



## Significant Difference between Shakespeare Plays and Restoration Comedy

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One significant difference between Shakespeare plays and restoration comedy is that the constant theme of the later is rivalry between the sexes which was overtly playful but frequently descended into sadism. Indeed the sophisticated relationship between men and woman in restoration literature frequently appear as cold blooded exploitation by the stronger party whether man or woman. It is remarkable that Shakespeare world should be free from this virus. Critics have sometimes surfaced and are meant only as an amusing pose both on the part of man and woman. Surely it would be ridiculous to treat Beatrice's retort to Leona to seriously when he jocularly suggested that he hopes to see one day fitted with a husband:

Not till god make men of some other metal than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to be over master with a piece of valiant dust to make an account of her life to a cloud of wayward mar!? No uncle I'll none Adam sons are m brethren and truly I hold it is a sin to match in my kindred.

This woman however takes no time to change her mind and gladly decide to requite Benedict when she learns that he loves her. Benedict's anti female posture is equally ridiculous:

That a woman conceived me I thank her that she brought me up I like wise give her most humble thanks but that I will have a reheat ended in my forehead or having my bugle in an invisible baldric all women shall pardon me. Because I will not so the, the wrong to mistrust any I will do myself the right to trust none and the fine is for the which I may go the finer I will live a bachelor.

Of course he will do nothing of the kind and will give up this state of bachelorhood at the earliest opportunity and suddenly recognize that the world must be peopled as if that is his personal responsibility the only defense of his earlier boast that he can offer is: when I said I would die a bachelor I did not think I should live till I were married.

The play clearly establishes that the earlier postures of Beatrice and Benedict are merely a reaction to the conventional and extravagant behaviors of romantic lovers. Indeed they take no time to recognize that their salvation lays only in coming together. Not only their salvation but the salvation of others too as Benedict claims. Prince thou art sad get thee a wife get thee w wife. Lest the prince should laugh at this zeal of a new convert Benedict adds. There is no staff more revenged than one tipped with horn.

A superficial reading of the taming of the shrew can give the impression that here at any rate Shakespeare shows reality between the sexes depicting at some length the cold blooded exploitation by the Stronger party of the weaker one the weaker being the woman. This is clearly a wrong impression. Even though the real theme of this play is essentially the same as that of the other romantic comedies of Shakespeare namely establishing a genuine personal relationship between man and woman it is worked out through a series of farcical situations which distort our response. Outwardly the play shows the taming of a shrew a taming that involves cruelty and humiliation. Katherine suffers first at the hands of her family and them at the hands of a husband whom her id compelled to marry in somewhat awkward circumstances. She fights back as long as she can but a stage comes when she is completely exhausted for lack of food and sleep.

Her famous speech in the last scene of the poem should be read in the context of what has been said above. Only in an apparent sense is it an expression of servile submission. Such submission was the lot of most women in that period or even today in most societies where women have to economic independence—but here the speech serves a wholly different purpose. Petruchio as we have seen has still to outgrow the desire to dominate the woman. He has yet to acquire confidence both in himself and in the woman he has married. As Coppelia Kahn has said such voluntary surrender is paradoxically part of the myth of female power which assigns to woman the crucial responsibility for creating a mature and society respectable man. This Katherine can do by reminding Petruchio that

husband and wife have different roles to play in life and that only foolish people quarrel about the superiority or inferiority for a of either of the two roles. The fact is that both roles are necessary for a happy married life. Unless a man and a woman recognize the difference in the roles that they are required to play whether by nature or by society we can have neither a stable family life nor an orderly society.

The speech is apparently addressed to women but its real aim is to educate Petruchio. But the time the play ends the husband and wives have come t realize that there can be neither rivalry between them nor any exploitation of one by the other. So this too like the other comedies of Shakespeare ends on a note of fulfillment. We are left with a sense that truly Petruchio is wedded to his Kate.

Germane Greer had described Kate's speech as the greatest defense of Christian monogamy ever written and has rightly arrested that it rests upon the role f a husband a protector and friend and it is valid because Kate has a man who is capable of being both. When she describes Shakespeare as one of the most significant apologists of marriage as a way of life and a road of salvation the implication is that Shakespeare celebrates the institution of marriage and treats it as the only means available to man or woman for achieving happiness and fulfillment. Indeed his marriage is clear namely that it is through marriage alone that men and women can become integrated human beings.

Shakespeare emphasis on the sanctity of marriage can be fully appreciated only in the context of the state of marriage which prevailed amongst the English nobility in the earlier part of the sixteenth century and the climate created by the religious reformers of the period in favor of an ideal Christian marriage. On the state of marriage in England in the earlier part of the century we have the well known statement of Lawrence stone.

In the early sixteenth century open maintenance of a mistress usually of lower class origin was perfectly compliable with a respected social position and a stable marriage. Peers clearly saw nothing shameful in these liaisons and up to about 1560 they are often to be found leaving bequests to bastard children in their wills. In practice if not in theory the early sixteenth century nobility was a polygamous society and some contrived to live with a succession of women despite the official or divorce. Presumably in deference to puritan criticism of the double slandered this casual approach to extra marital relationships disappeared after 1560 and between 1610 and 1660 evidence for the maintenance of regular semi official mistress becomes rare.

There are several bastards in Shakespeare and in King Lear we have the notorious case of Gloucester who boasts with impunity of a bastard son there was good sport at his making and the active of Shakespeare attitude to such a casual approach to extra marital relationship that Gloucester legitimate son should at last have to say to Edmund:

The gods are just and of our pleasant vices

Make instruments to plague us

The dark and vicious place where thee he got

Cost him his eyes.

Moreover Gloucester is an exceptional case and on the whole the most distinguishing feature of Shakespeare plays is their purity of tone. For one thing there are no reeks in Shakespeare or almost none and he more or less enjoins on both men and women a respect for the marriage bond. Women were always expected to live chaste and spotless lives both before and after marriage but the remarkable fact about Shakespeare are his adherence to a single slandered of sexual morality for men and women alike. Herbage who makes this point names Romeo orison, Orlando Malcolm florae and Ferdinand as leading lives as stainless as the heroines of the plays in which they appear. He also says that the lecherous men in Shakespeare Falstaff shallow in his youth Lucia patrols are either comic or contemptible and further that those perhaps not lecherous in a comic way but so infatuated as to become lawlessly involved Claudio cassia Troilus Antony are all viewed as pitiable. Herbage is perhaps overstating in Shakespeare or that in every case there is no double slandered in Shakespeare or that in every case there is an adherence to a single slandered of sexual morality. But the fact is that the general tendency of Shakespeare drama is towards equality between the sexes in this most crucial sphere of conduct.

It is remarkable that this should be so in an age when as Ruth also says the ideal set up for the lady is essentially Christian in its character and the ideal for the gentleman essentially pagan. Chastity was the chief if not the only quality required of a lady whereas it was not even included among the virtues required of a gentleman. The age indeed must have found it very appropriate that Spenser chose to embody chastity is a lady knight deserting from his usual practice of embodying a particular virtue in a knight. Shakespeare rejection of this aristocratic doctrine must owe a great deal to the new climate created by the religious reformers who denounced contemporary social evils more particularly the callous and cold clouded exploitation of woman by man. It is not without significance that the impact of the religious reformers was felt even by king James who gave this advice to his son in 1599 ye must keep your body cleaner and unpolluted while ye give it to your wife whom to online it belonged for how can ye justice crave to be enjoyed with a pure virgin if your body be polluted/ why should the one half be clean and the other defiled. It is true that at times the preachers stand sounded somewhat as they emphasized on the one hand obedience to parents especially in the choice of a spouse and on the other marriages based on love between two parties. But it

is fair to add that in spite of all their insistence upon obedience to parents they consistently emphasize the conditions under which husbands and wives could lead chaste and contented lives. Marital fidelity is the most important feature of such lives and clearly recognized that love between husband and wife alone could provide a viable basis for fidelity.

Most conduct books in the period emphasize the conditions under which chastity in marriage can become a reality. They therefore define marriage in intelligible and realistic terms. Since they cannot but accept the bible as their sole guide they refine upon the relationship between Adam and Eve for human guidance. This refinement is to be seen at its best in Bollinger one of the most popular writers in the sixteenth century whose writing influenced almost all contemporary conduct books. This is what he has to say about the origin of marriage. God made the man Adam altogether perfect set him in the paradise or garden of pleasure and afterwards said immediately. It is not good that man should be alone. Adam having looked upon all the beasts found . . . none that he could set his hate upon none himself none that he might dwell by as by a helper upon and comforter. He knew the he was alone and woe says Henry Smith quoting Solomon to all such as thieves steal in when the house is empties like a turtle which hath lost his mate like one wing when the other is clipped so had the man bane if he woman had not been joined to him.

William and Millville Haler from whose article on the puritan art of love these quotations have been taken add this comment thus the first need that befell man even before he had sinned was for woman and the first intervention of divine providence in his especial behalf was to create a wife for him and to establish wedlock as the prime source and pattern of all human relationship to come.

The relationship between husband and wife then is a very special one and it is based on the conviction that God made the, for each other and that they alone are fit for each other. This idea of fitness is to be seen in Henry Smith's description of a fitted wife therefore a godly man in our time thanked the Lord that he had not only given him a godly wife but a fitted wife for the said not that she was the wisest nor the holiest nor the humblest nor the modestest wife in the world but the fittest wife for him.

Such husband and wife are indeed so fit for each other that John Wing in *Crowned Conjugal* described them as the sweetest and most pleasing objects upon the earth to take up each other's eyes be thought worth looking upon. Perhaps even a better description of such a couple occurs in Daniel Rogers's *Matrimonial Honor*.

Husbands and wives should be as two sweet friends bred under one constellation tempers by an influence from heaven where of neither can give any great reason save that mercy and providence first made them so and then made their match saying see God hath determined us out of this vast world each for other perhaps many may deserve as well but yet to me and for my turned thou excellent them all and God hath made me to think so but because it is so.

Thomas Bacon who had written a long preface to the English translation of Bollinger's book and who later wrote a book of his own entitled *Book of Matrimony* sums up contemporary religious thinking on the question in his well known description of matrimony:

An hue holy and blessed order of life ordained not of man but of God yea and that not in this sinful world but in paradise that most joyful garden of pleasure which hath even been had in great honor and reverence among all notions.

Wherein one man and one woman are coupled and knit together in one flesh and body in the feared and love of God by the free loving hearty and God consents of them both to the intent that they two may well together as one flesh and body of one will and mind in all honesty virtue and godliness and spend their leaves in the equal partaking of all such things as God shall send them with thanks giving.

While Bacon has only ideal marriages in mind his statement does provide general guidelines for a happy married life. He makes three points one that the marriage between two persons is based on free loving and hearty consent second that they live together in a state of harmony based on a perfect compatibility between their bodies minds and wills a that should ensure a love of honesty virtue and godliness and third that they share their joys and sorrow or whatever God sends them with thanks giving.

It is remarkable that all the three points made by Bacon are present in Shakespeare's conception of marriage. As we have already seen he clearly rejects arranged marriage and however difficult it was in his age the marriages in Shakespeare are by and large based on the free loving and hearty consent of the partners have to be defied some times daughters have to elope with their lovers sometimes they even risk their lives to achieve a love marriage. But there is hardly any case in Shakespeare where there is a forced marriage. Consequently nowhere do we have the kind of situation that is almost constantly present in Restoration comedy where a woman is normally advised to find a gallant to supply the defects of husbands. As Valentine in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* claims the person one loves is different from all others whose worth makes other worthies nothing she is alone.

Compatibility between body's minds and wills however is not easy to achieve. The two persons may not lack free loving and hearty consent but such consent alone may not ensure harmony. As Germaine Greer has said Shakespeare recognized it as a difficult state of life requiring discipline sexual energy mutual respect and great

forbearance. Shakespeare men do not realize this fact but his women do and accordingly they search for a stable basis on which to put their relationship. Being realistic they recognize that neither nor sexual attraction can sustain a marriage. They therefore use wit and realism in the service of passion to mock male folly to educate men and to achieve a fruitful union with them. Rosalind, Viola, Portia and the women in *Love's Labor's Lost* all have active roles in their plays grounding male idealism in reality and effecting a reconciliation of sex with love, wit with affection, male with female. It is important that they do so because it is quite possible that from being a goddess of the romantic lover the woman might end up by becoming only a super man.

In times when divorce was impossible or more or less impossible and when adultery could lead to banishment or a death it was vital for a woman to make a sensible choice.

Shakespeare heroes are often too immature to become suitable husbands. Orlando in *As You Like It* is clearly one of them. He as a fancy monger and fits admirably the picture of a lover drawn by Jacques in his description of the seven ages of man:

And then the lover

Sighing like furnace with a woeful ballad

Made to his mistress' eyebrow.

He hangs verses on trees in praise of his beloved and becomes an object of ridicule. He is not the only lover in Shakespeare who writes bad verses in praise of his mistress. Even Hamlet does so and of course Benedict tries though mercifully he just cannot rhyme well. But Rosalind bluntly reminds Orlando that most lovers live in a world of fancy and are often attracted by the mere idea of being in love that their professions of eternal loyalty are mere lies and that men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them but not for love. Her most perceptive comment is to be seen in the distinction that she draws between romantic love and marriage:

Rosalind: now tell me how long you would have her after you have possessed her.

Orlando: forever and a day.

Rosalind: say a day without the ever any Orlando men is April when they woo December when they wed minds is May when they are maids but the sky changes when they are wives. I will be more clamorous than a parrot against rain more mew-fangled than an ape more giddy in my desires than a monkey. I will weep for nothing like Diana in the fountain and I will do that when you are disposed to be merry I will laugh like a hyena and that when thou art inclined to sleep.

Orlando clearly defined by that Rosalind has said asks but will my Rosalind do so? Adding 'O but she is wise. Thereupon Rosalind launches another attack on his conventional view of a wise woman:

The wiser the waywarder make the doors upon a woman's wit and it will out at the casement shut that and 'twill out at the key-hole stop that 'twig; fly with the smoke out at the chimney.

The question that Rosalind jocularly raises is a serious one. She reminds Orlando that marriage cannot be based on romantic love alone and further that a successful marriage with an intelligent and articulate woman is still more difficult to maintain. Rosalind is clearly rejecting the Elizabethan stereotype of a modest, virtuous, obedient and docile Elizabethan wife.

Beatrice also rejects this type. Like Rosalind while she is capable in intense love and devotion she demands qualities in the man of her choice which she can admire. These are somewhat unconventional qualities that age as they seem to lay heavy emphasis on his mind and heart. By contrast however intelligent otherwise in this regard Benedict looks for the same qualities in a wife as other Elizabethan husbands rich she shall be that certain wise or I'll none virtuous or I'll never cheapen her fair or I'll never look at her mind or come not near me noble or not it for an angel of good discourse an excellent musician and her hair shall be of what color it please God. Women in Shakespeare do not directly state what qualities they aspect in a good husband but in their own way they do assess the men they decide to marry. Men of course are not concerned with what qualities they need to possess to make good husbands. Don Pedro for intense is quite content to describe Benedict as not the unhopefullest husband that I know simply because he is of a noble strain of approved valor and confirmed honesty. But these qualities by themselves are not enough. Even Bertram of all is well that ends well was of a noble strain and of approved valor. His mother and Helena did not doubt his honesty to thought it was not confirmed. And yet he made a totally unworthy husband. So a woman in Shakespeare has to be careful. Beatrice in any case is a very perceptive person and she cannot be easily impressed by what appears on the surface. She has to probe and only then decides.

At one stage Beatrice hints at the chief deficiency of Benedict's character. He were an excellent man that were just in the mid-way between him and Benedict the one is too like an image and says nothing and the other too like my lady's eldest son evermore tattling. This is yet another instance of Beatrice's merry war with Benedict but it is also perhaps an expression of her impatience with what she regards as Benedict's lack of seriousness. This impatience may also explain her somewhat unkind remark later that Benedict is the prince's jester. That she is concerned with this

seriousness as a quality that a potential husband should possess a seriousness that is born of intellectual and emotional maturity is subtly indicated in her subsequent exchange with Don Pedro:

BEATRICE: . . . I may sit in a corner and cry height ho for a husband.

DON PEDRO: Lady Beatrice I will get you one.

BEATRICE: I would rather have one of your fathers getting. Hath your grace near brother like you? You father got excellent husbands if a maid could come by them.

DON PEDRO: will you have me lady?

BEATRICE: no my lord unless I might have another for working days your grace is too costly to wear every day...

The importance of Beatrice's last remark here has rarely been noticed. Critics have come to feel that in these remarks to use Beatrice's own words there is all mirth and no matter. The only person who took this remark seriously was Bernard Shaw. In getting married a play rises the question of an imaginative and cultivated woman wanting a Sunday husband as well as a weekday one. The play deals with the situation of Reginald who has married a girl thirty years younger than himself. Soon his young wife feels bored with him and falls in love with a young man of her own age named Simon Hotchkiss. The decree of divorce has not been made absolute yet when Reginald against the wishes of the members of the family comes to attend the wedding of his niece at the house of his brother bishop bride north. The bishop second brother the general is already there. To their surprise Reginald's wife Leo also appears on the scene. After the general has learnt from Reginald and Leo that the divorce proceedings are wholly a case of collusion he asks them in some surprise why they have done this and brought disgrace to the bride north family.

Perhaps Shaw is stretching the point, Perhaps he is also utilizing a stray remark in Shakespeare only to attack the Victorian conception of marriage and the absurd divorce laws in existence at that time. It is not easy to believe that Shakespeare could have been attacking the contemporary notions of marriage. That was not his habit. It may however be concerned that in Beatrice's remark Shakespeare did articulate though in a somewhat indirect and tentative way a woman's wish for an ideal husband something the Shaw makes the theme of the discussion between Leo and the bishop. However neither Shakespeare nor Shaw could find a suitable answer to the question raised by Beatrice and Leo. Beatrice does not of course take Don Pedro personal seriously and turns it into a jest. But she is clear in her mind that men like Don Pedro whatever their status in society can never make suitable husbands for women like her. She wants in her husband's personality the richness and variety that most men lack and which most women do not even demand. Ultimately she finds these in Benedict. Marriage for most men and women in Shakespeare's times was a routine affair and what William Stout said in 1699 could perhaps stand as an epitaph for many sixteenth and seventeenth century couples they lived very distinguished but had many children. Beatrice wants to avoid this fate and if she could speak freely to Benedict she might have said to him what in the late seventeenth century Dorothy Osborne wrote in a letter to William Temple there are a great many ingredients must go to the making of me happy in a husband first our humors must agree.

In a society where most marriages were arranged it is difficult to see how the woman could discover whether her humor and the humor of the man she was to marry would agree. So Shakespeare's heroines have not merely rejected arranged marriages but also reversed the usual sex roles in courtship that the age has chalked out for them. It is interesting to watch how Shakespeare violates the contemporary code that women are to be seen not heard.

Since a reversal of sex roles in courtship is a violation of degree Shakespeare often takes advantage of disguise. When Rosalind sees Orlando for the first time in the Forest of Arden she is dressed as a boy and though her first reaction is one of bafflement alas the day what shall I do with my doublet and hose? She quickly recovers and decides to exploit her disguise I will speak to him like a saucy lackey and under that habit play the knave with him.

And she does play the knave superbly after talking in a bantering tone about how time travels in diverse paces with diverse persons she comes to the real point of this encounter: there is a man who haunts the forest that abuses our young trees. . . . if I could for he seems to have the quotidian of love upon him. And then Orlando's education begins.

It would be wrong to claim that the Restoration woman has liberated herself from the Elizabethan notion that a woman is only half herself the other half and clearly the more important half being the man she marries. Most women in this period too subscribed to the horrible merging mingling self-abnegation of love and have not achieved that single separate being with its own laws. Which is the real sign of equality and freedom? Generally speaking however their position is quite considerably improved as compared to the position which is quite considerably improved as compared to the position of the Elizabethan woman. This improvement is reflected in Restoration comedy where the general tendency clearly is towards recognition of a woman's individuality.

Guy Montgomery in fact has claimed that the new world of the Restoration age emerged from chaos and proposed to men and women an equality scarcely known before to English society. C.v. Wedgwood specially contrasts the position of women in Shakespeare and Restoration comedy in her well-known remarks:

The old system of chivalry in which women chattels precious chattels but chattels nonetheless to be protected and possessed had in an attenuated form governed the moral outlook of the upper classes well into the seventeenth century. A new morality had not yet been worked out to fit a society which now finally came unmoored from feudalism and chivalry. With all their cynicism the morals of the fast set in the later seventeenth century represent a move towards greater justice between men and women. The capacity to meet a man on equally terms which had been the prerogative of an occasional Brunhild or Britomart was now open to any woman of quick wits. It can hardly be sustained that the morality depicted by Wycherley, Etherege, Congreve and Vanbrugh is an advance on that depicted by Spenser, Shakespeare, Massinger or even Ford. But at least theirs is a society in which neither Hero nor Imogen could be so scandalously mistreated by their lovers with the full approval of society.

Wedgeood's general point is unexceptionable but perhaps we should not ignore some of the forces in Elizabethan society which were clearly meant to protect women. In her case for instance apart from Beatrice's shrill cry kill Claudio which rings in our ears there are other forces getting ready to act. There are no young men in the family but the old men the father and the uncle challenge the man who had dishonored the daughter of the family. And when their niece Beatrice helplessly cries O God that I were a man I would eat his heart in the market place the family acquires a new member Benedict who though once a friend of Claudio now challenges him to a duel. There is also the friar the voice of religion wise and moderate advising patience. Elsewhere there is the law of the land performing its duty in however blundering a way. So it would be wrong to treat Hero as alone and abandoned. There are forces in her society family religion that cult of chivalry which is on her side. These forces are withdrawn only when a woman rejects them by upsetting the social moral structure of society. In her case these forces do not react immediately and we get the impression that she has been scandalously mistreated with the full approval of society precisely because she seemed to have upset the structure.

In the case of Imogen the protection of society is not withdrawn. Indeed in her case at no stage did society think except her husband of course that she had transgressed the moral bounds fixed by it for its women? She was just a victim of slander and as Pisano says no one is safe from slander:

Kings queens and states

Maids matrons nay the secrets of the grave

This viperous slander enters.

But even when her husband rejects her she is not left alone and helpless. Indeed from the very beginning of the play society seems to be on her side. Cymbeline's courtiers resent his treatment of his daughter and later posthumously his most faithful servant Pisano disobeys his master's orders and risks his own life to protect Imogen. At the back of all this there is the invisible strength of her two brothers who very appropriately are used as instruments to kill the only man who poses a threat to her honor. In the end the wicked queen dies and father daughter and sons are all united. The husband is more than repentant and all ends on a note of warm affection.

The significant fact for our purposes is that with both Hero and Imogen the woman is provided that greater security and continuity which is possible only in more cohesive and extended family systems.

The world of the heroine of restoration comedy is of an altogether different kind where religion society family all seem to have withdrawn and left woman free to play the game of life as well as she can. To believe that to play this game successfully mere quick wits will do is too simplistic. As Ian Watt has said in place of the security provided to her by the family the woman now needs a strong supporting ideology which can be provided only by romantic love. The word romantic can be provided only by romantic love. The word romantic can be somewhat confusing. The broad idea is that only the love of a husband can sustain a woman in a situation where familial and other social protection is not available to her. It is indeed the kind of love that can replace all other relationships. It is however based on two assumptions both of which unfortunately are absent in the restoration comedy. The first assumption is that the commitment of the man and the woman to each other is so total that in their lives there is no place for extra marital relationships. This assumption holds good in Shakespeare but restoration comedy shows it to be somewhat unrealistic. Hence in this comedy the heroines are faced with a really fateful choice for everything depends on the king of man she chooses. She may be lucky but in the general climate of permissiveness it is extremely easy to go wrong.

The second assumption of romantic love is a complete absence of financial considerations which again Shakespeare accepts but restoration comedy almost wholly rejects. It is not that financial consideration is altogether absent in Shakespeare. In at least two of his comedies the taming of the shrew and the merry wives of Windsor they do seem to play an important role. But what is important is that in Shakespeare financial considerations are relevant only in arranged marriages as they almost invariably were in his society. But marriages as they almost invariably were in his society. But marriages in Shakespeare are by and large marriages of love and in such marriages to use the words of the king of France in King Lear the woman herself is dowry. Even in the two plays mentioned financial consideration soon loses their relevance. However loudly Petruchio may proclaim that wealth is the burden of my

wooing dance the burden of the play is to show how two somewhat stubborn individuals can convert this marriage into a companionate one.

In the merry wives to Windsor mention did at one time convert Anne father wealth but that time is long past and it's the very riches of you that now I am at. Indeed his is a genuine marriage of love.

In the restoration age the situation is radically changed. Now the mercenary consideration becomes the chief motive for marriage amongst the upper class. Indeed as p. f. Vernon has pointed out in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century marriages of convenience became so widespread as to indicate that the aristocracy had come to accept a new view of the nature and function of marriage. A carefully arranged marriage had become the readiest means of accumulating landed property and so inevitably a new attitude to marriage arose. It is this new attitude to marriage that we have to keep in mind while considering the difficult that women face in this period in achieving a companionate marriage. What Dorimant says to Mrs. Love it is a lie but it correctly depicts the situation that the restoration upper class is facing believe me a wife to repair the ruins of my estate that needs it. Dorimant's remark to young bellair again does not reflect his true state of mind but it certainly reflects the attitude of the younger aristocracy:

The wise will find a difference

In our fate wed a woman

I am good estate.

There reasons for this increasing emphasis on the money motive are to be found in the increasing wealth of the city merchants and the dwindling fortunes of the landed aristocracy. The crisis must have got intensified by the reduction of eligible husbands owing to losses caused by the civil war. There is enough evidence to show that some of the rich merchants were paying very large dowries and causing real concern amongst members of the older aristocracy. Writing in 1685 sir William Temple rightly bewailed the new situation I think I remember within less than fifty years the first noble families that married into the city for downright money and thereby introduced by degrees this public grievance which has since ruined so many estates by the necessity of giving great portions to daughter.

Marriage in the period had become so mercenary that a courtesan in Mrs. Behn's *The Rover* or the banish cavaliers when abused by the rover for the trade snubs him in these words pray tell me sir are not you guilty of the same mercenary crime? When a lady is proposed to you for a wife you never ask how fair discreet or virtuous she is but what her fortune which if but small you cry she will not do my business and basely leave her she languish for you. The rover himself concedes that it is a barbarous custom. Mary Austell's comment on this barbarous custom is equally pertinent what qualifications do they look after in a spouse what will she bring is the first enquiry how many acres. Or how much ready coin? Defoe's *Moll Flanders* was wholly correct when she complained that the marriage market had become unfavorable to our sex.

A comedy that treats marriage as merely a commercial contract where neither compatibility of temperament and age nor affection plays any part is bound to present an unpleasant picture of husband and wife relationship. At times the picture is so unpleasant that we are left in no doubt that the playwright are attacking a serious contemporary social evil. Some plays merely ridicule greedy parents and guardians on unsuitable and inadequate husbands. But there are other plays like *Southern* where the problem of an unhappy marriage is present in such grim terms as to make it almost a problem play. That they come rather late in the period but even in its earlier phase restoration comedy presents marriage in the words of a character in *Shadwell's Epsom Wells* as the worst of prisons indeed an ecclesiastical mouse trap. A character in Mrs. Behn's *The Town Fop* goes even further and describes mercenary marriages as an adultery in fact one continued sin. All this is not an exaggeration when applied to marriages where hymen and priest wait still upon portion and jointure. P. f. Vernon is wholly correct in stating that where marriages yoked together without regard for human feeling young and old intelligent and stupid sensitive ladies and miserly businessmen all unions without affection they were bound to lead to mutual distrust possessive tyranny jealousy and contempt.

How can marriages of this type provide any satisfaction to the parties or even become tolerable? The situation becomes particularly difficult when no divorce is possible. Rochester's view expressed to burn on his death bed is not to be brushed aside lightly: the restraining a man from the use of women except one in the way of marriage and denying the remedy of divorce he thought unreasonable imposition on the freedom of mankind.

Rochester of course never cared to look at the question from the woman's point of view that in any case he described as the silliest part of god's creation. But, even in Rochester's times as perhaps in all periods in history have found as stated by Dorimant in *Wycherley* the country wife a mistress should be like a little country retreat near the town not to dwell in constantly but only for a night and away to taste the town better when a man returns. Male adultery Dorimant claims does not threaten the institution of marriage indeed it strengthens it. Such marriages were naturally not satisfactory from the woman's point of view but they met the needs of society adequately. William Stout

commented in a marriage in 1699. They lived disagreeably but had many children and surely the most important thing that an upper class husband demanded of his wife in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was an heir. What really distinguishes restoration comedy from earlier comedy especially Elizabethan comedy is its acceptance of the fact that married women too need the kind of retreat that Dorimant mentions. Jeremy Collier was outraged at this defiance by contemporary comedy of the most sacred tenet of sexual morality in the mind of a male it may not be amiss to observe that there're no instances of debauching married women in Plautus nor Terence nor yet in aristocracy. But on our stage how common is it to make a lord a knight or an alderman a cuckold? But surely we cannot blame the wife of Sir Jasper Fidget or of Mr. Pinch wife and the innumerable other wives in restoration comedy for finding some solace outside marriage. For Sir Jasper his wife is only a bothersome encumbrance at best a social ornament and for Pinch wife Margery is no more than a substitute for a whore. Sir Jasper is indifferent Pinch wife is hostile. In these marriages there is no trust understanding and of course no love.

Lady Fidget states her complaint in these words:

Why should our damned tyrants oblige us to live?

On the pittance of pleasure which they only give?

What Jacinta the woman of Julia in Mrs. Behn the false count says could serve as a reply to Lady Fidget's complaint hanged why should we young women pine and languish for what our own natural invitation may produce us let us lay you heads together and if Machiavelli with all his politics can outwit us its pity but we all lead apes in hell and die without the Jewish blessing of consolation. Julia of course would accept Jacinta's advice and outwit her husband but there is no doubt that her situation is much worse than that of Lady Fidget. She is married to a thing-foot only for his tomb a brute that wanting sense to value treats more like a prisoner than a wife. In her husband's mind she is worse than a prisoner he calls her his slave his property and his goods and chattels. Helena in the Rover has still not had such an experience as she is unmarried but she can well imagine what it would be like the giant stretches itself yawns and sighs a belch or two as Louse as a musket throws himself into bed and expects you in his foul sheets and you can get yourself unrest calls you with a snore or two and are not these fine blessings to a young lady? Otway Mrs. Goodville in friendship in fashion knows this at first hand I have not seen him this fortnight he never comes home till four in the morning and then he speaks to his separate bed where he lies till afternoon then rises and out again upon his parole flesh and blood can't endure it. The wife of Spruce in James Carlisle the fortune hunters put the wife's point of view sharply but now unreasonably we are accused for cuckolding our husband when certainly either by vanity folly pride or ill nature they draw it upon themselves. Constant in Vanbrugh provokes wife sums up this point of view at the end of the century:

A man of real worth scarce even is a cuckold but his own fault. Women are not naturally lewd there must be something to urge to it. They will cuckold a churl out of revenge a fool because they despise him a beast because they loath him. But when they make bold with a man they once had a well grounded value for ties because they first see them neglected by him.

However sensible Constant's defense of the woman's conduct in restoration comedy may be it provides no solution to the marriage problem. It does not help women to achieve what Mariana in Thomas Wright's *The Female Virtuoso*'s describes as a genuinely satisfying marriage when I reflect on marriage all I can see in it is a dear husband that will love me pretty children that will play about me and a house of my own to manage.

The restoration comedies of wit do of course, contain 'the rare and fine things that lovers say to each other—as also the repartee which Dryden described as 'the very should of conversation' and 'the greatest grace of comedy'. But in modern times we are more concerned with what these comedies are really trying to say and how sensible their comments on human conduct are. One thing that strikes us immediately is that even the most pedestrian of these comedies asks questions about the immediate social reality which Shakespeare's comedies tended to bypass. Juliet disinterred, for instance, has claimed that the arranged marriage in the sixteenth century was only trouble through adultery but there is no evidence that Shakespeare gave serious thought to this question. Indeed, except for some playful teasing on the part of his lovers, the question is raised in something like serious form only by his clowns and villains. Shakespeare is so committed to 'holy matrimony' that he never visualizes the possibility of either of the parties changing after marriage. Rosalind does, of course, say that 'men are April when they woo, December when they wed'. But this fate is reserved in as you like it for characters like Touchstone; Rosalind and Orlando are not touched by it. Their 'true faith' guarantees that they shall live happily ever after.

It is precisely this true faith that restoration comedy is unable to accept. It finds it false to human nature and recognizes human frailty as a fact of life. Men and women do change, it claims, and as Dorimant says, the oaths, vows and protestations of lovers 'may be a certain proof of a present passion, but to say truth, in love there is no security to be given for the future'. In a state of high emotion — or 'present passion' — Dorimant makes the claim: 'I will renounce all the joys I have in other women' but Harriet has the true instinct of a restoration comic heroine and warns him against this extravagance: 'hold — though I wish you devout, I would not have you turn fanatic'. This lack

of faith in any moral absolutes is so strong in this comedy that when at the end of she would if she could lady Corkwood resolved 'to give other the great business of this town, and hereafter modestly confine to the humble affairs of though somewhat unkindly, that this 'very pious resolution would work better if she could also 'entertain an able chaplain'!

In such a general climate of skepticism, establishing stable human relationship becomes difficult. Marriage clearly seems to have lost its sanctity in this period, but there is no other institution that can replace it. The attempt of restoration heroes and heroines is not to reject marriage – notwithstanding the scoffing attitude of most of them, particularly the men – but to make it more acceptable in terms of their real needs as men and women. Adultery may, of course, provide some temporary solace, but no one in this comedy really believes that it can be a substitute for marriage. Indeed, as denied Davis has said, 'inside every bawdy restoration comedy really there is a muddles, romantic, sensual, relational plea for "wedded love" struggling to escape. For women especially, 'wedded love' is all important. In a society where no profession is available to her, marriage is a woman's only carrier. As Mary Astell puts it, marriage was the contemporary woman's only preferment, the sum total of her Endeavour's, the completion of all her hopes. These hopes couple, however, be easily destroyed if she entered into a mercenary marriage and became the property of an unsympathetic husband.

No comic heroine would accept this kind of a situation. She is an individual with her own human dignity and man has to recognize this if any genuine relationship is to be established between the two. The question is not merely what sir Oliver Corkwood in she would if she could thought it was when he told court all and freeman: they are for having you take a lease for life, and you are for being tenants at will'. The question is a more basic one, and essentially a moral one: it is whether she is very much more – a companion, a friend, a sharer of one's joys and sorrows and a human being who has to be treated with respect and consideration.

The hero in restoration comedy must learn that there is a basic difference between a wife and a harlot. Unless he does that, there is no possibility of a mutually satisfying marriage. Wycherley's Alithea is saying no more than this when she tells Harcourt that 'love proceeds from esteem' or when she enunciates the 'doctrine for all husbands': women and fortune are truest still to those that trust 'me'. If correctly understood, the demand made by all witty heroines in restoration comedy is basically the same, namely, that the man should learn to recognize the difference between other women and the woman he decides to marry.

The difficulty of the heroines, however, is that the men they are dealing with have not learnt that a woman is not just a sex-object but a human being with a personality of her own. These men are not wholly to blame. They have been brought up in a culture which prescribes 'conversation with ladies and intrigues with them' as 'the best possible training in the "rules" whereby a gentleman might become more agreeable. This is the culture of a leisure-class society and it seems to assume that a little gaming and a bastard or two were nothing which could not be expected of a high-spirited young gentleman. What it does to trifled who recommended that his son should not only frequent the company of women of fashion but also have 'arrangements' with them.

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