ABSTRACT

MARY ELIZABETH MARTINEZ
Homosociality and the Place of the Woman in the Works of the Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comic Stage
(Under the Direction of Dr. Elizabeth Kraft)

The element of homosociality, as defined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Between Men: English Literature and the Male Homosocial Desire,* permeates the realm of the Restoration and eighteenth-century comic stage in which the most significant relationships most often exist solely between male characters. The female characters in these dramas, therefore, in many ways represent mere props through which the exclusively male relationships are altered or stimulated; these women, however, cleverly learn the most profitable way to function in such an atmosphere. This thesis explores the defining theme of homosociality in relation to the reactions and responses of female characters, as well as in relation to the effect of homosociality on the male-female dynamic of many of the most illustrative comedic plays of this time period. This study also examines the transformation of the homosocial aspect throughout the era as influenced by the rise of the sentimental comedy, as well as by the emergence of the laughing comedy in reaction to sentimentalism. Rooted in Sedgwick's theory of homosociality, this thesis extends and manipulates her analysis, navigating through the homosocial worlds of the most representative Restoration and eighteenth-century dramatic comedies with great emphasis on William Wycherley's *The Country Wife,* William Congreve's *The Way of the World,* Colley Cibber's *The Careless Husband,* George Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem,* and Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*.

INDEX WORDS: Homosociality, Place of the Woman in Homosocial Drama, Restoration Comedy, Eighteenth-Century Comedy, Comedy of Manners, Sentimentalism, Sentimental Comedy, Laughing Comedy

HOMOSOCIALITY AND THE PLACE OF THE WOMAN IN THE WORKS OF THE RESTORATION AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY COMIC STAGE

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my incredible mother, the woman who willingly spent hours listening to me as I obsessed over homosociality, women, and comedy, always encouraging me with a smile in her voice. And to my father, the always logical-minded man who surprisingly took such an interest in this project, thereby making the feat of writing this thesis even more worthwhile.

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I also would like to thank Dr. John Vance for taking the time to review my thesis and serve as reader for this project. When Dr. Kraft first suggested Dr. Vance as a possible reader, I was quite aware of his reputation as an expert in the field, and his approval of my thesis means more to me as a literary writer than an A+ grade on any paper possibly could.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The concept of homosociality, generally defined as "of, relating to, or involving social relationships between persons of the same sex and especially between men," encompasses the principal theme explored by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her revolutionary analysis of English literature entitled *Between Men: English Literature and the Male Homosocial Desire* ("Homosociality"). While Sedgwick examines in detail numerous works spanning centuries of English text, this study will focus primarily on select representative works from the Restoration and eighteenth-century comic stage. These particular dramas have been selected for the purposes of this study based on their capacity to most clearly illustrate the correlating theme of homosociality throughout this particular era and genre in English literature. The element of homosociality permeates the realm of Restoration and eighteenth-century dramatic works in which the principal relationships most often exist exclusively between male characters. Sedgwick, in fact, largely develops her theory by analyzing the homosocial structure of one of the most exemplary Restoration comedies, William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*. The social domain depicted in this infamous comedy of manners, first performed in London in 1675, represents the epitome of a homosocial environment in which the significant relationships exist between men and in which the action revolves around the statuses of these relationships.

The presence of such a society structured primarily by male bonds invariably raises the question of the place of the woman in the patriarchal worlds of these plays. Sedgwick

emphasizes the impossibility of thoroughly investigating the homosociality of these works without considering its "relation to women and the gender system as a whole" (Sedgwick 1). Due to the emphasis on male-male associations in these plays, the female characters in many ways represent mere props through which the exclusively male relationships are altered or stimulated. In this type of society "where men and women differ in their access to power," the women are often socially and economically defined solely by their husbands (Sedgwick 2). These often astute women, however, cleverly adapt to their situations, frequently learning the most profitable way to function in such an atmosphere, even as the men generally possess the money, the control, and the upper hand. The female characters adapt to their different social and marital situations in various ways, often through the development of their own homosocial bonds with other women or through the cunning manipulation of the men who sometimes find themselves outwitted by the assumed weaker sex. Although Sedgwick limits her analysis of Restoration drama to *The Country Wife*, her theory of homosociality, along with the examination of the female response to the homosocial domain, remains intriguing, applicable, and even essential to the comprehensive analysis of other works of the Restoration and eighteenth-century comic stage. In pursuit of this idea, this study will examine an extensive range of such plays in the homosocial light provided by Sedgwick, essentially utilizing the foundation of her analysis in order to expand, modify, and apply her theory to these additional works.

The Country Wife "sets the stage," so to speak, for the homosocial worlds depicted in subsequent comedies throughout the Restoration period, such as George Etherege's *The Man of Mode*, Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, and Sir John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*. Furthermore, the underlying foundation of homosociality persists even after the turn of the century but not without significant shifts in later plays. For instance, although William Congreve's *The Way of the*

World, first performed in 1700, is considered the paramount example of the Restoration comedy of manners, Congreve drastically deviates from the model of homosociality presented by his much lewder predecessor, Wycherley (Case 307). The homosocial element undoubtedly remains present in Congreve's last and best production, but this work portrays a slightly alternate world in which the homosocial sphere is less emphasized and slightly weakened by the atypical power of the female characters of this play, who are assertive, free-thinking, and independent, or so they seem. Positioned right at the turn of the century, *The Way of the World* neatly marks a considerable shift in the homosocial aspect of Restoration and eighteenth-century comic works, introducing a new realm of comedy, and for this reason, among others, Congreve's influential transitional play will be examined in further detail later in this study.

The introduction to Congreve's fundamental work in *British Dramatists from Dryden to Sheridan* claims that after the production of this play, "subsequent dramatists could either continue writing in a mode which had reached perfection […] or they could develop new modes of comedy" (Case 307). Eighteenth-century playwrights began pursuing the latter as comedic design shifted from often satirical comedy of ridicule to less cynical, softer-edged comedy that portrayed ideal behaviors meant to inspire imitation, and with this shift in theatrical taste came a transformation in the homosocial element of these comedies, as well (Case 307-308). Many factors influenced this alteration in the works being produced on the comic stage. Around the time of Jeremy Collier's 1698 *Short View*, an attack on the immorality of the Restoration stage, movements for moral reform had been emerging for quite some time; the libertine enthusiast Charles II had died over ten years earlier, being replaced by the more restrained and morally conservative William and Mary, and audiences gradually began rejecting the sharp bite of typical

Restoration comedy, thereby encouraging a modification of comedic drama being produced in the early eighteenth century (Case 387).

Perhaps the most significant result of this shift was the rise of sentimentalism, a theatrical movement catalyzed by Colley Cibber that emphasized moral instruction on the stage through the employment of exemplary characters, appealing to emotions rather than intellect and evoking a sympathetic response from audiences (Case 395-396). Cibber first introduced the sentimental comedy in 1696 with his play *Love's Last Shift*, to which Vanbrugh satirically responded with *The Relapse*, and eight years later Cibber's 1704 production of *The Careless Husband* solidified the establishment of the sentimental mode (Case 396). An alteration to the homosocial aspect found in the comedies of manners accompanied the development of this novel style, as well. For instance, although the existence of a male-dominated homosocial environment in Cibber's *The Careless Husband* proves undeniable, the play's guise of a heartwarming tale of love's conquering power somewhat debilitates the homosocial potency. Moreover, the milder female characters found in this play, including that of the faithful, obedient wife, differ greatly from their predecessors in terms of their modes of adaptation and their reactions to the male homosociality that surrounds them.

Responses to this new sentimental vogue varied, with some playwrights like Richard Steele strictly adhering to and reinforcing Cibber's efforts to moralize the stage through the sentimental, as he did in his 1722 work *The Conscious Lovers*, from which he excluded all debauchery in both action and dialogue (Case 435). Meanwhile, other playwrights, namely George Farquhar with his 1707 play *The Beaux' Stratagem*, fused the comedy of manners with sentimentalism, demonstrating the new possibilities for the female character in a slightly altered

homosocial world. Other eighteenth-century dramatists, however, especially toward the final quarter of the century, vehemently rejected typical sentimentalism in favor of an at least partial return to the wit and humor of the Restoration comedy of manners.

Oliver Goldsmith led this retrogressive movement, beginning with "An Essay on the Theatre; or, A Comparison between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy," published in *Westminster Magazine* in December of 1772. In this influential essay, Goldsmith reacts to the rise of sentimentalism and declares his preoccupations concerning the lack of humor on the late eighteenth-century stage, an unfortunate result of sentimentalism that he says will lead to the loss "of the art of laughing" ("An Essay" 753). He also dismisses traditional sentimentalism as "pathetic, […] weeping […] comedy" in which "folly, instead of being ridiculed, is commended" ("An Essay" 751-752). Furthermore, Goldsmith's well-received play, *She Stoops to Conquer; or, The Mistakes of a Night*, first performed in 1773, sixty-nine years after Cibber's *The Careless Husband*, represents his major effort at rejecting or possibly only redefining sentimentalism through a partial return to what he called "laughing comedy" (Case 755). In this work, Goldsmith revisits the traditional concept of comedy prevalent in previous decades but fails to return to the harsh lewdness and cynicism of Etherege or Wycherley, with his play perhaps most resembling the more muted comedy of Congreve. However, *She Stoops to Conquer* disrupts the homosocial world of the traditional comedy of manners by subduing male dominance to a certain extent as the female characters possess control of much of the social realm, making this play a significant marker of yet another shift in homosociality on the comic stage.

This study will navigate through the homosocial worlds of these Restoration and eighteenth-century dramatic comedies with great emphasis on Wycherley's *The Country Wife*,

Congreve's *The Way of the World*, Cibber's *The Careless Husband*, Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem*, and Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. In doing so, the foundation of this thesis will have its roots in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis of homosociality in English literature, principally her research conducted on *The Country Wife*; however, this study will extend and manipulate Sedgwick's analysis in order to apply her theory of homosociality to additional Restoration and eighteenth-century comedic plays, allowing a more exhaustive evaluation of such works in terms of their homosocial element. Furthermore, this examination will focus primarily on the effects of homosociality on the female characters of each play and the responses of these women to the homosocial realms in which they find themselves. This work also will explore the defining theme of homosociality in relation to the male-female dynamic of these illustrative comedies and will trace the diverse modifications and distortions of the homosocial aspect in each individual play, noting the influences of the rise of the sentimental mode and the subsequent emergence of the laughing comedy.

CHAPTER TWO
THE COUNTRY WIFE: AN EPITOMIC REPRESENTATION OF THE HOMOSOCIALITY OF THE RESTORATION COMIC STAGE

William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* represents the most illustrative example of the homosociality of the Restoration comic stage, a claim supported by Sedgwick's decision to examine this particular play in order to further develop her theory of homosociality in reference to this specific era of English literature. The social sphere in this play exemplifies the concept of a homosocial world, and Sedgwick notes that the work also offers "a comprehensive range of responses to a social situation in which the routing of homosocial desire through women is clearly presented as compulsory," a notion that remains constant in other Restoration and eighteenth-century comedies, as well (49). Sedgwick's assertion regarding the conveyance of male homosocial desire through women reinforces the image of the female character as a mere prop through which the homosocial world is affected in some way, thereby also indicating that the value of a woman is determined by her usefulness in the homosocial domain. Furthermore, Sedgwick's claim also suggests that Wycherley's work demonstrates the reactions and responses of the women to such treatment, which is a possibly less visible but equally essential aspect of homosociality that requires examination.

The routing of male homosocial desire through women perhaps first becomes clearly visible in *The Country Wife* through the portrayal of the relationship between Sparkish and Alithea. Sparkish, "one of those nauseous offerers at wit" who embodies the foolish, "traditional fop of Restoration comedy," entertains dreams of becoming one of the wits but demonstrates his

lack of potential as he constantly thrusts together his fiancée, Alithea, and his truly witty friend, Harcourt (I.i; Young 122). In doing so, "his strongest motive is […] to use his wife, and Harcourt's approval of her, as an intensifier of his homosocial bond with Harcourt and the wits" (Sedgwick 51). Douglas Young suggests that Sparkish's "love of Alithea is dependent on the approval of others," but in reality Sparkish harbors no true affection for his bride-to-be (125). His future wife interests him solely on the level of her usefulness as a beneficial device through which he can improve his status among the wits and strengthen his bonds with other men within the male homosocial world, in which he uses Alithea as a type of living currency that retains no value outside of homosocial transactions (Sedgwick 52-53). Even the engagement of Sparkish to Alithea entails a homosocial exchange and monetary arrangement as her brother, Pinchwife, grants Sparkish "five thousand pounds to lie with my sister" (Young 122; I.i). Sedgwick asserts that through this treatment of Alithea, Sparkish demonstrates that he grasps the demands of pure homosociality which mandates that male-female relationships exist only in secondary and complementary relation to males' bonds with other males (51). Peter Hynes concurs with Sedgwick regarding Sparkish's accurate interpretation of the concept of homosociality, but he argues that Sparkish nevertheless embodies "the play's outstanding coxcomb" in that he witnesses everything between Harcourt and Alithea but understands nothing (166). Sparkish idiotically ignores Harcourt's advances by dismissing them as "what we wits do for one another, and never take any notice," thereby enabling his friend to further establish himself in the dominant role in both the homosocial relationship between these two men as well as in the male-female relationship with Alithea (II.i). Brian Corman agrees with Hynes's assessment of Sparkish, as well, asserting that while Harcourt appears to transform from the traditional rake to a comic hero, representing the male half of an authentically witty pair, Sparkish remains a fop

throughout the entire play, being too preoccupied with his status in the homosocial domain to even notice as the very man he is trying to impress gradually steals his fiancée right out from under him (61-62).

Furthermore, while Sparkish unwittingly participates in a homosocial competition with Harcourt for the possession of Alithea, the other male characters in this play partake in their own homosocial rivalries, as well. Sedgwick asserts that in the homosocially competitive realm of this play, "cuckoldry is the main social engine of the aristocratic society depicted," which reemphasizes the routing of homosocial desire through women, who represent key pawns in games of cuckolding (49). Because the principal relationships between the male characters in this text mainly revolve around cuckoldry, the act of cuckolding represents the core of male homosocial preoccupation in this work as the men either constantly obsess over the possibility of being cuckolded (Pinchwife), plot to cuckold a fellow man (Horner), or even inadvertently and foppishly encourage their own transformation into a cuckold (Sparkish). Furthermore, H.W. Matalene states that "the lesson of *The Country Wife* is that 'Nature' […] has little or nothing to do with bringing about particular acts of sexual intercourse" but rather "the real sources of human sexuality are more social than biological" (397). This implies that the motives behind cuckoldry are not based on the desire for or pleasure gained from sex with women but rather on the homosocial competition that occurs between the men in their homosocial domain.

The rakish character Horner, for instance, represents the most active participant in this male homosocial game, and "given that the object of man's existence is to cuckold men, Horner is a master" (Sedgwick 55). Matalene suggests that Horner best understands sexual desire through the metaphor of hunger, and this classic Restoration rake certainly has the reputation of a

sexual glutton (397). Matalene fails to recognize, however, that women themselves do not satisfy this insatiable hunger because this particular desire arises not from an urge to feed his libido as much as from the urge to dominate the other men of society. John Vance supports this idea, asserting that "we have long judged Horner's motivation in the play as the consummation of his lust, but his initial stimulation seems more the result of the destructive male impulse," and "he [Horner] is aware that the grandest expression of power over other men, not over women, is in sexual conquest" (83). Horner's sexual adventures, therefore, provide him with homosocial, rather than heterosexual, power and satisfaction. Moreover, Sedgwick points out that Horner's very name, literally understood as one who places horns, the symbol of a cuckold, on another man, alludes to this homosocially-oriented, power-hungry facet of Horner's character by making it "explicit that the act of cuckolding a man, rather than of enjoying a woman, is his first concern" (56). Pat Gill supports this interpretation of the rake's namesake, as well as Vance's evaluation of Horner's personal motivations, as she declares that "Horner's name seems a sign more of hostility toward men than of desire for women" ("Interpreting" 59). Therefore, as his candid name proclaims, Horner essentially represents a homosocial threat to married men through the danger of his pure sexual potency.

Adding even more danger to his sexual prowess, Horner represents the most adept schemer of the play, as is expected of a Restoration rake. He is a master strategist who continually devises various plans to skillfully deceive the easily duped husbands in order to gain easy access to their often licentious wives. Horner exposes his deviant nature in the very first scene of the play as he discusses his newest plan of attack with Doctor Quack. Recently returned to England from France, he gives the doctor a task, instructing him to essentially ruin Horner's masculine reputation of virility. Dr. Quack completes his mission, assuring Horner, "I have

undone you forever with the women, and reported you throughout the whole town as bad as a eunuch" (I.i). By claiming to have been treated for syphilis with mercury while in France and professing himself impotent, Horner executes an ingenious strategy that allows him to get more than cozy with the women while being suspected of nothing by the men, thereby developing an even more treacherous angle to his game of cuckoldry. Gill confirms that "this sexual subterfuge secures him [Horner] entrance into the fashionable homes of London from which his rakish reputation had hitherto debarred him," and because of this clever scheme, "Horner becomes one of society's greatest dissemblers" ("Interpreting" 56-57). Sedgwick notes that triumph over fellow men in the homosocial domain "requires a willingness and ability to temporarily risk, or assume, a feminized status," that of a eunuch, and Horner's compliance with such a constraint allows him to establish his mastery over the other men (53). Horner is both "highly sensitive to the hidden motivations of males, and clever enough to subvert and use them for his own purposes," qualities which allow him to cunningly manipulate the other characters in order to control the male homosocial realm (Vance 85).

First of all, "by assuming the pose of an emasculated male—that ultimate state to which other males, himself included, attempt to push their brothers—Horner cleverly attempts to defuse the explosive possibility of being successfully assailed by others" (Vance 81). By pretending to remove himself from the arena of homosocial competition by feigning impotency, Horner deprives his fellow men of the opportunity to emasculate him, which allows him to focus his attention on emasculating others rather than on defending himself against emasculation. At the same time, Horner's scheme also removes any threat the husbands may feel regarding their wives' interactions with him. He declares to Sir Jasper Fidget, "I make no more cuckolds, sir," and, ironically, swearing to have renounced his life of cuckolding allows him the freedom to

cuckold with ease (I.i). The husbands who so carefully guarded their wives now even encourage Horner to engage with them. Sir Jasper, for example, tells Horner, "Call my wife mistress. […] Thou shalt for my sake […] have your liberty with her," foolishly attempting to use Horner as a safe distraction for his wife, passing her "off to one who is presumed impotent so that she may be diverted and 'employed,' while he pursues his own interests," attending to the business of the bourgeoisie (I.i; Young 121). Gill affirms Jasper's imprudent inattentiveness, claiming, "Always too busy to attend to his wife himself, Sir Jasper allows his keen interest in business to blind him to the sexual cravings and activities of his spouse," as well as to the unchanged sexual potency of Horner ("Gender" 203).

Using this cunning, two-pronged approach, "Horner is now able to pretend […] to his men friends that he now can value only homosocial bonds," thereby alleviating any threat the men may have felt (Sedgwick 57). Even more importantly, "at the same time as men mistakenly see him as entirely homosocial, he can convince the women that he alone among the men is entirely heterosexual, more interested in them than in their husbands' opinion of him," thereby craftily ensuring the cooperation of the women in his plot to cuckold their husbands (Sedgwick 57). Horner becomes one big, virile force of falsity in that, as noted by Gill, he spouts lies indiscriminately, deceiving fops, foolish husbands, women, and even his closest friends in order to dominate the male homosocial domain ("Interpreting" 59-60). He professes to the men, "Women serve but to keep a man from better company; though I can't enjoy them, I shall you the more," but Gill accurately asserts that "if loss of manhood prompts his assertion of the importance of male camaraderie, then the counterfeit character of that loss promptly undermines the assertion" (I.i; "Interpreting" 60). Horner does not hesitate to deceive his male comrades in order to cleverly seduce their women, thereby suggesting that homosocial friendship is

subordinate to the sexual conquests that grant him homosocial victory over other men (Vance 87). In addition, these so-called friends and comrades delight in what they perceive to be their own passive homosocial victories over the "emasculated" Horner. His closest "friends," Dorilant and Harcourt, snidely remind Horner repeatedly of his unfortunate "condition," while Sparkish relishes Horner's supposed sexual demise, as does Sir Jasper who "clearly delights in another male's humiliation and is more than willing to inflict further pain" as he boasts, "Ha, ha, ha! I'll plague him yet" (Vance 82; I.i). Pinchwife, on the other hand, remains unaware of Horner's rumored impotency, which makes him the only male character who perceives Horner's homosocial aggression and who correctly understands that Horner derives pleasure primarily from homosocial power (Gill, "Interpreting" 64). Pinchwife, therefore, embodies the principal concern of the husbands in this play, that of being cuckolded, and continues his efforts at secluding his country wife from the reach of Horner's sexual appetite, thereby reinforcing the homosocial fixation on cuckoldry in the play.

Feigning impotency also allows Horner to discover which women harbor a desire for sexual affairs by "provoking direct, unequivocal statements of revulsion at the idea of a eunuch" (Hynes 175). The clever rake defends the logic of his scheme, self-assuredly claiming, "She that shows an aversion to me [a eunuch] loves the sport," and he subsequently proves this theory (I.i). The element of strategy and the cuckolding of the man, rather than the actual sex with the woman, represent the sources of the pleasure Horner receives from his sexual endeavors. His homosocial desires, rather than the desires that originate from below the belt, motivate his actions, and the prospect of achieving his own personal victory over the other men by sleeping with their wives right under their noses represents his chief homosocial incentive. Horner's ability to cuckold his fellow men without their knowledge confirms his dominance in terms of

cleverness and masculinity in the homosocial realm, providing him with a homosocial sense of fulfillment and control. Sedgwick brilliantly affirms this, claiming that "the play makes clear in many ways that, far from renouncing or subordinating the male-homosocial destination of desire, Horner has actually elevated it to a newly transcendent status," a status that the foolish husbands do not have the power to reach (56).

In the homosocial world of *The Country Wife*, the majority of the female characters simply function as the tools used by the men in the game of cuckoldry, but these women adapt to their surroundings, developing their own tactics that allow them to maneuver through this sexually intensified, male-dominated society. As previously stated, Sedgwick declares that this play offers a clear view of an extensive range of responses to male homosocial desire, including those of the female characters (49). These women demonstrate their impressive shrewdness and cunning as they respond to their manipulation in the male homosocial world by creating their own rules and doing what they please, often forming their own homosocial bonds. For instance, "Lady Fidget, Mrs. Squeamish, and Mrs. Dainty, the women of the town, are perfectly comfortable with the way of the world" and react to male homosociality by fostering their own substantial, though superficial, homosocial bonds. They also illustrate a rebellious response to their husbands' homosocial preoccupations by entertaining themselves in any way they choose, often enjoying adulterous affairs with the town's gallants. For instance, as soon as Lady Fidget is provided a moment alone with Horner, she confidently asks him, "Could you be so generous, so truly a man of honor, as for the sakes of us women of honor, to cause yourself to reported no man [eunuch]? No man! And to suffer yourself the greatest shame that could fall upon a man, that none might fall upon us women […]?" (II.i). "As a volatile sexual creature knowledgeable of Horner's former proficiency," she recognizes Horner's deviousness and is eager to accept the

female role in his sexual plot, excitedly inquiring of his virility, "But indeed, sir, as perfectly, perfectly, the same man as before your going into France, sir?" (Vance 83; II.i). Horner assures her that he is indeed the same man that he was before his trip to France by confessing that he is not impotent in the slightest. Then, like a true rake, he declares to Lady Fidget, "I scorn you should take my word; I desire to be tried only, madam," and they consequently begin, or quite possibly resume, their affair (II.i). As demonstrated in this scene, Lady Fidget shrewdly realizes her economic and social dependence on her husband, but she also responds to his homosocial neglect by making her own rules and embracing her sexuality, confidently approaching a known womanizer with adultery as her single motivation.

In addition, "she [Lady Fidget] and her 'virtuous gang' devote themselves to divorcing the notion of honor from any moral reference," homosocially consorting in order to achieve the same social goal (Gill, "Interpreting" 62). These scandalous friends appear extremely self-aware in that they recognize the ridiculousness of the concepts of honesty and virtue in relation to women of their social stature who have husbands such as theirs. Gill asserts that these women are "amenable to secret rendezvous, unmoved by moral concerns but solicitous of their social standing," and, therefore, regarding these women, "honor now refers to reputation" ("Interpreting" 62-63). Jessica Munns also emphasizes the fact that "Lady Fidget and her friends treat insincerity as normal- the way of the world in a world where all appearances, words, and oaths intimate their reversal" (152). Lady Fidget firmly acknowledges this female insincerity as she openly asserts, "…we women make use of our reputation, as you men of yours, only to deceive the world with less suspicion. Our virtue is […] but to cheat those that trust us" (V.iv). Mrs. Squeamish supports this assertion, as well, informing Horner, "And that demureness, coyness, and modesty that you see in our faces in the boxes at plays, is as much a sign of a kind

of woman as a vizard-mask in the pit" (V.iv). These female characters embody self-professing adulteresses who reveal that "the women who make the greatest fuss about honor, virtue, and chastity are in fact the most lustful and therefore the most promising subjects" for cuckolding affairs (Hynes 174).

Lady Fidget and her promiscuous cohorts also reverse the traditional treatment of female sexuality by causing Horner's sexual potency to be "publically objectified, quantified, and judged, as women's bodies are," thereby asserting themselves in the homosocial atmosphere by behaving like lustful men in this way (Sedgwick 58). The china scene demonstrates this transformation of a man's virility into an object for exchange as the women get greedy when Mrs. Squeamish claims, "I'll have some china too" and subsequently is denied that which symbolizes Horner's sexual services (IV.iii). Lady Fidget simply tells her that "he [Horner] has no more left" (IV.iii). This scene illustrates the female homosocial competition of the play as the women compete for sexual gratification, to which Horner is the key. The drinking scene in Act V also demonstrates this female homosocial rivalry, as well as the bond between these three women, as they arrive at Horner's lodgings to enjoy a night away from their insufferable husbands. At this point, all three women have had affairs with the "eunuch," but each one remains unaware that Horner has serviced the others. Lady Fidget first realizes Horner's dissembling, and she subsequently prompts confessions from her rivals by proclaiming, "This is my false villain," a claim to which Mrs. Squeamish responds, "And mine too," while Mrs. Dainty Fidget choruses, "And mine" (V.iv). These women remain undeterred, however, as they designate themselves "sister sharers," forgetting their homosocial rivalry in order to retain their homosocial friendship and enjoy the same heterosexual pleasures (V.iv). This scene along with the china scene exposes the way in which these women thrust themselves into the homosocial

world not only through the construction of their own homosocial bonds but also by behaving like female rakes and by willingly aiding the cuckolding of their husbands. They demonstrate that homosociality is not limited strictly to the men, and although much of their attention circles around a member of the opposite sex, Lady Fidget and her minions nonetheless successfully form their own homosocial world isolated from the constraints of polite society.

Margery Pinchwife represents a special case in this play only in that she is a little late on the draw, first appearing in the play as a naïve and innocent country bumpkin recently married to the most jealous of all jealous husbands. Hynes observes that the cuckold plot involving Margery juxtaposes the other involving Lady Fidget and her gang in that Margery remains unaware of Horner's feigned impotency, leaving nothing but raw, untutored lust to compel her towards him (173). The other wives are neglected by their husbands while Margery is kept isolated from the outside world by her overly covetous spouse. She laments that she "must stay at home like a poor, lonely, sullen bird in a cage" due to her husband's homosocially driven fears of cuckoldry (III.i). Pinchwife's possessive and overprotective behavior as a husband is exaggerated to the extent that he even teaches his wife how to cuckold him simply by his constant ranting on the subject (Sedgwick 53). As a result, Margery reacts to her husband's homosocially based obsession in relatively the same way as the Lady Fidget-type characters, through attempts at sexual endeavors with a man other than her dreadful husband. Gill confirms this, stating that "in describing evils, her jealous husband Pinchwife whets her appetite for them, unwittingly instructing his wife in the way of the town […], thereby ensuring Horner's conquest" ("Interpreting" 64). Pinchwife himself even admits, "Well, if thou cuckold me, 'twill be my own fault" (III.i).

Margery also responds to her husband's homosocial preoccupations by turning to her sister-in-law, Alithea, for comfort and homosocial companionship. These two women interact intimately in the private sphere, forming their own homosocial bond as Alithea consoles Margery and defends her against the insults of her awful brother, Margery's husband. As Vance notes, "becoming increasingly aware of her surroundings, Margery soon understands the reciprocal requirements of sisterhood," as well, and she begins to defend her sister-in-law in return, beseeching her husband, "Indeed be not angry with her Bud" (94; II.i). This homosocial bond only carries so much weight, however, as Margery "promptly exchanges Alithea's good name for her own sullied one" in order to escape her husband's reprimands and gain free access to Horner's bed, thereby betraying her homosocial bond with Alithea (Gill, "Interpreting" 65). After Pinchwife discovers Margery's love letter to Horner, she quickly concocts a series of lies, claiming that "'twas she [Alithea] made me write the letter […]. Because, lest Mr. Horner should be cruel, and refuse her; or vain afterwards, and show the letter, she might disown it, the hand not being hers" (IV.iv). "Pinchwife, out of fear of being cuckolded, is easily duped by Margery," and because "he would rather lose a sister to Horner than his wife," he willingly laps up the delusions Margery provides for him (Young 130). In pursuit of her own desires, Margery selfishly endangers the reputation and honor of her sister-in-law, forsaking female homosociality in favor of a heterosexual affair with Horner, which she achieves after disguising herself as Alithea so that her husband will ferry her to Horner's apartment.

The virtuous Alithea, on the other hand, is the only woman who even remotely confronts the homosociality of the play without lowering herself. Even her name "is suggestive of her moral character for it is the English rendition of the Greek word meaning 'truth,'" and Alithea is "exactly defined by her exact truthfulness" (Young 120; Sedgwick 59). While she resembles the

other women in that she does what she pleases by "fluttering about abroad" and by accepting a suitor based on her own terms, she differs from them in that she is committed to honoring morality (III.i). Although she obviously feels no real love for Sparkish, she accepts him as her fiancé because he is not jealous, and she remains faithful to him until he dishonorably breaks off the engagement, convinced that Alithea has cuckolded him with Horner due to Margery's injurious plot. Gill declares that Alithea represents "a Restoration heroine, the character who serves as the worldly representation of virtue and as the moral backdrop before which the satire can unleash its attack on depravity," a claim supported by Young, who confirms that "Wycherley utilizes her as a direct contrast with the other ladies and gentlemen who reside in that world" ("Interpreting" 66; 118). Young also notes, however, that Alithea "is often pushed into the background of the play," but he maintains his belief that "she remains always the reference point for the audience to judge the true from the false" (119). Even her homosocial relationship with Margery augments the strength of Alithea's status as a reference point for truth in that Margery's wench-like behavior ultimately serves as a foil for Alithea's commitment to virtue.

Furthermore, in such a world where male-female relationships are undervalued to such an extent and are manipulated in favor of homosocial relationships between men, the possibility of witty pairs, equal partnerships between clever men and women who constantly challenge each other, is undermined and called into question. In *The Country Wife*, the outlook on marriage is incredibly dismal, but Harcourt and Alithea, who finally unite in the end, provide a possible exception. Harcourt is a witty fellow, like Horner, but his motives greatly differ from those of his rakish comrade. For instance, as Harcourt deceives Sparkish in an attempt to gain the favor of Alithea, he is motivated by his true desire for her rather than the desire to be victorious in the homosocial domain, an idea supported by his exclusive commitment to his relationship with her.

Harcourt thereby transcends homosocial manipulation, an idea supported by Young who claims that "his [Harcourt] courtship of Alithea must move to a level beyond the ideals of the fashionable world" (130). He wins her esteem by transcending the hypocrisy and depravity of fashionable society, and, as is expected in a comedy of manners, he also teaches her the ways of the world regarding Sparkish's true nature. Not only does Harcourt teach Alithea, but he also saves her from a miserable marriage and defends her honor in the final scene of the play after Horner unjustly accuses her of an affair in order to protect Margery and the other licentious women. Harcourt vows to Alithea, "I will not only believe your innocence myself, but make all the world believe it," essentially saving her reputation, as well, thereby proving himself worthy of her love (V.iv). Alithea and Harcourt match each other's wit and cleverness, especially as she challenges him in his pursuit of her, and this couple offers a hopeful alternative to the other male-female unions in this play as they find true love instead of a true affair. Although they are shoved to the periphery of the action, Alithea and Harcourt represent an authentic witty pair, thereby providing the only optimistic element throughout the entire text, an optimistic element greatly amplified in subsequent Restoration and eighteenth-century works, beginning with Congreve's *The Way of the World*.

In conclusion, *The Country Wife* exemplifies the concept of a homosocial world, providing a model of such a society for later works. For instance, *The Way of the World* follows this model by exposing a male homosocial domain in which the women once again must learn to function. The women in this subsequent production, however, operate in the homosocial environment quite differently than their predecessors in *The Country Wife*. Furthermore, the witty pair in this text is not hidden in the background like Harcourt and Alithea but is placed in the foreground, highlighted as the main couple around which the action takes place. Due to such

an alteration in the homosocial environment presented on the comic stage, *The Way of the World* will be examined in Chapter Two of this study.

CHAPTER THREE
THE WAY OF THE WORLD AND ITS HOMOSOCIAL DEVIATIONS

The very first scene of William Congreve's *The Way of the World* provides an initial glimpse of the typical, Wycherley-influenced, homosocial realm as the scene begins with a display of the competitive bond between two powerful men, Fainall and Mirabell. On the surface, these men compete in a game of cards, but in reality they engage in a significant homosocial relationship based on a battle of wit, displaying the archetypal male homosociality defined by Sedgwick. Subsequently, the play also introduces a female equivalent to the male homosocial world, thereby immediately illustrating a powerful female response to male homosociality. The power of this female equivalent to the male homosocial realm, moreover, seems astonishing compared to the faint attempts at female homosociality presented in *The Country Wife*, in which even during the drinking scene a man remains the focus of attention. The women in Congreve's play, on the other hand, create a female homosocial environment that is all their own, a "female society of cabalists, […] a same-sex confederacy," as they host weekly gatherings from which "all the male sex should be excepted," although to avoid scandal the women admit two town idiots, Witwoud and Petulant, into their club (Kraft 27; I.i). Fainall explains the concept of these cabal nights to Mirabell, informing him, "You and I are excluded," thereby demonstrating the full control of the women in their exclusive homosocial domain in which they essentially form "a deliberate sisterhood opposed to masculine control" by rejecting the presence of the men in the play (I.i; Kraft 27).

This same scene also reveals that one woman in particular seems to hold the reigns. Lady Wishfort, the mother of Fainall's wife/Mirabell's ex-lover and the aunt of Mirabell's current love interest, the chaste Millamant, controls not only her niece but also Millamant's monetary fortune, which both Fainall and Mirabell covet. Therefore, despite her fickle and foolish nature, Lady Wishfort possesses a high degree of control, at least technically, over the male characters in the play in terms of money and, as far as Mirabell is concerned, marriage prospects. In addition, Congreve's female characters declare their independence and happiness without men, first through their cabal nights but also with their words. Lady Wishfort, for instance, lives without a man and "publishes her detestation of mankind," although the emptiness of her misandrous declarations is meant to be recognized (I.i). Her niece, Millamant, believes that "living […] is not to be compromised by dependence, subordination, or even the love of a gallant" (Young 213). Mrs. Fainall and her false friend, Mrs. Marwood, similarly discuss the worthlessness of men as the former professes, "If we will be happy, we must find the means in ourselves, and among ourselves" without relying on men, and the latter follows her lead, vowing, "I have done hating 'em, and am now come to despise 'em; the next thing I have to do, is eternally to forget 'em" (II.i). Such assertions of independence without men, whether sincere or hollow, separate these women from those in *The Country Wife* in that not one of Wycherley's females even considers, much less proposes, a life without men; those women instead simply switch from man to man in search of often fleeting satisfaction. The women in *The Way of the World*, on the other hand, represent some of the most commanding, independent, and free-willed female characters depicted on the Restoration stage, functioning within the male-dominated homosocial world by attempting to separate themselves from it in order to create their own exclusive society defined by female homosocial bonds. Such a homosocial deviation formulated by the contestation of the

power of the male characters in this work, as well as by the construction of a female-dominated homosocial realm, signals a significant alteration to the homosocially defined gender roles of the Restoration/eighteenth-century comic stage. Therefore, while Sedgwick's theory of homosociality remains pertinent in the examination of Congreve's play, it nonetheless must be expanded and modified in order to further analyze the unique homosocial situations presented in this work.

Furthermore, in addition to the atypical power of the women in this play, the presence of a classic witty pair defies the concept of homosocial domination by mere definition in that a witty pair represents a heterosexual partnership of equals. Unlike in Wycherley's comedy in which the one possible witty pair is visible only in the periphery of the action, in Congreve's comedy, the "love-duel" between the members of the easily identifiable witty couple takes center stage (Young 211). Offering opposition to both male and female homosociality, Mirabell and Millamant rival the homosocial worlds in which the primary relationships exist between members of the same sex in that they engage in a significant relationship between man and woman. Gill discusses the complementary natures of these two characters, as well, describing Mirabell as "witty, charming, virile, seductive, arrogant, and successfully manipulative" and affirming that Millamant "complements him perfectly" ("Interpreting" 118). These characters, therefore, comprise the perfect witty pair, but such a well-balanced relationship does not entail the loss of the commanding natures of these obstinate characters.

Millamant embodies a strong-willed, autonomous woman who refuses to let the man in her life control her, and in her character exists "a rare brilliance and vitality not to be found in the women Wycherley created" (Young 213). Teeming with dazzling wit and harboring a

unfaltering desire for liberty, she plays an intense game of hard-to-get, proclaiming that she will "fly and be followed to the last moment," signifying that she will not be won over without sincere effort put forth by the men who choose to pursue her (IV.iv). In her initial interactions with Mirabell, she "maintains her independence and power over him by refusing his advances, and by surrounding herself with lesser men, the fops and false wits, Witwoud and Petulant, who amuse her and annoy and demean Mirabell" (Young 211). She frustrates and intrigues Mirabell by remaining aloof, mysterious, and even cruel, and she goes so far as to defend her mistreatment of him by explaining, "One's cruelty is one's power; and when one parts with one's cruelty, one parts with one's power," something she proves reluctant to relinquish (II.i). Millamant further demonstrates her commitment to independence and her desire for control as she clarifies that she will not accept any marriage proposal without first reaching an understanding of equality. This stipulation is exemplified in the famous proviso scene of Act IV in which she states her demands, demands to which Mirabell must comply before she will agree to marry him, indicating that "she seriously intends to make her future life on her own terms" (Young 222). She proclaims, "I'll never marry, unless I am first made sure of my will and pleasure," and she begins delineating her conditions, professing, "I'll lie abed in a morning as long as I please," and demanding "liberty to pay and receive visits to and from whom I please; to write and receive letters; […] to be the sole empress of my tea-table" (IV.i). Obviously "the central issue in the proviso is individual liberty and independence," and by insisting on maintaining both, even after marriage, Millamant demonstrates an unprecedented level of self-definition and female power (Young 223).

In turn, Mirabell reveals his own set of demands to which Millamant must agree, as well, indicating that their future partnership will be one of equals. He states, "I covenant that your

acquaintance be general; that you admit no sworn confident, or intimate of your own sex," indicating that he recognizes and acknowledges the threatening power of female homosociality, "a power […] that must be regulated and controlled if the social order is to be preserved" and if his marriage is to succeed (IV.i; Kraft 31). He also forbids her from wearing masks at any time, demanding that she like her own face as long as he does, as well as from wearing tight clothing while pregnant or drinking alcohol at her tea table of which she will be empress (IV.i). Although Mirabell thereby attempts to limit the power of his future bride, which Gill argues represents his attempt to maintain "an explicitly patriarchal social order," Mirabell's slight modifications to Millamant's provisos illustrate that both parties are willing to compromise, which is essential to a successful marriage ("Interpreting" 122). Young supports this idea of compromise, noting that "all the strategies and mechanisms of courtship bargaining in the play-world are utilized until each is assured that the union they are considering will have a satisfactory outcome for each of them" (212). Young also points out that Millamant must fight the hardest because, having less economic and social power and flexibility due to her sex, she has the most to lose in a marriage (212). However, despite the fact that Mirabell does not completely give in to her demands, Millamant continues to represent the rising power of the female character on the Restoration/eighteenth-century comic stage, especially compared to the women in *The Country Wife*, who seldom are depicted making demands, much less ones with which the men in their lives actually comply. Unlike her predecessors found in Wycherley's work, Millamant functions in the male-dominated homosocial world in which she is immersed not only by participating in the female homosocial realm but also by rising above and beating the system of male domination through asserting herself as an equal and engaging in a significant relationship with a man. She constantly challenges her male counterpart and also rarely fails to match his wit, which cannot be

said for any of the women in *The Country Wife*, with the possible exception of Alithea. Brian Corman affirms that both Mirabell and Millamant transcend the limits of homosociality, also claiming that their "ultimate triumph over the folly and malice that are so much a part of their world gains special significance from Congreve's emphasis on the difficulty and rarity of such a triumph," a difficulty and rarity emphasized by the near impossibility of such a triumph in plays such as Wycherley's (67).

However, despite the nearly unprecedented level of power that the women in *The Way of the World* appear to possess, the male protagonists of this play still prove to be the dominant force, as are Harcourt and Horner in *The Country Wife*. The men represent the tricksters, the intelligent schemers who conquer the women and ultimately obtain that which they desire, often through manipulation. For instance, it is Mirabell who carefully arranges the speedy marriage of Fainall and the Widow Languish, and it is Mirabell who tricks Lady Wishfort into giving him both Millamant and the other half of her fortune. Even the powerful Millamant "wins equality but, in the process, does not defeat her gallant" because he is essentially undefeatable (Young 212). Mirabell's manipulation and control of his fellow characters, both male and female, supports the idea that at the end of the day, Mirabell is running the show, whether the women or Fainall like it or not. He remains willing to betray male homosociality, as he does in tricking Fainall into marriage, as well as female trust, as illustrated by his abandonment of Mrs. Fainall, in order to emerge victorious in possession of whatever he sets his sights on (Kraft 29). Hynes confirms this assertion, stating that "Mirabell outfoxes both Lady Wishfort and Fainall in order to safeguard Millamant's fortune" and that "he achieves this […] because he is slier than his opponents," opponents who Corman claims are much more complex than those found in Wycherley's work, adding further merit to Mirabell's success (Hynes 164; Corman 67).

Furthermore, although they feign otherwise, the women in this play need the men for various reasons, including economic support and even happiness. Millamant admits this, saying, "Shall I have him [Mirabell]? I think I must have him," thereby implying that Mirabell is necessary in her life (IV.i). Although Millamant in particular constantly asserts her independence and freedom, in reality, "the heroine's liberty of choice is confined to marriage with the man of her choice" (Munns 145). The true autonomy of a husbandless state remains unfathomable in this work, reinforcing Millamant's dependence on her male counterpart, a dependence which also suggests that Mirabell possesses the upper hand even within the witty pair. In addition, the rest of the women in this play who present themselves as separate from the male homosocial domain nonetheless are controlled by men, as well. Lady Wishfort, for example, supposedly expresses her hatred of the male sex but in reality would "do anything to get a husband" and "would marry anything that resembled a man," which is evident in her anxiety over meeting Sir Rowland (II.i). Even Mrs. Fainall, another dominant female character in this work, reveals her inevitable submission to a man as she admits that she entered into a marriage with a husband she detests at Mirabell's bidding. A pregnancy scare during her affair with him "forced her to become dependent on Mirabell, who assisted her in arranging the marriage" (Young 219). She inquires of her past paramour, "Why did you make me marry this man," presenting a much debated question to which Elizabeth Kraft offers an answer that reinforces the overwhelming element of male control in this work (II.ii). Kraft asserts that Mirabell essentially abandons the Widow Languish, forcing her to marry Fainall to salvage her reputation, because "he does not want to marry her, and ultimately he has the power of decision" (31). Gill supports this claim, stating that "since she yielded to his seductions, it seems she is not a fit candidate to be his bride" ("Interpreting" 125). Moreover, although Mirabell and Mrs.

Fainall maintain a strong bond of friendship and "although he is quick to protect her, Mirabell nonetheless believes that she does not merit an honorable man for a spouse" (Gill, "Interpreting" 125).

Furthermore, the absence of true female homosocial loyalty reinforces female dependence on the male characters in this work. Although they host their cabal nights and gossip together, the women in this play essentially refrain from any profound homosocial bonds. First of all, "Millamant may be the glory of her sex but she is no friend to it" in that she "represents and defends her gender in the abstract but has no close, sisterly dealings with particular members of it" (Gill, "Interpreting" 123). Although she discusses her personal affairs with Mrs. Fainall, she maintains a distance, refraining from true homosocial intimacy. Gill asserts that this is because "virtuous heroines may be affable to, but not intimate with, other female protagonists," but regardless of the reasons, Millamant remains rather homosocially bereft. Mrs. Fainall herself resembles Millamant in this way in that her most significant bond is with Mirabell rather than another female. In fact, she aids Mirabell in his pursuit of Millamant, which includes deceiving her mother, Lady Wishfort, thereby choosing to honor her male-female bond with her past lover over her homosocial bonds. Mrs. Marwood, furthermore, betrays her homosocial "friendships" with Lady Wishfort, Mrs. Fainall, and Millamant by having an affair with Fainall while also contriving with him to steal Millamant's fortune from Lady Wishfort. This lack of female homosocial loyalty bestows even more importance on the male-female relationships of the play, reinforcing female dependence on the men who possess the control. In addition, on an even more complicated level, this play raises the question of between whom the primary relationship actually exists. Does the main focus of the play really reside in the relationship between Mirabell and Millamant? Or does Congreve present a true homosocial

world, like that of *The Country Wife* examined by Sedgwick, in which the principal relationship is between two men, Mirabell and Fainall, as they compete for Millamant's fortune?

In conclusion, on one hand, *The Way of the World* presents a homosocial world in which the main social relationships exist between men. In this aspect, Congreve's most famous play closely follows the model of homosociality analyzed by Sedgwick and illustrated in Wycherley's *The Country Wife*. On the other hand, this comedy also presents some of the strongest, most independent women of this time period who fight tooth and nail to assert themselves within the male-dominated homosocial environment. Millamant in particular distinguishes herself from the female characters in *The Country Wife* by compromising and reaching agreements with the male half of her witty pair, while the majority of the women in Wycherley's play simply give up within their marriages and move onto adulterous, cuckolding affairs out of desperation. In addition, *The Way of the World* possesses a witty couple that serves to challenge homosocial domination through an equal partnership between man and woman. Although Harcourt and Alithea appear to represent the witty pair in *The Country Wife*, Wycherley's play does not permit the audience/reader to see if their relationship will prove to be one of equality. Furthermore, although *The Way of the World* differs from Wycherley's less optimistic creation, in the end the male characters still appear to possess the power and the control, as they do in *The Country Wife*, as the principal homosocial competition is waged between Fainall and Mirabell. Congreve's work remains distinct, as well as more hopeful, however, by suggesting that perhaps this male domination is for the best as Mirabell essentially saves Millamant from a marriage to a fop or other undeserving gentleman or from a life alone with her foolish aunt, thereby guiding her to her ultimate happiness and teaching her the way of the world.

Congreve's *The Way of the World* introduced not only the turn of the century on the British stage but also a shift from the far more cynical and bawdy humor of Wycherley's *The Country Wife* to an arguably more profound, though perhaps less realistic, softer-edged comedy that reigned in the eighteenth-century dramatic realm. With this shift also came modifications to the homosocial domain of later plays as female characters began to respond to male homosociality in different ways and as the male-female dynamic became more essential in such works. As previously noted, Nettleton, Case, and Stone declare that after Congreve's immensely popular production, imitation or introduction of new modes remained the only options for playwrights. Colley Cibber recognized this need for a novel mode even before *The Way of the World*, displaying his first attempt at introducing the sentimental comedy in 1696 with his play *Love's Last Shift*. He then further solidified sentimentalism with *The Careless Husband*, which premiered in 1704 and proved instrumental for many contemporary dramatists, including Richard Steele, who adhered to and advanced Cibber's model of sentimentalism. This new mode introduced even more significant alterations to the homosociality of the Restoration comedies of manners, and due to these momentous transitions on the eighteenth-century stage, the sentimental mode will be examined in the following chapter with emphasis on Cibber's *The Careless Husband*.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE RISE OF THE SENTIMENTAL MODE AND ITS HOMOSOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In a substantial effort to moralize the late seventeenth/early eighteenth-century stage by replacing the arguably morally bereft Restoration comedy of manners with a perhaps more reserved dramatic mode, playwright Colley Cibber unveiled a new style of comedy, that of the sentimental, in 1696 with his play *Love's Last Shift* (Case 395). Although recent criticism rejects the idea of any particular first sentimental playwright, Cibber has been praised as "the writer who 'first taught the stage to talk decently and morally,'" and as Maureen Sullivan declares, Cibber was the first to provide a clear example of the plot, characters, language, and attitudes of the sentimental comedy (ix). Cibber's launch of this novel mode was well-accepted, indicating a shift in audiences' taste around this time regarding the works being performed in the playhouse. Contemporary developments, such as the publication of Jeremy Collier's attack on the "immorality and profaneness" of the Restoration stage, as well as the growing presence and power of a conservative bourgeois audience, fueled this change in spectator taste. Regardless of the contributing factors, Cibber capitalized on this altered preference through his introduction of sentimentalism to the stage; this type of comedy favored an appeal to an audience's emotions rather than its intellect and insisted upon the inclusion of exemplary characters meant to be admired rather than ridiculed, contrary to the majority of characters found in the comedy of manners (Case 395). Cibber further solidified the establishment of this mode, thereby also advancing the purification of the works being produced on the English stage, with his play *The Careless Husband*, performed in 1704. Beth Wallace notes that critics often consider this play in

particular as Cibber's "most masterful capitulation to the new ethos of bourgeois morality" (476); she also acknowledges, however, that although Cibber was indeed a shrewd businessman and theatre manager, often catering to the demands of the social class most likely to bring the highest amount of revenue to the playhouse, his most famous play possesses a deeper complexity than a simple crowd-pleaser.

Although Cibber's sentimentalism represents a severe deviation from the comedy of manners, it does not represent a complete rejection of the previous comedic mode (Case 195). Sullivan declares that on the contrary, Cibber's goals of advancing sentimentalism did not prevent his use of the attitudes of the comedy of manners, and in *The Careless Husband* in particular, the playwright maintains many elements commonly found in the typical Restoration comedy, including a world defined primarily by homosocial relationships (xvii). In this way, Cibber's epitomic sentimental comedy remains anchored to the legacy of the comedy of manners; underneath the play's guise of a heartwarming tale of love's conquering power, a male-dominated homosocial environment persists. Cibber's play includes the classic figures of scheming men who not only engage in competition with one another for the love of the less powerful women but who also construct homosocial bonds which often represent the most powerful dynamic of the play. Moreover, the responses of some of the female characters to this male homosociality largely resemble many of the female reactions found in comedies of manners. However, this play's sentimental nature also brings about many modifications to the homosocial element, as well as to the responses of the characters to their homosocial surroundings; therefore, analyzing the balance and relationship between the features of the comedy of manners in this work and the alterations to homosociality required by the new sentimental mode becomes paramount.

First of all, the short list of male characters in *The Careless Husband* includes the rather stock figures of Restoration comedy, those of the rake-like womanizer, Sir Charles Easy in this play, and the ridiculous fop, here dubbed Lord Foppington. As Wallace affirms, these narcissistic male characters revel in their own superficiality and artifice but also act as foils to the more intricate character of the honest and goodly Lord Morelove, who is more reminiscent of Etherege's Young Bellair than he is of the Restoration rake, being truly and helplessly in love with Lady Betty Modish (476). As one would expect in a comedy of manners, however, it is not the moral and good-hearted Lord Morelove that dominates the homosocial environment of the play but rather the more rakish figure, Sir Charles. This deviant and witty character controls the homosocial world in that he proves himself to be the main schemer, developing complex plots and slyly working the other characters, including Lord Foppington, Lady Graveairs, and Lady Betty, like puppets in order to fulfill his own purposes. While Brian Corman argues that the Restoration rake represents the major casualty of the moralization of the stage, in this work the rake still seems very much alive and well (65). In fact, Sir Charles may appear even more rakish than his predecessor, Congreve's Mirabell, in that the audience/reader actually witnesses his adulterous escapades while only being privy to talk of Mirabell's past indiscretions. However, the sentimentality of Cibber's play does alter the figure of the rake, here embodied by Sir Charles; Sir Charles is not a Horner-like bachelor but rather a married man, which perhaps makes his affairs even more contemptible. Secondly, he converts from a selfish, disinterested rake to a caring husband, something practically unprecedented, especially since the audience/reader never really knows if Mirabell and characters like him in other Restoration plays of courtship actually convert from rakes to faithful husbands. Regardless of these modifications to the figure of Sir Charles, this character still portrays the figure of the Restoration rake, thereby

also serving as the antithesis of the incredibly un-rakish Morelove. Morelove differs from this man, as well as from Lord Foppington, in that he gives no pretense of rakishness, being "so much the benevolent man of sense and so little the rakish man of wit" (Corman 67). He is earnest and genuine, as well as desperately and openly in love with a woman who delights in rejecting and misusing him, but Morelove's decent nature does not exempt him from participating in the homosocial sphere.

For instance, because of his unsuccessful ventures with Lady Betty, Morelove turns to Sir Charles for advice, and these two men subsequently develop the most significant relationship of the play, which reinforces the homosociality that pervades throughout this work. Cibber provides evidence of this male bond in the very first act of the play, highlighting its relevance to the plot, as Morelove immediately visits Sir Charles after returning from London. As they discuss Morelove's unfaltering love for Lady Betty, Sir Charles asks his young companion, "Will you take my advice?" and as is expected, the love-sick Morelove responds, "I have no relief but that; had I not thee now and then to talk an hour, my life were insupportable" (I.i.375-379). Morelove thereby demonstrates his dependence on his homosocial relationship with Sir Charles, and these men only further strengthen their bond throughout the remainder of the play as Sir Charles constantly advises Morelove and also helps him devise a plot to gain Lady Betty's affection. As Sullivan points out, it is Sir Charles who ultimately secures Lady Betty for Morelove "by abusing her so violently that she is forced to seek refuge in Morelove's chivalry, the very quality she had declared to be unfashionable and dreary" (xxi). These two men work together to successfully educate and convert Lady Betty, a task that requires their homosocial teamwork. The almost parental role of Sir Charles as mentor and male companion to Morelove

bolsters the male homosociality of the play, and in turn, his clever scheming in an effort to aid Morelove in his quest for Lady Betty supports his status as the dominating force in society.

The male homosocial relationships of this play are not limited to the bond between Sir Charles and Morelove; both of these men interact with Lord Foppington, as well. Although he is indeed a fop, Lord Foppington proves more of a threat than his more foppish predecessors and represents Morelove's rival in the struggle for Lady Betty, a fact that Sir Charles brings to Morelove's attention. Morelove does not hesitate to engage in homosocial competition for her affection, thereby once again emphasizing the importance of male homosociality. Lord Foppington makes this competition extremely obvious, declaring that "piquing a rival in public may be as good sport as being well with a mistress in private," and he cherishes the anxiety he causes Morelove, declaring with delight, "Morelove's as jealous of me as the devil; heh! heh! heh!" (III.i.629-631; 475-476). This almost devious fop is not nearly as interested in Lady Betty herself as he is in the competition with Morelove, a homosocial competition that Morelove recognizes and knowingly partakes in, although he also expresses his true desire for Lady Betty. Sir Charles plays a meaningful role in this competition, as well, as he cunningly incorporates Lord Foppington into his ploy to secure Lady Betty for Morelove, excitedly revealing his plan to use the fop, claiming, "We may have occasion for him [Lord Foppington] in our design upon Lady Betty. […] We must have him" (I.i.470; 503).

Moreover, not only do the male characters exhibit homosocial bonds and engage in competition with each other, but the female characters follow suit, developing their own homosocial bonds and rivalries, as well. First of all, Lady Easy passive-aggressively partakes in a competition with her servant, Edging, as well as with "a young, handsome, wild, well-jointured

widow," Lady Graveairs, for the attention of her own adulterous husband (II.ii.28). Lady Easy's opening soliloquy calls attention to this female homosocial competition as she laments, "Was ever a woman's spirit, by an injurious husband, broke like mine? […] Wrong me with my very servant!" (I.i.1-4). The licentious servant of whom she speaks, Edging, also recognizes the implicit, homosocial, competitive bond that exists between her and her lady, spitefully and jealously pouting, "I am as handsome as she [Lady Easy]" (I.i.77). This silly wench confronts Sir Charles regarding her other female competition, as well, spouting, "Did not I ask you […] if you would be always constant to me, and did not you say I might be sure you would? And here, instead of that, you are going on in your old intrigue with my Lady Graveairs" (I.i.110-114). Lady Graveairs herself is no more discreet about her jealousy, making a fool out of herself as she throws herself at Sir Charles, complaining of her mistreatment and his inconstancy. She is no match for the clever, manipulative rake, however, and he easily secures her trust once again, simply by declaring, "You'll find, madam, I have deserved better of you than your jealousy imagines" (V.i.29-30). Lady Easy, Edging, and Lady Graveairs all knowingly compete for the emotional and physical love of Sir Charles, but the sentimentality of the play insists upon the eventual triumph of the virtuous and admirable Lady Easy.

In addition to the homosocial ties of female competition, the advisor-advisee relationship between Lady Easy and Lady Betty also reiterates the importance of homosociality to the play. Just as "Sir Charles directs Morelove's eventual triumph over Lady Betty, […] Lady Easy is Lady Betty's adviser," with the relationship between these two women mirroring that of their male counterparts (Sullivan xx). The character of Lady Betty, who somewhat resembles Congreve's Millamant with her witty personality and demanding nature, asserts herself and thrusts herself into her homosocial surroundings. She is committed to independence and liberty

for women and refuses, for as long as she can, to be subjected to the demands of the male sex or those of proper society. Unlike Millamant, however, Lady Betty is superficial, "fond of dress and display and […] playing games at all levels" (Wallace 476). Not only does she lack the depth and sincerity of Congreve's heroine, but she is also "careless, refusing to behave seriously and reveling, like Sir Charles, in a modish desire to dominate in love" (Sullivan xxi). She articulates her preoccupation with dress and display, as well as her desire to be in control in her relationships with the opposite sex, as she tells Lady Easy, "Beauty certainly is the source of power, as power in all creatures is the heighth of happiness. […] I had rather command than obey" (II.i.40-45). Lady Betty functions in the male-dominated homosocial realm by completely rejecting any type of submission within it, developing her own homosocial bond with Lady Easy and avoiding any meaningful relationships with men, especially those in which she would not be in complete control.

Lady Easy, on the other hand, embodies sincerity and authenticity and serves as the source of reason and wisdom in her homosocial companionship with Lady Betty (Wallace 477). She constantly instructs her less sensible friend, providing timeless advice, such as, "Have a care, my dear, of trusting too far to power alone, for nothing is more ridiculous than the fall of pride" (II.i.182-184). Lady Easy also represents a practically unprecedented character, that of the faithful, obedient wife who personifies virtue and patience, even as she is tortured by her husband's constant infidelity. She responds to her husband's unfaithfulness, as well as to his homosocial preoccupations, on which he often places greater priority than he does his wife, with steadfast fortitude and composure. Regardless of her passivity and submissive nature, she nonetheless is a powerful character in that she is not only confident in her goodness but also shrewdly understands the practical value of her patient disposition (Sullivan xix-xx). She reveals

her astuteness in the first lines of the play as she muses, "Oh, how tedious a relief is patience! and yet in my condition 'tis the only remedy, for to reproach him with my wrongs is taking on myself the means of a redress, bidding defiance to his falsehood, and naturally but provokes him to undo me" (I.i.4-9). She recognizes the truth of her situation but also correctly believes that her husband recognizes her goodness and therefore eventually will right his wrongdoings. Uncommon to the lewder comedies of earlier times, Lady Easy is compensated for her suffering and is rewarded for her admirable traits at the end of the play as her husband undergoes a conversion from a typical Restoration rake to a faithful spouse.

Although the homosociality of the comedy of manners persists in Cibber's play in the form of homosocial bonds, rivalries, and power struggles, thereby aligning with Sedgwick's model of homosociality, the sentimental nature of this work nonetheless requires a deviation from the overall structure of the homosociality of typical Restoration comedy. The play's sentimentality resides foremost in the conversion of Sir Charles and the compensation of Lady Easy, as well as in the ultimate union of the devoted and deserving Morelove with the newly educated and reformed Lady Betty. Corman asserts that with the popularization of the sentimental mode, "good nature and benevolence increasingly mark the worthy characters, with conversion to these new values frequently central to the plot" (65). This observation adequately describes the sentimentality of *The Careless Husband* in which the admirable and authentic qualities of Lady Easy and Lord Morelove mark them as worthy characters and in which the conversion of the less worthy characters, Sir Charles and Lady Betty, is paramount to the sentimental ending of the play.

First of all, the steinkirk scene demonstrates the endurance and self-control of Lady Easy, and the swift repentance and conversion of her husband thereafter seems plausible because she has proved herself to be more than just the epitome of patience; instead, she behaves the way she does with a certain goal always in mind, that of the conversion of her husband, and she simply realizes that patience represents the most effective means of obtaining "the dear reward of long desiring love" (Sullivan xxii; V.vi.145-146). The brash, satirical nature of the comedy of manners would not permit Lady Easy's shrewdly innocent behavior or the subsequent conversion of her husband, especially considering his outright rakish nature, but, as Corman confirms, the sentimental mode demands both (65). Due to the sentimentality of this work, Sir Charles seems sincere as he begs forgiveness from his wife and praises her commendable nature, admitting, "I blush to think I've worn so bright a jewel in my bosom and till this hour have scarce been curious once to look upon its luster" (V.vi.97-100). He professes his "new-born love" and pleads, "Receive me then entire at last, and take what yet no woman ever truly had, my conquered heart" (V.vi.139; 142-144).

Lady Easy's eventual triumph over her husband calls into question the potency of male homosociality in the play; not only does she successfully devise and carry out her subtle plot to win back her husband, proving herself to be an effective a schemer, but their (re)union at the end of the play brings a male-female relationship into the foreground. Ultimately, however, Sir Charles remains the dominant force in the play, and his homosocial relationship with Morelove dominates the plot for the majority of the work. Lady Easy undeniably influences her husband's conversion, but Sir Charles makes the decision to reform and retains the freedom to do whatever he wishes, including his continued participation in a homosocial bond with Morelove. Lady Easy accepts this reality due to her recognition of a simple, sentimental truth: "For when we have

said all we can, a deserving husband is certainly our best happiness" (II.i.186-187). This reality provides a parallel between the comedy of manners and the sentimental comedy in that just as Harcourt and Mirabell become responsible for guiding Alithea and Millamant to their ultimate happiness, Lady Easy realizes that her own husband is the key to her bliss, as well.

This reality also applies to Lord Morelove and Lady Betty, which once again reinforces the importance of the men to the futures of the women, thereby highlighting the power of the male characters. Furthermore, although Lady Betty embodies one of the strongest, most powerful female characters on the early eighteenth-century stage, in the end, as is to be expected within a male-dominated homosocial sphere, she proves powerless against the plots of the men. Sir Easy confesses his elaborate plot in the final scene of the play, and Morelove follows suit, admitting, "I do confess I had my share in't" (V.vii.299). Lady Betty cannot resent her defeat, however, because she finally realizes that her reformation and acceptance of Morelove's affection will lead to her best possible future. At the same time, although Morelove truly cares for Lady Betty, her conversion reaffirms the potency of male homosociality in this work in that it is the result of careful planning by Sir Charles and his young cohort. She must be educated in the ways of love, and these two men provide the foundation for the bulk of her enlightenment as they conspire to break down her defenses. The significant relationship between these male characters and their fervent scheming against Lord Foppington and Lady Betty takes the spotlight, reaffirming the dominance of homosociality in this play.

Although Lord Morelove's honest love for Lady Betty and the conversion of Sir Easy from a careless husband to a caring one due to his wife's carefully planned patience seem to weaken the homosocial elements of the play, homosociality as defined by Sedgwick still persists

underneath the true love of the male-female relationships. However, the success of Lady Easy's plan to provoke her husband's conversion and the conversion itself, combined with Lord Morelove's candid devotion to Lady Betty and her own reformation, demonstrate significant alterations to the homosociality of the early eighteenth-century stage. Wallace eloquently states that "the comedy suggests that beneath the surface of the rake or the dissipated gentlewoman lies the making of a solid bourgeois husband or wife," which is precisely the result of the conversions of Sir Charles and Lady Betty (477). In order to achieve this new, optimistic characterization of the rake and obstinate, foolish woman, Cibber advances Congreve's modifications, almost completely eliminating debauchery and augmenting not only the virtue but also the power of the female characters. The homosocial relationships in this play, both male and female, attest the permanence of homosociality, but the heightened prominence of the male-female dynamic along with the conversions of Sir Charles and Lady Betty also undermine this homosociality, thereby confirming the transformation of the homosocial element in the sentimental comedy.

As explained in the introduction to this study, reactions and responses to Cibber's sentimentalism varied from acceptance and subsequent imitation of this novel form to outright, vehement rejection. Some dramatists, namely Richard Steele in *The Conscious Lovers*, strictly adhered to and even advanced Cibber's model of sentimentalism and honored the contemporary efforts to moralize the stage by "almost completely eliminating indecency from both action and dialogue" (Case 435). Other playwrights reacted quite differently, with writers like George Farquhar fusing the new moral sentimentalism with the typical elements of the Restoration comedy of manners while those like Oliver Goldsmith completely dismissed the sentimental mode in order to return to the outright wit and humor of the comedy of manners. The following

chapter will focus on such responses to sentimentalism, specifically those of Farquhar and Goldsmith as exemplified by their comedies *The Beaux' Stratagem* and *She Stoops to Conquer*. Furthermore, the homosocial elements of these plays will be analyzed in comparison to Sedgwick's model of homosociality, as well as the new homosociality of the sentimental mode.

CHAPTER FIVE
RESPONSES OF FARQUHAR AND GOLDSMITH TO THE SENTIMENTAL MODE: HOMOSOCIAL CONSISTENCIES AND REVISIONS

Although separated by more than sixty-five years, George Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707) and Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer; or, The Mistakes of a Night* (1773) represent two similar yet distinct responses to the sentimental mode that began to emerge in the final years of the seventeenth century. While some playwrights, namely Richard Steele, derived inspiration from Colley Cibber's sentimentalism and proceeded to imitate and advance this novel style of comedy, others, like Farquhar and Goldsmith, believed such a dismissal of the comedy of manners to be premature. Farquhar, therefore, produced a unique fusion of the two modes in *The Beaux' Stratagem*, combining the Restoration spirit with the morality of the new sentimentalism and also manipulating the homosociality of both modes in order to fit this blend. Goldsmith, on the other hand, rejected sentimentalism and revisited the older concept of what he dubbed "laughing comedy" in *She Stoops to Conquer*, which interestingly disrupts the homosociality of the Restoration comedy of manners, creating yet another shift in the homosociality of the eighteenth-century stage. He follows Farquhar's example, however, by essentially fusing elements from both styles of comedy rather than completely eliminating all sentimental influence from his most famous work.

The Beaux' Stratagem

Farquhar himself defined comedy as "'a well-framed tale, handsomely told, as an agreeable vehicle for counsel or reproof,'" and he strived to create works that both entertained

and instructed his audiences (Case 349). Most critics agree that *The Beaux' Stratagem* represents the paramount example of Farquhar's comedic work, "but many, admitting its appeal, have had great trouble in defining exactly what the play is—the last of the traditional comedies of manners, the destroyer of that tradition, or the first comedy of a new tradition" (James 258; Fifer xxv). Although many scholars, most noticeably Shirley Strum Kenny in her analysis of Farquhar's works, which she calls "humane comedy," reject the categorical dichotomy of the sentimental comedy versus the comedy of manners, all critics acknowledge the shift that occurred around the turn of the century (Heard 2-3). Regardless of the conflicting ideas regarding this shift, moreover, *The Beaux' Stratagem* undeniably represents "a transitional work, sharing certain characteristics with the Restoration comedy of manners that preceded it and other characteristics with the chaster and more bland comedy that followed it" (Fifer xxvi). Furthermore, for the purposes of this study, it seems most likely that Farquhar's play embodies neither the comedy of manners nor sentimentalism exclusively but rather represents an amalgamation of both modes, "a new comedy, lying somewhere between the comedy of manners and the sentimental comedy—the comedy of life" (James 55). As such, Farquhar's comedy retains many conventional elements of Restoration comedy, including decided male homosociality and rake-like figures, but in this work Farquhar ingeniously fuses such features with characteristics of the new sentimentalism. Therefore, while maintaining the homosocial aspect commonly found in earlier comedies, this playwright also demonstrates the new possibilities for true love and the place of the woman provided by the sentimental mode.

The introduction to this wildly popular play provided in *British Dramatists from Dryden to Sheridan* claims that Farquhar achieves this fusion of Restoration and sentimental comedy by allowing his characters to talk like Restoration rakes without permitting them to act as such

(Case 349). According to Brian Corman, Farquhar's technique of preventing his characters from actually behaving like rakes is an effect of the new moralization of the stage from which "rakish behavior does not instantly vanish, but its prominence is reduced, and more talked about than represented" (65). While Corman's assertion accurately describes some of Farquhar's figures more than others, this technique of stopping the characters at their words allows Farquhar to reconcile the satirical nature of the comedy of manners with the morality recently introduced to the stage, and the two main characters of this play, Aimwell and Archer, most clearly demonstrate such fusion. Farquhar maintains the homosociality in this work largely through the substantial relationship between these two characters, who also embody the main schemers of the comedy, constantly devising "ten thousand […] rascally tricks" to swindle money out of unsuspecting women in order to replenish their own broken fortunes (IV.ii.30). Charles Fifer notes that Farquhar also uses the traditional device of the paired heroes, in this case Aimwell and Archer, which allows him to further combine elements from the comedy of manners with those from the sentimental mode through the portrayals of these characters, as well (xxvi).

For instance, Archer personifies many of the classic traits of the Restoration rake; "he is a witty, amorous, unprincipled hedonist," and his manner of speaking often emphasizes his rakishness (Fifer xxvi). He confesses his noncommittal views about love in the first scene of the play, as he casually declares, "I love a fine house, but let another keep it; and just so I love a fine woman," and he later disgustedly exclaims to Aimwell, "Passion! what a plague […] I can play with a girl as an angler does with his fish" (I.i.265-267; III.ii.19-20; 29-30). He also gushes insincere professions of love first at the naïve country bumpkin, Cherry, who resembles a more innocent Margery Pinchwife, and later at the desperately unsatisfied Mrs. Sullen, who seems a faint echo of Lady Fidget. He pursues these women as a sport and even behaves like a rake to a

certain extent, "forcing" his kisses upon them both, and it appears that he would have consummated these seductions had he not been repeatedly interrupted (Fifer xxvii).

Aimwell, on the other hand, balances Archer's rakishness, thereby essentially balancing the comedy of manners with new sentimentalism once again. This character begins as a pale version of Archer (Fifer xxvii); he matches Archer's wit and cleverness in plotting, and he even attempts to behave like his rakish friend, halfheartedly spouting idioms such as "no woman can be a beauty without a fortune" (II.ii.46-47). Ultimately, however, he stops himself at his words, unlike Archer who curses the impediments to his almost sexual encounters. Aimwell more closely resembles the un-rakish romantic or converted rake of the sentimental comedy, of which Cibber's Lord Morelove provides an excellent example. Aimwell proves much wittier than Morelove, but he possesses Morelove's passion, a characteristic of the new sentimentalism. The audience/reader is meant to recognize his true nature immediately, as Archer even jabs at his companion in the first scene, scoffing, "Ay, you're such an amorous puppy, that I'm afraid you'll spoil our sport; you can't counterfeit the passion without feeling it" (I.i.270-272). Of course this assessment of Aimwell turns out to be completely accurate as he falls hopelessly in love with Dorinda, the sweet, young heiress whose (mother's) fortune the men seek, and as he is converted by his love for her, not that he was even formerly an authentic rake (Fifer xxvii).

Aimwell's conversion marks the clearest influence of sentimentalism in Farquhar's work, and the scene of his reformation reflects the most sentimental of sentimental comedy as he muses, "Such goodness who could injure! I find myself unequal to the task of villain; she has gained my soul, and made it honest like her own. I cannot, cannot hurt her" (Fifer 383; V.iv.22-25). He then begs Dorinda, "Madam, behold your lover and your proselyte, and judge of my passion by my conversion" and even admits, "I am no lord, but a poor needy man, come with a

mean, scandalous design to prey upon your fortune. But the beauties of your mind and person have so won me from myself" (V.iv.26-28; 31-34). He has nothing to fear, however, for as is expected in such a sentimental scene, Dorinda subsequently not only forgives him but loves him more deeply because of his honesty, honesty for which he is rewarded yet again as he receives the title Lord Viscount Aimwell after the death of his brother (Corman 68).

Despite their distinct natures, Archer and Aimwell comprise the basis of the abounding male homosociality in this play, a homosociality reinforced by additional male bonds, such as those between Bonniface and his "fraternity" of highway men, as well as those between the "sullen, silent sot," Sullen, and his comrades, "the constable, Mr. Gage the exciseman, the hunchbacked barber, and two or three other gentleman" (I.i.353; II.i.66; V.i.12-14). In this world teeming with male homosocial relationships, the female characters often are marginalized, neglected, or simply used by the men. Therefore, the question regarding the way in which the women function in this environment invariably arises once again, and, not surprisingly, the answer lies in the examination of the female homosocial unions. Farquhar uses his female characters and their reactions to their male-dominated surroundings to further strengthen his blurring of the lines between the comedy of manners and sentimentalism. These women, like their Restoration and sentimental predecessors, respond to the male homosociality of the play by constructing their own homosocial relationships and by developing their own schemes.

Mrs. Sullen expresses the foundation of the female reaction to male homosociality in the play as she wonders, "Why should we not be as free in our friendships as the men?" (III.i.8-9). She and her sister-in-law, Dorinda, provide the strongest example of the female homosociality of the play, although they are practically antithetical. Fifer explains that "the character of Mrs. Sullen, like that of Archer, has its roots in the Restoration comedy of manners, in the frankness

of her language and in the acknowledgement of her physical desires," thereby resembling a subdued Lady Fidget (xxviii). She differs from the typical desperate, sexually unfulfilled wife of the Restoration comedy, however, in that her licentious babble is only talk; she flirts and flaunts, but unlike the Lady Fidgets of the comedy of manners, Mrs. Sullen refrains from actual adulterous affairs. She even admits her use of the French Count Bellair as a pawn, rather than an actual lover, in her attempt to arouse her husband's interest by constructing a homosocial competition; she confides to Dorinda, "I think one way to rouse my lethargic, sottish husband is to give him a rival," and perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of this plot is the cooperation of her devoted sister-in-law (II.ii.150-151). Dorinda decides that her homosocial loyalty to Mrs. Sullen outweighs her familial ties to her brother as she agrees to aid her sister-in-law. Mrs. Sullen expresses the profundity of their homosocial bond as she says to Dorinda, "You must assist me. […] He's but half a brother, and I'm your entire friend. […] I expect you should go along with me in everything […] I trust my honor in your hands" (II.ii.175; 177-181).

Furthermore, Mrs. Sullen also serves as advisor to Dorinda in the matters of the heart, as Lady Easy does for Lady Betty Modish in Cibber's *The Careless Husband*. Although Mrs. Sullen lacks the patience, virtue, and composure of Lady Easy, she is still trustworthy and likable, and she offers advice, saying to Dorinda, "Did not I tell you that my lord [Aimwell] would find a way to come at you? Love's his distemper, and you must be the physician" (IV.i.115-117). The character of Mrs. Sullen represents a hybrid of the Restoration Lady Fidget and the sentimental Lady Easy, thereby furthering Farquhar's blending of the two modes, while Dorinda resembles a highly sentimental figure, lacking the wit of Millamant and Alithea but possessing the virtue and poise of a young, Lady Easy-type character. Cherry also adds an interesting element to the array of female characters in this play in that she is quite reminiscent

of Margery Pinchwife but is far more innocent and virtuous. Being cursed with a father who "would […] debauch his daughter into the bargain," she, too, participates in the homosocial friendships of the play (I.i.371-372). In fact, in the final act, Cherry, like Dorinda, betrays her familial ties in favor of her homosocial loyalties as she reveals her father's plot to rob Lady Bountiful, justifying her betrayal by professing, "My Lady Bountiful is my godmother, and I love Mrs. Dorinda so well" (V.ii.118-120). After confessing her knowledge of the scheme, however, she rejoins her father in order to warn him, demonstrating her lack of true progression and reinforcing a female dependence on male characters that pervades the work.

Despite the changes occurring during this era regarding the comedy produced on the English stage, one aspect that remains fairly constant is female dependence on the male characters, an aspect that Farquhar's play fully preserves. Not only does Cherry return to her father, but she also simply switches from one male homosocial group to the other by transgressing that of her father and his cohorts and entering into that of Aimwell and "Martin" as she turns to them for help. Additionally, Dorinda depends on Aimwell for her final happiness, and although Mrs. Sullen obtains a divorce from her negligent husband, she admits that she married in the first place "to support the weakness of my sex by the strength of his," thereby unmistakably acknowledging the superiority of the male characters (V.iv.258-259). Therefore, although female homosociality exists in this play, it ultimately poses no real threat to the dominance of the male characters who establish stronger homosocial bonds than those of the women. While Mirabell in *The Way of the World* recognizes the true threat of female homosociality in the comedy of manners, a threat he acknowledges as he forbids Millamant to keep a female confidant, the male characters in Farquhar's work understand that the female homosociality of the play poses no real danger to their male supremacy.

Furthermore, the men also sustain the potency of male homosociality by comprising the main group of schemers in the play, as they do in both comedies of manners and sentimental comedies, as well. However, the enhanced "true love" element, achieved by the union of Aimwell and Dorinda, somewhat undermines the power of male homosociality in Farquhar's work. For instance, Dorinda appears to have profound control over Aimwell in that he feels compelled to confess to her, thereby not only almost ruining the plan to obtain her fortune but also betraying his homosocial bond with Archer. His partner in crime exclaims, "Discovered! and without my consent? […] you dispose of all without my partnership?" (V.iv.59-62). Archer obviously resents this betrayal, but, typical to the sentimental comedy, all ends well. Such power in love grants female characters like Dorinda far more control than they possess in comedies of manners in that in this play, heterosexual love undermines homosocial bonds, providing new possibilities for the woman despite the persistence of male homosociality and domination.

George Farquhar responds to the emergence of sentimentalism on the English stage by rejecting neither the comedy of manners nor the sentimental comedy but rather by creating a brilliant fusion of the two modes in *The Beaux' Stratagem*. Eugene Nelson quotes George Henry Nettleton when he claims, "'Whatever Farquhar's lapses in point of morality, he has none of Wycherley's vindictive and brutal cynicism,'" confirming that while Farquhar's work fails to represent a wholly sentimental comedy, it does not offer a complete revival of the comedy of manners either (54). Corman supports this claim, as well, as he explains that Farquhar's work has been "stripped of its punitive origins in response to the rejection of the satiric principles that had been its underpinning" but "without sacrificing laughter, humors characters, physical comedy, love, or sex" (68-69). Furthermore, such a blending of two distinct modes requires modifications to homosociality, thereby also providing room for new possibilities regarding

female responses to their homosocial surroundings, as well as for the female character itself. In conclusion, as Fifer claims, the future of comedies like *The Beaux' Stratagem* resides not in the sentimental or the comedy of manners but rather in comedies like Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, and, therefore, Farquhar "can be credited with fathering the kind of comedy that later came from the pen of Goldsmith" (xxviii-xxix).

She Stoops to Conquer; or, The Mistakes of a Night

In "An Essay on Theatre; or, A Comparison between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy," published sixty-five years after Farquhar's debut of *The Beaux' Stratagem*, Oliver Goldsmith responds to the prolonged occupation of the English theatre by the sentimental comedy. He declares his preoccupations concerning the lack of humor on the late eighteenth-century stage, a fault he attributes to the rise of sentimentalism, which he dismisses as "bastard tragedy" or at most, "pathetic […], weeping […] comedy" in which "folly, instead of being ridiculed, is commended" (Case 751-752). His well-known play, *She Stoops to Conquer*, which was received with laughter and applause, serves as his greatest effort at rejecting or possibly only redefining sentimentalism through a partial return to what he called "laughing comedy" (Case 755). Although Goldsmith in many ways emulates the older concept of the comedy of manners in his laughing comedy, he excludes the harsh lewdness of Etherege or Wycherley, opting for the more muted comedy of Congreve or Farquhar. He also makes a noteworthy advancement with *She Stoops to Conquer* in that he revives many of the truly comedic values of laughing comedy while almost completely disregarding the figure of the rake and substantially diminishing homosociality. He also maintains the element of true love found in sentimental works, thereby creating a sort of amalgam of the comedy of manners and the sentimental comedy, much like his predecessor Farquhar did sixty-five years before him. Elisabeth Heard explores this relation

between the works of Farquhar and Goldsmith, noting that "Goldsmith's […] comedies, particularly *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) […] most clearly hearken back to Farquhar" (142). As such, Goldsmith's last work follows the tradition of Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem*, and, therefore, an analysis of his alterations to the figure of the rake and to the homosocial aspect of this tradition becomes paramount.[1]

First of all, an analysis of the male characters in Goldsmith's play reveals the absence of any true rake. Goldsmith, like Farquhar, uses the device of the paired heroes, Young Charles Marlow and George Hastings, in his work, but while Farquhar portrays the typical Restoration rake through the character of Archer in particular, Goldsmith's most rakish characters barely even speak rakishly. Throughout the entire play, Hastings only desires Miss Neville, and rather than feigning rakish indifference, he admits to Marlow, "Miss Neville's person is all I ask" (II.i.161-162). Marlow proves a bit less monogamous, but only under certain conditions does he reveal his limited rakishness. His rakish behavior is contingent upon the behavior and especially the class of the woman; Young Charles flings himself at any common girl whom he believes lacks virtue, but he avoids "all the terrors of a formal courtship" with modest women of a higher class (II.i.137-138). Even Hastings acknowledges his friend's pathetic aversion, candidly telling him, "But in the company of women of reputation I never saw such an idiot, such a trembler" (II.i.110-112). Marlow's quirks are displayed quite humorously in his encounters with Miss Kate Hardcastle; upon first meeting her, Marlow greets her "with a respectful bow, a stammering voice, and a look fixed on the ground" (III.i.48-50). Later, however, when she "stoops to conquer" by playing the part of the barmaid in order to provoke the impudence of the

[1] In a more exhaustive study, an examination of the treatment of social class in this particular work, especially in regards to homosocial discrepancies between the classes, would prove quite intriguing.

unsuspecting Marlow, he responds amorously and rakishly, suavely flirting, "Suppose I should call for a taste […] of the nectar of your lips" (III.i.341-342). Goldsmith rejects sentimentalism in favor of a return to laughing comedy, and yet his play lacks one of the most essential elements of previous comedy, the rake. In fact, sentimental Cibber's careless husband, Sir Charles, proves more rakish than Goldsmith's most rakish figure. Marlow lacks the power and the potency of the traditional rake and in the end even renounces his few rakish qualities in favor of true love and monogamy, thereby resembling the sentimental figure of the converted rake. Marlow's un-rakish nature and his ultimate conversion illustrate that while Goldsmith repudiates the sentimental mode, sentimental influences still pervade his "laughing comedy."

Furthermore, the realm of Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* lacks the homosociality of traditional Restoration comedy; the playwright does not disregard the homosocial element completely, but the homosocial world is disrupted to say the least. Firstly, the majority of the male homosociality in the play takes an inferior role to the male-female dynamic. The friendship between Marlow and Hastings represents the foundation of the male homosociality, a friendship first described by Miss Neville to Miss Hardcastle as she explains, "They [Marlow and Hastings] are never asunder" (I.i.205-206). These great friends, however, remain preoccupied by their own romantic matters throughout the entire play as their relationships with their respective female counterparts, Miss Hardcastle and Miss Neville, ultimately seem to trump their homosocial friendship as both men place the strongest emphasis and the greatest efforts on succeeding in their romantic endeavors. Marlow declares to his friend in the beginning, "My chief inducement down was to be instrumental in forwarding your happiness, not my own. Miss Neville loves you; the family don't know you; as my friend, you are sure of a reception," but he soon becomes wrapped up in his own amour for the "barmaid" (II.i.152-156). Moreover,

Hastings does not hesitate in betraying his homosocial relationship with Marlow in order to advance his romantic relationship with Miss Neville. After Miss Neville informs Hastings that the place he and Marlow took for an inn is actually the home of the Hardcastle family and after the two young lovers devise a plan to elope, he instructs her, "In the meantime, my friend Marlow must not be let into his mistake. I know the strange reserve of his temper is such that, if abruptly informed of it, he would instantly quit the house before our plan was ripe for execution" (II.i.424-428). He deceives Marlow to protect his marriage plans with Miss Neville, a fact which Marlow realizes and resents, declaring, "Your conduct, Mr. Hastings, requires an explanation. You knew of my mistakes, yet would not undeceive me," the reason for which of course lies in Hastings's romantic ties to Miss Neville (IV.i.468-470). Hastings forsakes his homosocial friendship with Marlow in favor of his male-female, romantic relationship with Miss Neville, thereby enhancing the true love aspect of the play that is so reminiscent of sentimentalism. Perhaps even more importantly, this severe disruption and fragmentation of male homosocial bonds in favor of heterosexual love suggests that the real alteration to traditional comedy provided by Goldsmith is found in the renunciation of male homosociality, which Goldsmith portrays as less significant than heterosexual love bonds.

The male homosociality of the play (or lack thereof), however, is restored to a certain extent by the remaining male characters, but these men represent stock characters of the Restoration comedy, old men and country bumpkins who lack true sophistication, suggesting that the homosociality demonstrated by their friendships may be antiquated and obsolete. For example, Mr. Hardcastle rejoices in his homosocial bond with Sir Charles, Young Marlow's father, as he delights, "Yes, my dear friend, this union of our families will make our personal friendships hereditary" (V.i.23-25). In addition, his stepson perhaps represents the most

homosocial character of the play. He is devoid of any rakish qualities, being "no friend to the ladies," and only enjoys passing time with "a low, paltry set of fellows" at the local alehouse (II.i.747; I.i.89). He also devises the homosocial plot against his stepfather in the beginning as he thinks to himself, "Father-in-law has been calling me whelp, and hound, this half year. Now, if I pleased, I could be so revenged upon the old grumbletonian" (I.ii.82-84). He is also unwillingly part of a homosocial competition with Hastings for the hand of Miss Neville, a competition which progressively transforms into a homosocial friendship as he aids Hastings in his plan to elope with Miss Neville, for whom he harbors no desire. Tony refrains from participating in any significant relationship with a female, even betraying his own mother in order to be rid of his cousin, and he thereby represents the most homosocially active and dominant character of the play. Furthermore, B.S. Pathania asserts that although Tony "is a 'low' comic creation," it is in this character "that the heart of comedy beats. We owe him most of the fun and mirth of the play which revolves around his practical joke on Marlow and Hastings" (132; 130). In this sense, Tony represents a vital character in this work, even if he is "a mere composition of tricks and mischief," in that he creates the foundation of the plot through his homosocial deceit of Marlow and Hastings (I.i.46-47). He reinforces male homosociality and provides most of the laughs, but the low, farcical nature of his character prevents him from achieving the power of the Horners and Mirabells of previous comedies of manners.

The women to whom Tony has such an aversion, on the other hand, represent some of the most multifaceted and compelling characters in Goldsmith's play. These women are not forced to respond to much male homosociality, unlike their predecessors, and they, therefore, behave differently, also possessing more power. Although Kate Hardcastle and Constance Neville partake in a female homosocial friendship, they remain preoccupied by the men in their lives and

never demand their independence, unlike the obstinate Millamant or excessive Lady Betty. Kate and Constance still embody powerful female characters, however, in that they execute some of the most devious plots of the play and exercise some degree of control over their male counterparts and the other characters around them. Kate's barmaid plot provides the most obvious example of the intelligence and power of Goldsmith's female characters. After Marlow mistakes her for a barmaid, she schemes "to keep up the delusion," relishing in her belief that if she succeeds, it will be "no small victory gained over one who never addresses any but the wildest of her sex" (III.i.295-298). She even draws her father, as well as Marlow's father, into the situation, instructing them, "If you […], in about half an hour, will place yourselves behind that screen, you shall hear him [Young Marlow] declare his passion to me in person" (V.i.134-137). Her plan works perfectly, and as Laura Rosenthal explains, "While her deception may humiliate Marlowe, she wins him as a husband by demonstrating her ability to give a convincing performance as a whore" (169). In addition, instead of the female education that usually secures the resolution in both the comedy of manners as well as in the sentimental comedy, in this play, Kate ultimately educates Marlow, offering a much more exalted status for the female character. Rosenthal explains that "Kate does not so much 'cure' Marlowe, as is often argued, as accurately assess his fetish, indicating that she can both indulge it and protect his outward respectability" (169). She essentially teaches him "a little confidence" by showing him how to overcome his nervous aversion to women of quality while also securing his love and realizing her own, all under the guise of a lowly barmaid, thereby demonstrating her cleverness as well as her affection for him (II.i.598).

The other female protagonist, Miss Constance Neville, also displays cunningness and strength as she plots to obtain her fortune from the greedy hands of her aunt, who resembles

Congreve's Lady Wishfort, and she conspires with both Hastings and her cousin, Tony, in order to carry out the plan. Furthermore, both Constance and Kate also illustrate the control they possess over their male partners. For instance, after Constance turns down Hastings's request to forget her fortune and elope with him immediately, he concedes, lamenting, "I have no hopes. But since you persist, I must reluctantly obey you" (V.ii.196-197). Marlow similarly declares to Kate, "I can have no happiness but what's in your power to grant me," revealing the female control in their newly founded romantic partnership. Although the female characters demonstrate an augmented force of control in Goldsmith's play, their relationships with their male counterparts still ultimately represent partnerships of equals. The men possess cleverness and class, qualities that their women proudly match, and the female characters also realize that they must depend on the men in their lives to lead them to happiness, as is the case in both the comedy of manners and the sentimental comedy, as well.

Goldsmith unveiled *She Stoops to Conquer* in order to reintroduce humor and wit to the late eighteenth-century stage, and by doing so, he manipulates the styles of both the comedy of manners and the sentimental comedy in order to create a fusion of the two while emphasizing the truly comic elements of both. As Panthania remarks, "Written in the tradition of true comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer* stands out glittering from among the many faded comedies of the eighteenth century. Full of humor because of its delightful incidents, character, and dialogue, it delivered a staggering blow to the sentimental comedy" (108). This staggering blow, however, does not necessitate a complete elimination of all elements found in the sentimental comedy; Goldsmith not only maintains and even enhances the true love aspect of sentimentalism but also excludes any authentic rakish behavior. He thereby follows in Farquhar's wake and the legacy of English comedy, succeeding in producing the epitome of "laughing comedy." Furthermore,

through the almost complete renunciation of homosociality in this play in favor of heterosexual, romantic bonds, Goldsmith suggests that perhaps the laughter ensues after the principal male and female characters stop struggling for power through homosocial bonding and turn their attention instead to the pleasures of male-female partnership and equality. Therefore, although Goldsmith professes a return to the traditional concept of comedy, he also significantly advances the comedy of his time by excluding almost all homosociality in *She Stoops to Conquer*, in which individuality and heterosexual desire become paramount.

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