

**SIR GEORGE ETHEREGE'S THE MAN OF MODE: A
PARADIGMATIC RESTORATION
COMEDY OF MANNERS**

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The socio - political turbulence during the reign of Charles I developed under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell into a civil war (1642 - 1649) which resulted in the execution of the monarch. This in turn was followed by the Interregnum which lasted from 1649 to 1660, a period in which strict Puritan restriction was exercised in every field. Though Charles I's son Charles had been crowned in 1651 as Charles II, he had only been able to rule a few months after which he lived in exile with most of his men in France for the next nine years. Upon the death of Cromwell in 1658 the incompatibility between the Parliamentarians and Cromwell's generals increased, leading to an almost unanimous consent to welcome back Charles II who was finally restored to his throne on May 29, 1660 at the age of thirty.

As a result of having lived in France such a considerable length of time, Charles II had developed an admiration for the elegant French way of life and lively mode of entertainment which led him to order the reopening of the theatres which had earlier been closed down by the extremely austere Puritans who looked upon all forms of entertainment, especially theater-going, as immoral.

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As the English theatre had arrived at a standstill during the Puritan regime, in an attempt to reestablish the theatres in London, Charles II sent his men Sir William D'Avenant (the godson of Shakespeare) and Thomas Killigrew to France to learn new techniques in playwrighting and theatre production. Moreover, Charles II provided funds to have new theatre buildings built and to have new companies established. In 1661 in Drury Lane the King's House housed one of the two major companies of the period: the King's Men, managed by Killigrew. The King's Men later acted at a new theater, the Theater Royal. When this theater was destroyed by fire, the King's Men acted at a theater in Lincoln's Inn Fields until finally the new Theater Royal was rebuilt in 1674 by the most reputable architect of the time, Sir Christopher Wren. On the other hand, D'Avenant came to be the administrator of the Duke's House which housed the Duke's Men. In 1671 this company moved to Dorset Garden which was also designed by Wren. However, as D'Avenant had died in 1668, the new manager of this company was Thomas Betterton, the distinguished actor.

The two forms of play most commonly associated with the Restoration are the heroic tragedy and the comedy of manners. However, the latter grew more popular among the theater-goers which mainly consisted of the King, his court and other members of the upper-class obviously because of its entertaining aspect.

The comedy of manners emerged with Sir George Etherege's *The Comical Revenge* (1664) and continued with William Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing Master* (1672), *The Plain Dealer* (1674), *The Country Wife* (1675), Aphra Behn's *The Dutch Lover* (1673), *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), *The City Heiress* (1682), *The Lucky Chance* (1686), Thomas Shadwell's *The Libertine* (1675), William Congreve's *The Old Bachelor* (1673), *The Double Dealer* (1694), *The Way of the World* (1700), Sir John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* (1696), and George Farquhar's *The Beaux's Stratagem* (1707).

Although Charles II died in 1685, comedies which continued to be written in this mode were still referred to as Restoration

comedy of manners. Nevertheless, it is a common practice to accept Farquhar as the last comedy of manners writer associated with the Restoration. The echoes of this type of comedy were also later seen in Oliver Goldsmith's *She Swoops to Conquer* (1773), Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775), *The School for Scandal* (1777), and in the nineteenth century in Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). However, in these plays there are certain characteristics which lean heavily towards the sentimental melodrama of the time as well. In the twentieth-century the comedy of manners tradition continued with some variations with Noel Coward's *Hay Fever* (1925), *Private Lives* (1930), *Blithe Spirit* (1941), *Present Laughter* (1942) and finally with Alan Ayckbourn's *How the Other Half Loves* (1969), *Aburd Person Singular* (1972), *Bedroom Farce* (1977) and *Sisterly Feelings* (1980).

Sir George Etherege (? 1634 - ? 1691) had lived in exile in France during the Interregnum. Thus he was well - acquainted with the French language and literature. He returned to England after the Restoration and came to be associated with men like Wycherley, Sir Charles Sedley, the Earl of Rochester and a few others who were known as the Court Wits. Etherege's biographers are uncertain of the details and exact date of the turning points in his early life. His first play *The Comical Revenge* (1664) is commonly considered as the first Restoration comedy of manners. His second play *She Would if She Could* (1666), written in the same fashion, appeared the same year Etherege was appointed secretary to Daniel Harvey, the English ambassador to Istanbul, Turkey where he stayed three years. On his return to London, Etherege went back to his earlier life style of the merry courtier. He kept himself busy, in the meantime, writing lyrics and lampoons. It was not, until eight years after the production/publication of his second play that he finally produced his third and most significant play, *The Man of Mode* (1676). In 1680, at 46 Etherege married a rich widow; the same year brought Etherege a knighthood. In 1685 James II appointed

Etherege Envoy to Ratisbon, Germany where he lived for three and a half years. With the Glorious Revolution in 1688, when James II fled to France, being a Jacobite, Etherege too, had to once again leave his country to live for a second time in exile, mainly in France, where he was reported to have died.

The Man of Mode, a typical Restoration comedy of manners, vividly illustrates both the thematic and technical aspects of this literary form. It presents a very successful observation on Etherege's part of his own social circle. It has even been suggested that the characters of Dorimant, Sir Fopling Flutter and Medley were based on real - life figures, that is the Earl of Rochester, Sir George Hewitt and Sir Charles Sedley respectively (Wilson 1959 : 88; Nettleton 1969 : 53).

This five - act comedy opens in Dorimant's dressing room where he is seen with his friend Medley receiving a tradesman and gossiping with an orange woman. The latter informs them of the arrival of a beautiful, young and witty heiress, Harriet, in town. Dorimant who has newly acquired a young mistress, Bellinda, reveals his decision to get rid of his former mistress Mrs. Lovett; he is resolved to seek Bellinda's cooperation in this matter. However, after having listened to the orange woman's remarks he also develops an interest in Harriet. Later Young Bellair, obviously less rakish than his friends Dorimant and Medley, arrives. He is in love with Emilia and is planning to marry her. All three engage in town gossip, especially concentrating on the follies of Sir Fopling Flutter. Act I ends with news on the arrival of Young Bellair's father, Old Bellair. This news, however, has upset the young man lest his father should hinder his plans related to Emilia. Act II opens in the house of Lady Townley who is the sister of Old Bellair. She is aware of the love affair between her nephew and Emilia, and is willing to help. As Old Bellair is staying at her house, he has had the chance to meet Emilia whom he does not know is the fiancée of his own son. Old Bellair becomes much enamored of Emilia. Planning to propose to her himself, he advises his son to marry Harriet. In the meantime, in Mrs. Lovett's house her maid reveals her uneasiness about Dorimant's recent

negligent conduct towards her mistress and expresses her concern that he might be in love with another woman. Bellinda arrives as part of Dorimant's plan to make Lovett jealous. She tells Lovett that she saw Dorimant with a masked lady at the theater the other night; actually she herself was the masked lady. Not knowing the time and date of Bellinda's visit to Lovett, Dorimant himself visits her, too, though he had previously sworn to Bellinda that Lovett did not mean anything to him anymore. Thus both Bellinda and Dorimant are very upset to have run into each other at Lovett's house. The most important outcome of this unfortunate encounter has been Bellinda's realization of Dorimant's untrustworthy nature. In the meantime, Lovett accuses Dorimant of having an affair with another woman. On the other hand, Dorimant, who had been encouraging Sir Fopling to court Lovett in order to have an excuse to leave her, accuses Lovett of unfaithfulness. Act III opens at Lady Woodvill's lodgings. Harriet reveals her interest in Dorimant and states that she will not yield to her mother Lady Woodvill's will and marry Young Bellair. Nevertheless, Harriet and Young Bellair pretend to be interested in each other only to fool Lady Woodvill and Old Bellair so that they can more freely pursue Dorimant and Emilia respectively. Old Bellair insists on sending them for a drive with Lady Woodvill so that he could be with Emilia himself. Back in Lady Townley's house Dorimant is busy persuading Bellinda to make Lovett walk in the Mall. Finally, Sir Fopling Flutter, who is the man of mode, makes his first appearance. Having recently returned from France, he tries to impress everyone with his stylishness. While Harriet and Young Bellair are walking in the Mall they run into Dorimant; eventually Young Bellair introduces Dorimant to Harriet. At the same time Lovett reveals an exaggerated interest in Sir Fopling only to make Dorimant jealous. As Lady Woodvill has heard much about Dorimant's dubious reputation, she is determined to keep him away from her daughter. However, disguised as Mr. Courtage, Dorimant succeeds in getting invited to Lady Woodvill's house. In Act IV, the disguised Dorimant is seen flattering the unsuspecting Lady Woodvill; at her party eventually he wins her confidence.

Then he engages in a witty conversation with Harriet. But as Lady Woodvill fears that the rakish Dormant might be at the party, she sends Harriet away thus giving Dormant a chance to leave in order to keep a former rendezvous with Bellinda. Sir Fopling who is also at the party entertains everyone with new dance figures he has learnt in France. Bellinda and Dormant meet in the latter's house. Dormant once again promises Bellinda that he will be true to her and not see Lovett anymore. However, when Dormant's chair men mistakenly take Bellinda, who has not given any directions, to Lovett's house, she is terribly disappointed to see Dormant there, so soon having broken his promise. Lovett, too, grows suspicious when she notices that Bellinda has arrived in Dormant's chair. Thus, Dormant has been exposed to both his mistresses. In the meantime, Emilia has secretly married Young Bellair. When Old Bellair asks the chaplain to marry Young Bellair to Harriet and himself to Emilia, he is very much surprised when the chaplain reveals the secret marriage ceremony he has performed earlier. Lady Woodvill finally discovers that Mr. Courtage is Dormant himself. When Dormant however, reveals his honorable intentions, Lady Woodvill agrees to let him court Harriet in her country home. As there is nothing left for Bellinda or Lovett to say, they helplessly remain silent.

The Restoration comedy of manners aims at revealing the manners of the upper - class however artificial this may seem. Thus *The Man of Mode* portrays the conduct of the elite members of English society, some with titles like "Sir" and "Lady".

These comedies traditionally take place in an urban setting. The setting of *The Man of Mode* is London, a big city providing its upper - class inhabitants fine dining rooms, theaters, and peaceful walks in the fashionable Mall. However, as the city is commonly associated with a corrupt way of life, in the end of *The Man of Mode* Dormant is sent to the country, which stands for innocence, purity and virtue, where there is a chance that he might reform.

For ages the Restoration comedy of manners has been accused of shamelessly portraying obscenity and corruption. The comedy writers of the period have been unjustly charged with endorsing libertine values or upholding libertine conduct as an ideal as they portrayed the libertine more colorfully than the honest man in their plays. However, with the second half of the twentieth century the satiric nature of these plays came to be universally accepted. In fact playwrights formed two levels of satire as the libertine ridiculed the fools, and they themselves ridiculed the libertine himself though in a more subtle manner (Birdsall 1970 : 136). The libertine was in no way rewarded for his immoral conduct. For instance, at the end of *The Man of Mode*, Dorimant the libertine, does not win the hand of his lover, he has first to live in the uncorrupt atmosphere of the country for awhile and reform his licentious conduct. Moreover, the male libertine is always matched with the female and never with the sensible woman. Thus, the comedy of manners cannot be simply discarded as mere portraits of corrupt, empty and idle lives.

The plot of the Restoration comedy of manners is usually quite complex due to the intricately woven intrigues and the use of disguises. These characteristics are clearly visible in the extensive summary of *The Man of Mode* provided above. Another feature that enriches the action of *The Man of Mode* is the existence of an equally complicated sub - plot along with the main plot. The main plot consists of Dorimant, Harriet, Belinda, Lovell, Lady Woodvill, Medley, Pert the maid, the orange woman and of course Sir Fopling Flutter, and the sub-plot consists of Old Bellair, Young Bellair, Emilia, Lady Towalcy and Mr. Squire the parson. Young Bellair can be regarded as the intermediary character who links the two plots since he is Dorimant's friend and Harriet's "lover". In the main plot, with the exception of Lady Woodvill, all the characters place passion over reason in varying degrees and are either directly in pursuit of flirting with the opposite sex or, like Pert and the orange woman, assist others in their pursuits. On the other hand, in the sub - plot where the characters practice restraint, Young Bellair and Emilia's relationship is based on true

love which eventually culminates in marriage with the help of Lady Townley and the parson. For Old Bellair, in his foolish pursuit of a young lady, though with honorable intentions, he more or less recalls the characters of the main plot.

Another common characteristic of the Restoration comedy of manners is the existence of some set scenes. There are three set scenes all together. Firstly, there is "the lady and the maid scene" which usually takes place in II. ii. In this scene the discarded mistress or the lecherous old woman is commonly portrayed in her boudoir at her toilet without her social mask; she is seen swearing and drinking liquor like a man or putting on make-up like a prostitute. In the meantime, she continuously discusses her plans with her maid to win back her libertine lover. In *The Man of Mode* the scene between Lovell and her maid Pert in II. ii. is a fairly typical "lady and the maid scene". In this play there is, however, another scene which may be regarded as "the lady and the maid scene" as well, that is the scene between Harriet and her maid Busy in III. i. Yet neither Lovell nor Harriet are presented swearing or putting on make-up. However, while Lovell discusses with Pert her plans to recapture Dormant, Harriet, on the other hand, is decisively reluctant to converse with Busy regarding the same man.

The second common scene which is "the unmasking scene" is when the plots and real intentions of the male libertine are revealed in front of his mistresses ultimately resulting in his losing face and being exposed. In *The Man of Mode*, in V. i., Dormant's fickle nature and inconsistency is revealed before his two mistresses, Lovell and Belinda who both come to the realization of his untrustworthiness.

Finally, the proviso scene is the third set scene in the Restoration comedy of manners. It is in this scene, which takes place towards the very end of the play, that the male and female libertine, who have decided to get married, discuss their provisos. The female libertine seeks equality in marriage by ensuring her rights to hold tea parties to which she may invite whomever she

sees fit, and to freely write to and receive letters from whomever she wishes. On the other hand, the male libertine makes various demands to secure his deep - rooted freedom of long - standing within the restrictions of marital life. In *The Man of Mode*, the discourse between Dorimant and Harriet in V.ii. can be regarded as the undeveloped archetype of the proviso scenes in later plays. Here Dorimant does not set any provisos securing the freedom he is long - accustomed to; on the contrary, he promises Harriet complete faithfulness:

Dorimant : I will renounce all the joys I have in friendship and in wine, sacrifice to you all the interest I have in other women....

(V. ii. 191.)

As for Harriet, the only proviso she sets is Dorimant's staying in the country for awhile so as to reform his conduct.

The Restoration comedy of manners, almost always written in prose, has at all times been noted for its witty dialogues that especially take place between the male and female libertine. However, while critics applauded the sharp wit displayed in these exchanges, they were much antagonistic towards the obscenities arising from the frequent employment of *double entendres*. *The Man of Mode* is no exception. The most colorfully witty remarks belong to Dorimant and Harriet, sometimes in the statements they make to others but mostly in the conversations they hold between themselves. For instance,

Harriet : To men who have fared in this town like you, 'twoud be a great mortification to live on hope. Could you keep a Lent for a mistress?

Dorimant : In expectation of a happy Easter and, though time be very precious, think forty days well lost to gain your favor.

(III. iii. 175.)

Furthermore, the double entendres were mostly used by the orange women who sold fruit. At that time, references made to fruit and eating fruit were equated with pretty women and having

sex. In the following line, the orange woman is actually implicitly announcing the arrival of a pretty new woman, Harriet, in town:

Orange Woman : News! Here's best fruit has come town
t'year...
(I. I. 157).

In the following remark Bellinda looks down on her women visitors from the country who actually want to eat fruit in the literal sense:

Bellinda: The country gentlewomen I told (Lord, they have the oddest diversions!) would never let me rest till I promised to go with them to the markets this morning to eat fruit and buy nosegays.
(V. I. 186.)

But while Bellinda relates her own experience of eating fruit she makes use of a double entendre :

Loveit : Methinks in complaisance you should have had a nosegay too.

Bellinda :I begged their pardon and told them I never wore anything but orange flowers and tuberoses. That which made me willing to go, was a strange desire I had to eat some fresh nectarines.

Loveit : And had you any?

Bellinda: The best I ever tasted.
(V. I. 186).

The following exchange is also in the same vein:

Footman : Madam, Mr. Dormant.

Loveit : What makes him here?

Bellinda : (aside) : Then I am betrayed, indeed. H'has broke his word, and I love a man that does not care for me!

Loveit : Lord, you faint, Bellinda!

Bellinda : I think I shall such an oppression here on the sudden.

Pert : She has eaten too much fruit, I warrant you.

Loveit : Not unlikely.

(V. 1. 187).

Another common characteristic of the Restoration comedy is that the characterization is weak and the characters are stereotypes who mostly have allegorical tags rather than proper names. In *The Man of Mode*, for instance, the most obvious ones are "Smirk" — the importunate parson with an unpleasant grin; "Fopling Flutter" — the fidgety fop; "Mrs. Loveit" — the lecherous woman; "Medley" — a person of different sorts, a homosexual; "Pert" — the saucy maid; "Busy" — the maid who actively engages herself in her chores; and "Handy" — the servant who is clever with his hands and at doing odd jobs of various kinds.

At the top of these stereotypes are the male and female libertine, also known as the gay couple. In *The Man of Mode*, Dorimant and Harriet are the representatives of the gay couple. Although Harriet, being a woman, does not or cannot take her libertine conduct as far as Dorimant, she is still not as disciplined as tradition would have her. While rejecting the oppression of sexual instincts, the libertine exalts freedom. The sensual libertine lives by the rules of nature. Thus, he/she does not permit the social and moral codes of the time to put a restriction on his/her independent and individualistic conduct. The libertine who reduces love to lust and to a mere game finds it unfashionable, tiresome and even dangerous for one's freedom to reveal one's affection towards the opposite sex. Dorimant, for instance, for the reasons above, is reluctant to express his love for Harriet:

Dorimant : (aside) I love her and dare not let her know it; I fear sh's an ascendant o'er me and may revenge the wrongs I have done her sex. (IV. 1. 180.)

Also, a constant lover is regarded as a bore. Moreover, the male libertine is always cynical towards marriage which he

regards as a yoke, a trap and as slavery and bondage as it limits the free expression of man's natural impulses and renders life dull. Dormant, who is also cynical of women's virtue and loyalty expresses his distrust in marriage as a sound institution:

Dormant : She's a discreet maid, and I believe nothing can corrupt her but a husband.

Medley : A husband?

Dormant : Yes, a husband. I have known many women who make a difficulty of losing a maidenhead, who have afterwards made none of making a cuckold.

(I. i. 162.)

As for the sensible couple, which in this case is Young Bellair and Emilia, they are the complete opposite of the gay couple. Their relationship is founded on true love and not lust. They abide by established social and moral codes; they practise restraint; as opposed to leading a sensual life they lead a rational one ruled by virtue and common sense. The honest man and woman are much less mischievous than their gay counterparts. If Young Bellair deceives his father by plotting a secret marriage, it is only to be able to marry the woman with whom he is truly in love. Thus, his manoeuvring, unlike those of Dormant's, are not the outcome of a double-dealing nature, but the natural consequence of one's desire to realize a noble and honorable intention. Unfortunately, the honest couple lacks the wit, sparkle and vivacity of the gay couple.

Among the common stereotypes of the Restoration comedy of manners perhaps the fop is the most colorful and sparkling one. However, his artificial manner renders him an object of ridicule. In *The Man of Mode*, as can be deduced from the name, Sir Fopling Flutter is the fop. Although he is the title character, his appearance is delayed until III. ii. In the meantime, however, the reader/audience gets an idea about the extent of his foppery from the comments of other characters. Having "arrived piping hot from Paris" (I. i. 161), he affects stylishness with his extravagant costumes:

Medley : He was yesterday at the play, with a pair of gloves up to his elbows, and a perwig more exactly curled than a lady's head newly dressed for a ball.

(I. i. 161.)

Looking on Paris as the heart of modern civilization, Sir Fopling upholds all that is French. Thus, he shows off the new figures of the French dances he has recently learned in France; he pretentiously sprinkles his common conversations with French words aiming at giving them a sophisticated air; he has even brought from France French footmen and pages with names like Champagne, La Fleur, La Tour, etc. (III. iii. 175) as he looks down on English servants as blockheads and disapproves of their mien (III. iii. 177). The following lines illustrate the artificiality of Sir Fopling's idea of a gentleman:

Young Bellair : a complete gentleman, who, according to Sir Fopling, ought to dress well, dance well, fence, well, have a genius for love letters, an agreeable voice for a chamber, be very amorous, something discreet, but not overconstant.

(I. i. 161.)

It is while exaggeratedly observing these qualities of the gentleman that Sir Fopling makes a fool of himself and is eventually regarded as a coxcomb by the others. In addition, the fop further makes a fool of himself trying to be as witty and mischievous in his affairs with women as the libertine. But he is almost always matched with the discarded mistress as is the case with Sir Fopling and Lovett.

Another stereotype is the discarded mistress of the libertine who is seen plotting to win back her lover. In *The Man of Mode* Dorimant is presented in the process of discarding Lovett for Bellinda, and Bellinda for Harriet. Hence, in this play there are eventually two discarded mistresses. Nevertheless, it is only Lovett who concocts intrigues to draw Dorimant away from "the other woman;" she manages to beat Dorimant at his own game by arousing his jealousy while flirting with Sir Fopling. Both

mistresses, Lovell more sharply though, are ridiculed for not being able to control their passion and falling for Dorimant whose libertine nature they are well aware of.

The elderly lechers of both sexes are another stereotype of the comedy of manners. These people who nevertheless affect virtue, are ridiculed for going against nature in their lustful pursuits at a mature age of younger companions of the opposite sex. In *The Man of Mode*, Old Bellair, who was undoubtedly a libertine in his youth, can be considered the representative of the elderly male lecher stereotype as he, although with the honorable intention of marriage, tries to impose himself upon Emilia who is much younger than him. At the end of the play Old Bellair makes a fool of himself as he announces his wish to marry Emilia, for he instantly discovers to his great surprise that she is already married to his own son.

In addition, Medley, is another libertine, but one with homosexual inclinations as can be seen in the following lines in his greeting of Dorimant:

Medley; Dorimant, my life, my joy, my darling sin! how dost thou?
(I. i. 158.)

Finally, Nan, the orange woman, is yet another stock character of the Restoration comedy of manners who is present in *The Man of Mode*. Usually a prostitute, the orange woman, uses selling fruit as an excuse to bring to the doors of the rich the newest town gossip as Nan informs Dorimant of Harriet's arrival. At other times, by carrying letters and notes between lovers, especially at the theater, she also acts as a go-between. Her speeches are full of *double entendres* as she refers to women in terms of fruit, and having sex in terms of eating fruit.

There are other stock types common to the Restoration comedy of manners who are not distinctly portrayed in *The Man of Mode*. These are the witwoud, the cuckolded husband and the country bumpkin. The inept witwoud who awkwardly tries to imitate the

sparkling wit of the libertine unfortunately reduces himself to the level of a fool. He is not only a pretender to wit but also a pretender to libertinage. Nevertheless, as his attempts in both fields result in drastic failure because of his lack of sound judgement, he appears as the perfect fool. To a certain extent, Sir Fopling may be considered to reflect the characteristics of not only the fop but the witwoud as well. On the other hand, the naive country bumpkin, who has only recently arrived from the country to London with the aspiration of having a good time chasing women like the libertine, ends up just like the fop and the witwoud only making a fool of himself. In the comedies, he too, is almost always matched either with the discarded mistress of the libertine or with an elderly lecherous woman. In *The Man of Mode* it may be said that Old Bellair subtly echoes the characteristics of this stereotype. The cuckolded husband, however, is not at all present in *The Man of Mode*. The rich old gentleman who marries a beautiful young wife, usually from the country, is presented as another gullible figure. He is punished by being made a cuckold for forcing nature.

Just as there are common set scenes and stereotype characters in the Restoration comedy of manners, there are also some fixed themes. Among these themes the most significant is the pursuit of sex which is practised by nearly all the characters except the sensible couple who is contrarily in pursuit of true love. In *The Man of Mode* Dorimant, in agreement with his libertine nature, pursues both Loveit and Bellinda; on the other hand, although his pursuit of Harriet begins as one based on sexual intentions it eventually evolves into the pursuit of genuine love. Moreover, Loveit and Bellinda lustfully pursue Dorimant; Sir Fopling pursues Loveit for the sake of gallantry, and Old Bellair is in pursuit of young Emilia to satisfy his lustful nature though within the respectable boundaries of marital life.

Secondly, the pursuit of money is another significant theme commonly dealt with in the Restoration comedy of manners. At the beginning of *The Man of Mode* Dorimant's interest in the newly arrived young and beautiful Harriet redoubles as he

discovers that she is also an heiress. Moreover, Old Bellair's urging his son to marry Harriet mainly stems from his interest in her wealth:

Old Bellair : You need not look so glum, sir; a wife is no curse when she brings the blessing of a good estate with her.
(II. i. 163.)

It is surprising, however, to see that the sensible Young Bellair who is truly in love with Emilia is not altogether indifferent towards money as he temporarily resolves to give up Emilia so as not to be disinherited by his father who has expressed his disapproval of his son's marrying anyone other than Harriet.

Another common theme is the urbanites looking down on the country. The "uncivilized", "ill - bred" country people, the "unrefined" country manners and the "dull" country life are viewed with horror, ridiculed and despised by most characters in the plays. In *The Man of Mode*, Dorimant, for instance imagines Harriet to be an "ill - fashioned country toad" (I. i. 157) when he is first told that she has recently arrived from the country. Moreover, Bellinda finds it hard to endure the dull conversations of country women:

Bellinda : Pity me rather, my dear; where I have been so tired with two or three country gentlewomen, whose conversation has been more unsufferable than a country fiddle.
(II. ii. 165.)

In Harriet's words "all beyond Hyde Park is a desert" (V. ii. 191) for these Londoners.

Yet another set theme is the libertine's cynical attitude towards women, love and marriage. Dorimant's cynicism towards women is illustrated in the following lines :

Dorimant : There is an inbred falsehood in women, which inclines 'em still to fops whom they may most easily deceive.
(V. i. 187.)

In addition, the following lines reveal his cynical attitude towards love:

Dorimant : Love gilds us over and makes us show fine things to one another for a time, but soon the gold wears off and then again the native brass appears.

(II. ii. 167.)

As for Dorimant's cynicism towards marriage, as an artificial institution restricting man's and woman's natural sexual impulses, his remarks in I.i.162 have been provided earlier within the character analysis of the libertine.

Moreover, the theme of the arranged marriage by despotic parents is illustrated in Old Bellair's and Lady Woodvill's urging their son and daughter respectively to marry one another for material reasons. Both parents, however, are punished by becoming dupes at the hands of their children.

A further theme which has not been presented in *The Man of Mode* is the cuckolding of the rich old husband by his young wife. Hypothetically speaking, this theme could have been developed through Old Bellair who appears as a perfect candidate for cuckoldom with his insistence on marrying a young wife. However, it would have taken a less sensible woman than Emilia to act as a fornicator.

With regard to these themes Etherege brings forth serious messages. Firstly, he makes the point that marriages should be based on true love and not be reduced to the level of contracts merely made to ameliorate and ensure the finances of both parties. More significantly, Etherege cautions his reader/audience against rendering himself/herself a fool by founding one's conduct on artificial manners and especially by letting oneself be ruled by one's passions. Thus, Emilia's following remark can be considered to epitomize Etherege's views:

Emilia : Nature must be restrained by reason.

(IV. i. 181.)

In conclusion, with its upper - class characters, urban setting, intricate plot, "the lady and the maid scene", "the unmasking scene", "the proviso scene", witty dialogues and *double entendres*

The Man of Mode is, in technical terms, an archetype of the comedy of manners. Moreover, with its themes of the pursuit of sex, the pursuit of money, cynicism towards marriage, looking down on the country, and arranged marriages it is also thematically a model for ensuing plays of the same kind. Thus, both with its technical and thematical features *The Man of Mode* can well be considered a paradigm on which the succeeding comedies of manners of the period were founded.

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