. Their attempt to "smoke" him ends in his asserting his superiority over them, and he successfully reveals Witwoud for the fop and fool that he is (438). In Vanbrugh's The Relapse, Sir Tunbelly Clumsey also gets the better of the town fool, Lord Foppington, and it is the latter who becomes the main object of the dramatist's ridicule. Apart from Sir Wilfull's drunken fit, his behavior may be regarded eccentric only if the standards of the town are accepted as the norm, and Congreve gives sufficient evident to suppose that these

are far from perfect. One may detect in Congreve's treatment of Sir Wilfull, the attitude of Farquhar, who in the Dedication to The Recruiting Officer, states that he has no desire to "make the Town merry at the expense of the Country Gentlemen" (41). In this respect, Congreve differs from his Restoration predecessors, and the fusion which is achieved in the character of Sir Wifull and the others, enables him to avoid that distinction between the main and minor characters evident in the plots of Love for Love and reveals further evidence of the synthesis of the two comic modes.

The witwouds and servants also share the same ambivalence and appear to breathe the same charmed atmosphere as their superiors. Witwoud and Petulant belong to the same tradition as Congreve's own Tattle and Lord Froth, as Wycherley's Dapperwit, Oldfox and Novel, and as Etherege's Sparkish - all of whom affect to be the gallant and pretend to wit and decorum. Petulant makes absurd attempts to prove to the truewits that he is popular with the women. Witwoud relates how Petulant frequently sends some trulls to call on him once a day in public places; at other times:

> he wou'd slip you out of this Chocolate-house, just when you had been talking to him - As soon as your Back was turn'd - Whip he was gone; - Then trip to his Lodging, clap on a Hood and Scarf, and Mask, slap into a Hackney-Coach, and drive hither to the Door again in a trice; where he wou'd send in for himself, that I mean, call for himself, wait for himself, nay and what's

> more, not finding himself, sometimes leave a Letter for himself. (405)

He has "an odd sort of small Wit" (403), and like Oldfox and Novel in The Plain Dealer (490), he also believes that malice constitutes true wit (409). Similar to Lord Froth's, his perversity is seen in his readiness to "contradict any Body" (403).

Witwoud's wit is merely composed of "some few Scraps of other Folks Wit" (401), and similar to those other fools who have a wrong concept of it, he believes that "A Wit shou'd no more be sincere, than a Woman constant; one argues a decay of Parts, as t'other of Beauty" (403). In one brief exchange where Witwoud and Petulant flatter each other, they reveal their own peculiar brand of verbal wit:

> Witwoud. Thou hast utter'd Volumes, Folio's, in less than Decimo Sexto, my Dear Lacedomonian, Sirrah Petulant, thou art an Epitomizer of words.
>
> Petulant. Witwoud - You are an anihilator of sense.
>
> Witwoud. Thou art a retailer of Phrases; and dost deal in Remnants of Remnants, like a maker of Pincushions - thou art in truth (Metaphorically speaking) A speaker of short-hand. (453)

To those with more wit, these fools become objects of amusement. In The Man of Mode, Mrs. Loveit finds Sir Fopling

entertaining (268), and Millamant sees Petulant and Witwoud as being essential to her health (421).

Although Congreve was annoyed, as is shown in the play's Dedication, that some members of the audience could not "find the leisure to distinguish betwixt the character of a Witwoud and a Truewit" (390), it may well be asked, as Pope phrased it in "The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace," if "Congreve's fools are fools indeed?" (1.300). Both Witwoud and Petulant are frequently capable of making similitudes which, if not profound or intellectual in import, are quite descriptive and valid. Describing the encounter between the drunken Sir Wilfull and the objectionable Petulant, Witwoud states that "they cou'd neither of 'em speak for rage; And so fell a sputt'ring at one another like two roasting Apples" (453). And to Millamant's aversion to having an illiterate man as a lover, Petulant responds as follows:

> Why shou'd a Man be ever the further from being married tho' he can't Read, any more than he is from being Hang'd. The Ordinary's paid for setting the Psalm, and the Parish-Priest for reading the Ceremony. And for the rest which is to follow in both Cases, a Man may do it without Book - So all's one for that. (436)

Here, Petulant's common-sensical attitude contrasts with the more affected one of the heroine. It may also be added that Witwoud is not without some positive qualities. He has, as

Fainall remarks, "something of a good Nature, and does not always want Wit" (401). Petulant, on the other hand, is less endearing and attractive because it is his humor to be cruel (405).

Lastly, there are the servants, who also take on some of the qualities of their masters or mistresses. In Restoration comedy, they are instrumental in furthering the love-intrigues of their superiors, as are Sentry in She Would If She Could and Lucy in The Old Bachelor. Waitwell and Foible further Mirabell's plan to fool Lady Wishfort, and Foible is responsible for exposing the adulterous relationship between Fainall and Mrs. Marwood. But Congreve's servants reveal, as does Jeremy in Love for Love, a wit and elegant turn of phrase. To Foible's description of Lady Wishfort's reaction to Sir Rowland's portrait, Mirabell replies that "Matrimony has made you eloquent in Love" (424). There is also little of the envy and foolishness which are found in their Restoration counterparts, such as in Prue in Wycherley's The Gentleman Dancing-Master and in Dufoy in Etherege's Comical Revenge, or even in Setter in The Old Bachelor. From Waitwell and Foible, down to Mincing, who attempts to copy the speech of her mistress, Millamant, to Betty and the footman, Congreve diversifies and adds to those traits normally associated with the servant, for all of them are drawn with such good nature

and tolerance that their little follies, like Millamant's evoke delight rather than scorn.

To see The Way of the World purely as the quintessence of Restoration comedy is, therefore, to ignore those elements in it which are to be found in eighteenth-century comedy. The plot and theme bring together into a harmonious whole ideas from both comic modes, while delight and instruction are so balanced that the one is not subordinated to the other. The characters, themselves compounded of a subtle mixture of Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy, help to bring the structure of the play into an aesthetic unity and demonstrate Congreve's ability to blend the old and the new. The excesses of The Old Bachelor and The Double Dealer are avoided, while the more obvious eighteenth-century characteristics of Love for Love, the bipartite division of the plot and the sentimental conclusion, are now more subdued.

Before concluding, it should also be emphasized that the total effect of The Way of the World is more than just a result of the fusion of the two comic modes. There is that element, to use a popular phrase of the seventeenth century, of "je ne sais quoi," which makes the play more than equal to the sum of its parts. Congreve states in the Dedication to the play that "little of it was prepar'd for

that general Taste which seems now to be predominant in the Pallats of our Audience" (390), and it may certainly be stated that the play transcends any classification or explication purely in terms of either Restoration or eighteenth-century comedy, for the play is ultimately sui generis. Nevertheless, the fusion of the two comic modes, which is so essential to understanding and appreciating the complexity of the play, partly explains its greatness.

VII

CONCLUSION

It may now be seen how Congreve's development and achievement as a dramatist are related to his plays' relationships to Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy. After writing The Old Bachelor according to the well-established tradition of Restoration comedy, Congreve moved on to attempt a rather different form of comedy in The Double Dealer, a play which reflected and anticipated that type of comedy which was gradually to eclipse, and finally to dominate, the older tradition. The efforts expended upon this experiment were not entirely wasted. The brilliantly comic scenes in the subplots indicate that Congreve's forté was not in writing plays which viewed life in those simplified terms demonstrated in the main plot. Despite Congreve's passionate defence of the play in the Dedication, there is reason to suppose that his next play benefited from the lessons gained from composing the first two comedies. In Love for Love, Congreve brought together the wit, gaiety and the familiar character of Restoration comedy, with the moral and sentimental elements of eighteenth-century comedy. In the last play, The Way of the World, Congreve gave consummate

expression to his view of life, a concept which has been explained partly in terms of the manner in which he successfully reconciled the two comic modes. And an examination of the plots, themes and characterization has readily revealed the plays' similiarities with Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy.

If the dramatists of the Restoration were inclined to view life with only a jaundiced eye, those of the succeeding century failed to combine into an aesthetic unity the ambivalent aspects of life. In the plays of Cibber, Vanbrugh and Farquhar, the new spirit of eighteenth-century comedy rose to challenge the old, but it failed to unify the materials of the plays and only succeeded in imposing upon them an incongruous pattern of sentimentalism and didacticism. In the comedies of Steele, what was left of the old spirit was adapted to the needs of the new, which now reigned supreme. If one were to look for a worthy successor to Congreve, one would have to search beyond the world of the theater to that of the novel, to the works of Henry Fielding, in which there is contained that same realistic vein of humanism which gave birth to Love for Love and The Way of the World.

Before esprit finally gave way to benevolence in the theater, Congreve was able to look at life and see its ambiguities and complexities. At a time when the comic mask

was being transformed from the derisive grin of the Restoration to the benign smile of the eighteenth-century muse, Congreve brought together the frequently contradictory features of the comic spirit. For a moment in the development of English comedy, the double perspective afforded Congreve, enabled him to assimilate the influences of the earlier mode and to introduce into his plays elements which occur in later comedy. It is this perspective, the plays' relationships to Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy, and Congreve's ability to transpose all these influences into works of art, which give to his plays an added imaginative dimension and which also explain his development and achievement as a dramatist.

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