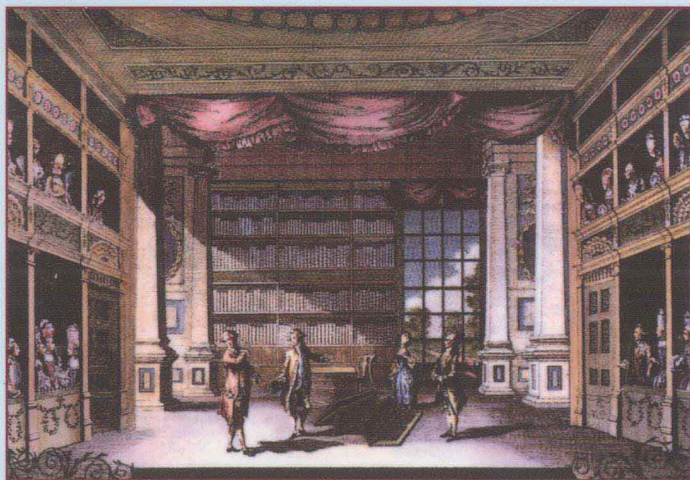


RESTORATION AND EIGHTEENTH- CENTURY COMEDY



SELECTED AND EDITED BY
SCOTT McMILLIN

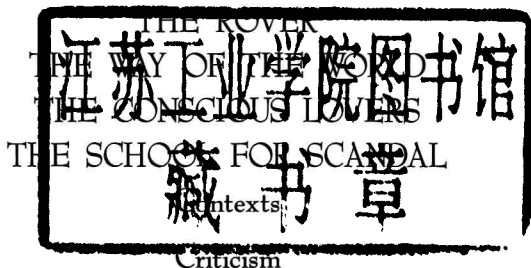
A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION
SECOND EDITION



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RESTORATION AND
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
COMEDY

Authoritative Texts of
THE COUNTRY WIFE • THE MAN OF MODE



SECOND EDITION

Edited by

SCOTT McMILLIN
CORNELL UNIVERSITY



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Preface to the First Edition

The plays in this volume are comedies about men and women who live in London, care for sex and money, and make fools of one another if not of themselves. There is nothing strange about that combination of activities, as anyone who has lived in London or cared for sex and money will know; and since more than a thousand comedies in English concern the same matters, the reader may wonder why these few should be drawn together for special attention. The answer is not that these few are classics which anyone interested in drama should read; and the obvious point that they belong, more or less, to one period in the chronology of English literature, while a better answer, is only a beginning. The reason for drawing together plays from one period is that in reading them, in attending to their relationships to one another and to the age from which they come, we can learn to imagine the theater at the same time as we learn to imagine history.

Take the theater first. Readers of a play are in a difficult position, because they are reading something that was not primarily meant to be read. Plays are performances, and they need actors, a stage, an audience before they fully exist. Hence, reading plays ought to make one feel a bit silly—like wearing sunglasses to see how the flower grows—until one develops an imagination to witness a printed drama as a performed event, an enactment occurring within a particular set of theatrical circumstances. The London theater from 1660 through most of the eighteenth century was a place of unusual excitement and innovation, and it deserves to be imagined. It was not a “transitional” stage, standing a bit uncertainly (as some have thought) between the Shakespearean playhouse and the theater of realism, but a coherent stage where established traditions were enlivened with new intentions, and where a sense of risk and venture could be based upon trusted conventions. Modern scholarship, particularly in the magnificent eleven-volume *The London Stage*, has finally brought this theater into focus, an achievement I have tried to represent under the heading “Stages, Actors, and Audiences.” The reader will find the basic theatrical information there.

The historical imagination reaches beyond the playhouse to the city, and to the range of social and intellectual attitudes from which comedy was observed in London between 1660 and 1800. This period presents the first example in England of a transaction between the theater and

an articulate body of social criticism. The drama has always been *related* to society, of course, and in earlier periods the theater was often interrupted or sustained by specific social influences. But by “transaction,” I mean a continuing relationship between the theater and its observers, both sides giving a literary statement of their interests and making a record of social and dramatic change as it occurred. The first time this transaction can be witnessed in England is the period of Dryden, John Dennis, Congreve, Jeremy Collier, Addison, anonymous writers for the weekly papers, unknown essayists from the coffeehouses, and gentlemanly letter-writers from country homes. Comedy held a special position in the transaction, not only because the plays usually represented phases of contemporary London life and thus touched upon immediate social interests, but also because performances depending upon laughter, wit, and mockery pose a social criticism which some perceive as a benefit and others as a threat. Much of the background material in this volume is intended to represent the prevalent attitudes of the age about comedy, beginning with general statements about the nature of comic experience and narrowing down to the specific cases of the plays included here.

The general discussions of comedy are grouped under “Wit, Humour, and Laughter.” The selections begin with Hobbes’s statement about laughter as an expression of personal superiority, continue through Dryden’s and Congreve’s more formal approach to literary wit and humour, and pass on to various reactions of eighteenth-century writers, who tended to speak for the gentler and more benevolent qualities of comedy. The change of attitude reflected here corresponds to the emergence in drama of “sentimental” or “weeping” comedy near the turn of the century, in reaction to the raillery and licentiousness of the Restoration mode. In the final selection, Goldsmith denigrates the drama of sentiment and appeals for a return to something like the Restoration style—although his own “laughing comedies,” and those of his contemporary Sheridan, surely retain some elements of sentimentality themselves.

Then follow two sections on specific critical quarrels of the age. The first concerns Jeremy Collier’s notorious attack on the theater, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698). This is an extraordinary book, for its long-winded complaining against the immorality of plays serves as the rhetorical surface of a deeply conservative reaction against what Collier regarded as the licentiousness of English social life after the abdication of James II and the political settlement of 1689. This reactionary intention, always implied but never declared, made the book both provocative and elusive—provocative because it touched political nerves, elusive because it refrained from political statement. The resulting controversy lasted for thirty years and, whatever its impact on English politics, changed the course of English

comedy. I have tried to represent the first stage of the argument ("The Collier Controversy: 1698") by including a portion of the *Short View* along with the early replies of a dramatist (Congreve), a professional critic (Dennis), and one of the anonymous essayists who got into the fray (*A Vindication of the Stage*). Then, to show how the controversy later came to bear upon the theory and practice of comedy, I have reprinted selections from the prominent literary feud between Sir Richard Steele and John Dennis, which occurred early in the eighteenth century and centered on two of the plays in this volume, Etherege's *The Man of Mode* and Steele's own *The Conscious Lovers*.

Finally—and this should always be the goal of the theatrical and historical imagination—matters come home to our own time and our own language. Modern criticism of Restoration and eighteenth-century drama remains an uncertain and interesting enterprise, for the best work has not yet formed into broadly shared opinions about the meanings of these plays. Some of the possibilities of meaning, however, have been shrewdly set forth, with the result that the examples collected under "Criticism: From Lamb to the Present" are notable more for their diversity of opinion than for their consolidation of dogma. I have tried to suggest some of the earlier shifts of opinion by beginning with Charles Lamb's famous essay from 1822 (still a focal point for critics) and then supplying, in the selections from Palmer, Dobree, and Knights, three influential and divergent views from the first half of the twentieth century. The rest of the selections represent criticism since 1950 and are not meant to fall into any pattern at all. I have chosen them because they are serious efforts to discuss plays that are too often treated casually, and because they have been found helpful by some of the students I have known.

I am grateful to Professors M. H. Abrams, Cecil Price, and Robert D. Hume for their advice on the arrangement and contents of this volume. In preparing the manuscript, I am glad to have had the assistance of Michael Nash and Nancy Wallack. And on all matters, large and small, John Benedict and his staff at Norton have been expert and kind.

SCOTT McMILLIN

Preface to the Second Edition

The general arrangement of this collection remains as it was, but I have taken the opportunity to add the one play that students and colleagues have most often urged me to include, Behn's *The Rover*. I have also redesigned the Criticism section in order to provide some of the best examples of the kinds of analysis that have become prominent in the past two decades.

I am grateful for all of the suggestions I have received over the years since the first edition. I would especially mention advice received from Walter Cohen, Albert Furtwangler, and Robert T. Levine. Reports from the two anonymous consultants for Norton were very helpful in reviewing the overall design of the first edition and suggesting the best spots for revision and updating. And I am grateful to Carol Bemis and her staff at Norton for countless acts of kindness and expertise.

S.M.

A Note on the Texts

In editing the Restoration and eighteenth-century texts, I have modernized spelling and punctuation throughout, although "humour" has been retained in order to distinguish its original meaning from our casual use of the word today. The text of *The School for Scandal* calls for special comment. I have followed the text of the Georgetown Crewe manuscript, which has been accepted as authoritative since George H. Nettleton published it in *British Dramatists from Dryden to Sheridan* (1939). I have also included several stage directions from corrections in Sheridan's hand in the so-called "Second Crewe Manuscript."¹ The other plays present no major textual difficulties, and with only the most obvious emendations I have followed the text of the first edition in each case, expanding contracted forms of characters' names in speech prefixes and stage directions, and making a few necessary additions to the stage directions.

The Country Wife: quarto of 1675.

The Man of Mode: quarto of 1676. (Sir Fopling's attempts at French have not been corrected when he is obviously mispronouncing, but otherwise I have regularized these forms.)

The Rover: quarto of 1677.

The Way of the World: quarto of 1700.

The Conscious Lovers: quarto of 1722 (dated 1723).

1. See Cecil Price, "The Second Crewe Ms. of *The School for Scandal*," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 61 (1967): 351-56, and the textual introduction to Price's edition of Sheridan's plays (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1973) 1.324-50.

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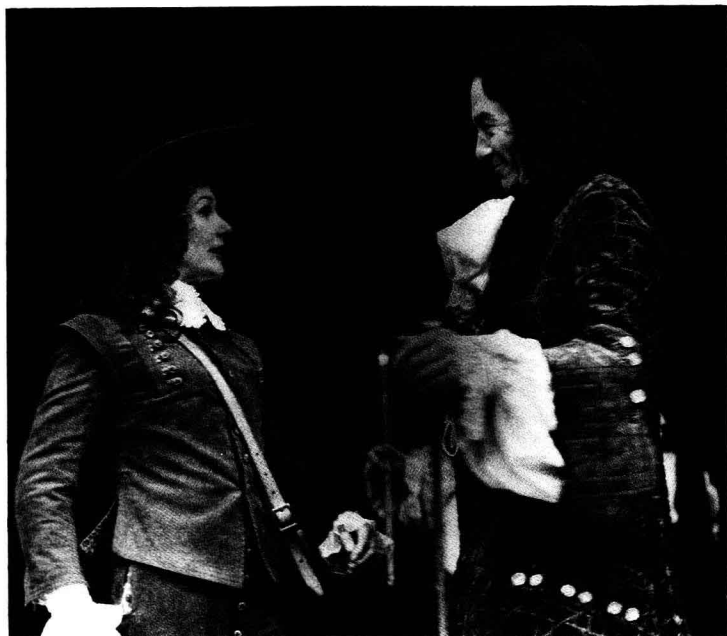
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THE TEXTS OF THE PLAYS





The Country Wife, National Theatre, London, 1977. Susan Littler as Mrs. Pinchwife (in disguise) and Albert Finney as Horner. By permission of Zoe Dominick.

WILLIAM WYCHERLEY

The Country Wife

Indignor quicquam reprehendi, non quia crasse
Compositum illepideve putetur, sed quia nuper:
Nec veniam antiquis, sed honorem et praemia posci.¹

Prologue

*Spoken by Mr. Hart*²

Poets, like cudgel'd bullies, never do
At first or second blow submit to you;
But will provoke you still, and ne'er have done,
Till you are weary first with laying on.
The late so baffled scribbler of this day,
Though he stands trembling, bids me boldly say,
What we before most plays are us'd to do,
For poets out of fear first draw on you;
In a fierce prologue the still pit defy,
And ere you speak, like Castril³ give the lie.
But though our Bayes's⁴ battles oft I've fought,
And with bruis'd knuckles their dear conquests bought;
Nay, never yet fear'd odds upon the stage,
In prologue dare not hector with the age,
But would take quarter from your saving hands,
Though Bayes within all yielding countermands,
Says you confed'rate wits no quarter give,
Therefore his play shan't ask your leave to live.
Well, let the vain rash fop, by huffing so,
Think to obtain the better terms of you;
But we, the actors, humbly will submit,

† First performed in 1675, at Drury Lane, and published in the same year.

1. Horace, *Epistles* II.i.76–78: "I hate to see something censured not because it is deemed coarse or inelegant in style, but because it is modern; when for the ancients not only indulgence but honor and rewards are demanded."

2. Who acted Horner's role.

3. A quarreler in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*.

4. Poet's. Bayes is the poet in the Duke of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*; the role lampoons John Dryden.

Now, and at any time, to a full pit;
 Nay, often we anticipate your rage,
 And murder poets for you on our stage.
 We set no guards upon our tiring-room,⁵
 But when with flying colors there you come,
 We patiently, you see, give up to you
 Our poets, virgins, nay, our matrons too.

The Persons

MR. HORNER	<i>Mr. Hart</i>
MR. HARCOURT	<i>Mr. Kynaston</i>
MR. DORILANT	<i>Mr. Lydal</i>
MR. PINCHWIFE	<i>Mr. Mohun</i>
MR. SPARKISH	<i>Mr. Haines</i>
SIR JASPER FIDGET	<i>Mr. Cartwright</i>
MRS. MARGERY PINCHWIFE	<i>Mrs. Boutell</i>
MRS. ALITHEA	<i>Mrs. James</i>
MY LADY FIDGET	<i>Mrs. Knepe</i>
MRS. DAINY FIDGET	<i>Mrs. Corbet</i>
MRS. SQUEAMISH	<i>Mrs. Wyatt</i>
OLD LADY SQUEAMISH	<i>Mrs. Rutter</i>
WAITERS, SERVANTS, AND ATTENDANTS	
A BOY	
A QUACK	<i>Mr. Shatterel</i>
LUCY, ALITHEA'S MAID	<i>Mrs. Cory</i>

The Scene: London

The Country Wife

Act I. Scene i. Horner's lodging

Enter HORNER, and QUACK following him at a distance.

HORNER [*aside*] A quack is as fit for a pimp as a midwife for a bawd; they are still but in their way both helpers of nature. — Well, my dear doctor, hast thou done what I desired?

QUACK I have undone you forever with the women, and reported you throughout the whole town as bad as a eunuch, with as much trouble as if I had made you one in earnest.

HORNER But have you told all the midwives you know, the orange-wenchs at the playhouses, the city husbands, and old fumbling keepers of this end of the town? for they'll be the readiest to report it.

QUACK I have told all the chambermaids, waiting-women, tire-women,

5. Dressing room in the theater.

and old women of my acquaintance; nay, and whispered it as a secret to 'em, and to the whisperers of Whitehall; so that you need not doubt 'twill spread, and you will be as odious to the handsome young women as—

HORNER As the smallpox. Well—

QUACK And to the married women of this end of the town as—

HORNER As the great ones; nay, as their own husbands.

QUACK And to the city dames as aniseed Robin⁶ of filthy and contemptible memory; and they will frighten their children with your name, especially their females.

HORNER And cry, "Horner's coming to carry you away." I am only afraid 'twill not be believed. You told 'em 'twas by an English-French disaster,⁷ and an English-French surgeon, who has given me at once not only a cure but an antidote for the future against that damned malady, and that worse distemper, love, and all other women's evils?

QUACK Your late journey into France has made it the more credible, and your being here a fortnight before you appeared in public looks as if you apprehended the shame, which I wonder you do not. Well, I have been hired by young gallants to belie 'em t'other way; but you are the first would be thought a man unfit for women.

HORNER Dear Mr. Doctor, let vain rogues be contented only to be thought abler men than they are, generally 'tis all the pleasure they have; but mine lies another way.

QUACK You take, methinks, a very preposterous way to it, and as ridiculous as if we operators in physic should put forth bills to disparage our medicaments, with hopes to gain customers.

HORNER Doctor, there are quacks in love as well as physic, who get but the fewer and worse patients for their boasting; a good name is seldom got by giving it oneself, and women no more than honor are compassed by bragging. Come, come, doctor, the wisest lawyer never discovers⁸ the merits of his cause till the trial; the wealthiest man conceals his riches, and the cunning gamester his play. Shy husbands and keepers, like old rooks,⁹ are not to be cheated but by a new unpracticed trick; false friendship will pass now no more than false dice upon 'em; no, not in the city.

Enter BOY.

BOY There are two ladies and a gentleman coming up.

Exit.

HORNER A pox! some unbelieving sisters of my former acquaintance, who, I am afraid, expect their sense should be satisfied of the falsity of the report. No—this formal fool and women!

6. A notorious hermaphrodite.

7. Venereal disease.

8. Reveals.

9. Swindlers, cheats.

Enter SIR JASPER FIDGET, LADY FIDGET, and MRS. DAINTY FIDGET.

QUACK His wife and sister.

SIR JASPER FIDGET My coach breaking just now before your door, sir, I look upon as an occasional¹ reprimand to me, sir, for not kissing your hands, sir, since your coming out of France, sir; and so my disaster, sir, has been my good fortune, sir; and this is my wife and sister, sir.

HORNER What then, sir?

SIR JASPER FIDGET My lady, and sister, sir.—Wife, this is Master Horner.

LADY FIDGET Master Horner, husband!

SIR JASPER FIDGET My lady, my Lady Fidget, sir.

HORNER So, sir.

SIR JASPER FIDGET Won't you be acquainted with her sir?—[*Aside.*] So, the report is true, I find, by his coldness or aversion to the sex; but I'll play the wag with him.—Pray salute my wife, my lady, sir.

HORNER I will kiss no man's wife, sir, for him, sir; I have taken my eternal leave, sir, of the sex already, sir.

SIR JASPER FIDGET [*aside*] Ha, ha, ha! I'll plague him yet.—Not know my wife, sir?

HORNER I do know your wife, sir; she's a woman, sir, and consequently a monster, sir, a greater monster than a husband, sir.

SIR JASPER FIDGET A husband! how, sir?

HORNER So, sir; but I make no more cuckolds, sir.

*Makes horns.*²

SIR JASPER FIDGET Ha, ha, ha! Mercury, Mercury!³

LADY FIDGET Pray, Sir Jasper, let us be gone from this rude fellow.

MRS. DAINTY FIDGET Who, by his breeding, would think he had ever been in France?

LADY FIDGET Foh! he's but too much a French fellow, such as hate women of quality and virtue for their love to their husbands, Sir Jasper; a woman is hated by 'em as much for loving her husband as for loving their money. But pray let's be gone.

HORNER You do well, madam, for I have nothing that you came for. I have brought over not so much as a bawdy picture, new postures, nor the second part of the *École des Filles*, nor—⁴

QUACK [*apart to* HORNER] Hold, for shame, sir! What d'ye mean? You'll ruin yourself forever with the sex—

SIR JASPER FIDGET Ha, ha, ha! He hates women perfectly, I find.

MRS. DAINTY FIDGET What pity 'tis he should.

1. Timely.

2. Sign of the cuckold.

3. Used in treating venereal disease.

4. Horner refers to pornographic items: "postures" (obscene engravings) had long been associated with the *Sonetti lussuriosi* of Aretino (c. 1524); *École des filles*, by one Mililot, was available in London at least by 1668.

LADY FIDGET Ay, he's a base, rude fellow for't; but affectation makes not a woman more odious to them than virtue.

HORNER Because your virtue is your greatest affectation, madam.

LADY FIDGET How, you saucy fellow! Would you wrong my honor?

HORNER If I could.

LADY FIDGET How d'ye mean, sir?

SIR JASPER FIDGET Ha, ha, ha! No, he can't wrong your ladyship's honor, upon my honor; he, poor man—hark you in your ear—a mere eunuch.

LADY FIDGET O filthy French beast! foh, foh! Why do we stay? Let's be gone; I can't endure the sight of him.

SIR JASPER FIDGET Stay but till the chairs come; they'll be here presently.

LADY FIDGET No, no.

SIR JASPER FIDGET Nor can I stay longer. 'Tis—let me see, a quarter and a half quarter of a minute past eleven; the council will be sat, I must away. Business must be preferred always before love and ceremony with the wise, Mr. Horner.

HORNER And the impotent, Sir Jasper.

SIR JASPER FIDGET Ay, ay, the impotent, Master Horner, ha, ha, ha!

LADY FIDGET What, leave us with a filthy man alone in his lodgings?

SIR JASPER FIDGET He's an innocent man now, you know. Pray stay, I'll hasten the chairs to you.—Mr. Horner, your servant; I should be glad to see you at my house. Pray come and dine with me, and play at cards with my wife after dinner; you are fit for women at that game yet, ha, ha!—[*Aside.*] 'Tis as much a husband's prudence to provide innocent diversion for a wife as to hinder her unlawful pleasures, and he had better employ her than let her employ herself.—Farewell.

HORNER Your servant, Sir Jasper.

Exit SIR JASPER.

LADY FIDGET I will not stay with him, foh!

HORNER Nay, madam, I beseech you stay, if it be but to see I can be as civil to ladies yet as they would desire.

LADY FIDGET No, no, foh! You cannot be civil to ladies.

MRS. DAINTY FIDGET You as civil as ladies would desire?

LADY FIDGET No, no, no! foh, foh, foh!

Exeunt LADY FIDGET and MRS. DAINTY.

QUACK Now, I think, I, or you yourself rather, have done your business with the women.

HORNER Thou art an ass. Don't you see already, upon the report and my carriage, this grave man of business leaves his wife in my lodgings, invites me to his house and wife, who before would not be acquainted with me out of jealousy?

QUACK Nay, by this means you may be the more acquainted with the husbands, but the less with the wives.