"WEEPING" VERSUS "LAUGHING" COMEDY: AN EXAMINATION OF THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF SENTIMENTAL COMEDY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A Thesis

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Master of Arts

by

Joan Rosenfield

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the rise, nature and development of sentimental comedy during the eighteenth century. Sentimental comedy differs from the earlier Restoration comedy in the type of language used since bawdy and double entendres are largely purged from these plays. There is no scene in sentimental comedy equivalent to Wycherley's "china" scene in The Country Wife (IV, iii) in its witty but callous portrayal of sophisticated promiscuity.

Since "creeping" sentimentalism is already present in plays of the Restoration and earlier, it is impossible to establish a definite date for the beginning of sentimental comedy. However, Colley Cibber's first play, Love's Last Shift (1696), has been given the distinction of being called the first sentimental comedy.[1] This view has considerable merit because Cibber appeared on the theatrical scene at a time when Restoration comedy was no longer in its heyday and he was astute enough to tailor his plays to the change in theatrical taste. However, Cibber's allegiance to the tenets of sentimental comedy was not wholehearted and he preserves, although in a tempered form, certain of the Restoration characters such as the fop and the coquette. His language

[1]B.R.S. Fone, "Love's Last Shift and Sentimental Comedy," Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research, IX, No. I (May, 1970), 11.

also has a vitality of colloquialism and wit which is not found in later sentimentalists.

Sir Richard Steele's periodical writing demonstrates his lifelong criticism of the immorality of Restoration plays; and he used his own plays as a vehicle for expressing his theory of moral comedy. The stage became his pulpit and his characters are drawn as exemplary models of conduct.

Later in the century, Hugh Kelly and Richard Cumberland wrote plays of excessive sentimentality because they were unable to separate the moral basis of the drama from the humourous possibilities inherent in human nature.

"Laughing Comedy" was not completely dead on the English stage during the eighteenth century. Sheridan was the most successful playwright in bringing back wit and satire to the theatre. However, more germane to sentimental comedy are the plays of Oliver Goldsmith, since they demonstrate an uneasy relationship between sentiment and humour not found in Sheridan's plays. Although Goldsmith attacked sentimental comedy, his own plays are certainly not entirely free of sentimentalism. Nonetheless, when an audience leaves the theatre after a performance of She Stoops to Conquer, it leaves laughing--something which cannot be said for an audience leaving Kelly's False Delicacy.

An appendix is included to demonstrate the popularity of sentimental comedy in comparison with other types of comedy presented at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. In addition, the individual statistics of each play's performance record

show how a sentimental play like False Delicacy fared against a largely non-sentimental play like The Good Natur'd Man, and how consistently popular was Steele's The Conscious Lovers throughout the eighteenth century.

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I wish to acknowledge the invaluable help and encouragement given to me during the writing of this thesis by my adviser, Dr. E. E. Reimer, Associate Professor of English, University of Winnipeg.

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Chapter 1

THE NATURE AND RISE OF SENTIMENTAL COMEDY

As a literary term "sentimentalism" is difficult to define, and critics in the twentieth century from Ernest Bernbaum to Arthur Sherbo have not been able to agree on its qualities. In an article entitled "The Sentimental Mask," Paul Parnell defines this vexing critical problem:

> Criticism so far has simply not defined the basic relationship between sentimentalism and virtue or morality; nor has it explained why the term, if occupied with man's noblest ideals, carries a generally unfavourable connotation.[1]

This unfavourable connotation has placed a stigma on sentimental comedy as being either saccharine or completely unbelievable. It is true that in its extreme form sentimental comedy becomes merely mawkish. However, this debasement of the genre does not vitiate the original and positive qualities of early sentimental comedy.

The difficulties in presenting a workable definition of sentimental comedy notwithstanding, it is possible to set down some of its characteristic properties. First and foremost, sentimental comedy makes its appeal to the heart rather than to the intellect. Secondly, it examines human behaviour in an unsatirical way and emphasizes man's good-

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[1]Paul E. Parnell, "The Sentimental Mask," PMLA, LXXVIII (1963), 529.

ness. Thirdly, sentimental comedy has a very definite moral and didactic aim. Above all, the audience is meant to sympathize with the characters on stage who are, generally, average, ordinary people. No longer does this type of drama confine itself to the portrayal of kings and noble personages, for now the spotlight is on people of a lower social status--although peasants and artisans are still sometimes objects of ridicule. Sentimental comedy represents the ultimate triumph of good over evil since, at bottom, there is the belief that man is basically good and virtuous. Sentimental comedy, then, does not set out to ridicule folly and lash the vice but presents instead a picture of basically good-hearted people led astray temporarily but ultimately reclaimed. The leading characters of sentimental comedy--such as Amanda and Lady Easy in Cibber's Love's Last Shift and The Careless Husband respectively-- are models of virtue who suffer innocently. In their stoical reactions to such suffering they become moral models to be emulated, not only by other characters on stage who have yet to learn the rewards of virtue, but also by the audience.

There are two types of character indispensable to sentimental comedy; they are the virtuous woman and the reformed rake. The latter character is an obvious development from the Restoration rake who romped through the plays of Wycherley, Etherege, Congreve and Farquhar. Also, in contrast to those Restoration dramatists who presented their women as

"sensually and sexually minded creatures,"[2] the sentimental playwrights presented females of sterling virtue who valued their goodness and fidelity as much as their reputation.

Sentimental comedy, then, presents a gallery of characters most of whom are virtuous and blameless in their conduct. Those who commit follies of any sort do so out of misdirection and misunderstanding. Sentimental comedy sets itself the task of pointing up human virtues rather than exposing our vices and follies to ridicule and censure. But this type of comedy was not entirely unopposed by other playwrights; Goldsmith, for example, objected to sentimental comedy on two grounds: first, because it failed to present human nature as it really is (a curious mixture of virtue and vice), and secondly, because it failed in its moral duty of bringing to light and satirizing human failings and vices.

In sentimental comedy a heavy emphasis is placed upon emotions such as pity, sympathy, reconciliation and love. In any general discussion of sentimental comedy and in the examination of specific plays, the references to various emotions can sometimes cause problems. Critics have argued over terminology; for example, J. H. Smith holds that words such as "pity" and "benevolence" do not adequately describe or define the genre."[3] Nevertheless, plays with a

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[2]Frederick T. Wood, "The Beginnings and Significance of Sentimental Comedy," Anglia, LV (1931), 372.

[3]John Harrington Smith, "Shadwell, the Ladies and the Change in Comedy," Modern Philology, XLVI (1948), 23.

heavy emphasis on the tender emotions do generally fall into the sentimental school. The danger of this type of drama lies in the substitution of false emotion for the real thing, particularly in the hands of inferior playwrights such as Kelly and Cumberland. Their characters are often no more than mere cardboard figures who are given sententious platitudes to mouth. Too much excellence, too excessive a dose of virtue and constancy, are difficult to accept and to believe in, especially when there are no reprobate characters set up as contrasts to the paragons of goodness and beauty. Plenty of "honest" tears are shed as the spectators watch the progress of these perfectible human beings going from distress to reconciliation and happiness.

Sentimental comedy has been said to have a two-fold purpose: to emphasize the good side of human behaviour over its bad side and to preach goodness, honesty and virtue to all. John Harrington Smith defines the distinction between Restoration and sentimental comedy in terms of an audience reaction to the comic methods of the earlier playwrights:

> . . . the essence of that reaction was the replacement of the comic method of the Restoration, which featured realism and satire and in which the writer's interest in whether reform was accomplished thereby was merely incidental, with a method which put reform first and meant to accomplish it by representing not things as they were but standards as they ought to be, personified in characters who should be examples for imitation by the audience. Let us call this the "exemplary" method.[4]

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[4] Ibid., 23-4.

Since exemplary comedy deals with social behaviour and its desired morality, certain playwrights were led to take up the cudgels against dueling, for example. In the Preface to The Conscious Lovers, Steele writes that "the whole was writ for the sake of the scene in the fourth act, wherein Mr. Bevil evades the quarrel with his friend."[5] Marriage often takes the spotlight and its conventions are critically discussed. Whereas the faithful wife would have been ridiculed in a Restoration comedy, such a woman gains commendation and applause in a sentimental comedy. Patience is a necessary concomitant of the long-suffering wife who must endure her husband's infidelity. Her reward comes when her straying husband realizes the errors of his way, repents, begs forgiveness and is returned to the fond and tender embraces of his wife.

The rise of sentimental comedy is related to the changing taste of the theatre audiences who, to a certain degree, reacted against the bawdy and licentiousness of the earlier Restoration stage. The reasons for this audience reaction are many. First, many writers and pamphleteers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries strongly criticized the profanity in English comedy. This groundswell of moral indignation became powerful enough to call into

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[5]Richard Steele, "The Conscious Lovers," in Eighteenth Century Plays, ed. by Ricardo Quintana, The Modern Library (New York: Random House, Inc., 1952), p. 110. All subsequent references to this play will be from this edition and will be indicated in the text by act, scene and page numbers.

question the basic tenets of contemporary comedy. Jeremy Collier's A Short View of The Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage (1698) had a profound effect on this movement but, as George Henry Nettleton points out in English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century, "Collier himself was less the prophet of an unrealized evil than a voice through which revolt against the immorality of the stage became fully articulate."[6] However, Collier was the central figure among the crusaders who sought to bring about a reformation and general cleanup of the stage. It should also be noted that although he is indelibly associated with the rise of sentimentalism, "he attacked the early plays of sensibility as bitterly as the comedy of manners."[7] Collier's attack on the theatre represents more of a culmination of opinion against the excesses of the stage than a rallying point for reformers.

Collier's first chapter is entitled "The Immodesty of the Stage" and it is an attack on what he considers to be indecent language. He declares the English used on the stage to be "superlatively Scandalous." Throughout his attack, Collier is careful to compare the playwrights of his own time to the ancients and not unexpectedly the older dramatists are held up as models. In his second chapter he

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[6]George Henry Nettleton, English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 141.

[7]Wood, "Sentimental Comedy," p. 380.

spends a great deal of time in condemning the practice of swearing as both "ungentlemanly" and "unchristian." To support his criticisms he quotes offensive passages from various plays. The third chapter concentrates upon Collier's effusive objections to the representation on stage of the clergy. He mentions just about every play which has a priest in it and censures the playwrights for degrading this profession. Chapter Four is a stern denunciation of playwrights who create "vitious" persons who are rewarded at the end of the play. Poetic justice in his view has been severely distorted. The next chapter has a somewhat narrower focus since Collier concentrates upon censuring individual playwrights such as Congreve and Vanbrugh. The last chapter vitiates the effect of Collier's criticism since he wanders far afield from his original aim of documenting the abuses of the drama. He takes as his subject the stage itself and brings into the discussion topics such as philosophy, the church and the constitutions of Athens, Sparta and Rome.

Collier's weakness lay in his inability for discrimination and moderation in argument. He lumped together too many plays as being immoral and licentious without being able to distinguish between moral and artistic issues. He culled examples to consolidate his own arguments but did so in a way which heavily loaded the dice in his favour. But, the same impulse to criticize and reform the stage which resulted in Collier's writings, also sparked, for example, the theoretical criticism and plays of Richard Steele.

A second reason for the change in audience reaction lay in the changing composition of this audience. Between 1660 and 1685 the theatres were largely dominated by a Court and Town coterie headed by King Charles II, and the middle classes were largely absent. Such an exclusive patronage of the theatres tended to turn the playhouses into private clubs where people came to see and be seen. Entertainment was considered to be the prime objective of the theatres, and the Restoration audience revelled in seeing itself portrayed as a group of witty, cultured, urbane and refined people. So small was this audience that two theatres were sufficient to cater to the demand for plays. The monarchs who followed Charles II did not openly patronize and encourage the theatres as he had done. Consequently, the theatrical public lacked a leader who could mould them into a cohesive group. As Emmett L. Avery points out, "by the early 1700's the population of London had increased considerably, and although the theatre remained a fashionable place, the middle classes, citizens, gentlemen, and ladies, the apprentices, and even servants formed a larger proportion of the audience."[8] This change in theatrical audience did cause a shift towards sentimentality.

The various prologues and epilogues of eighteenth-century plays offer us the playwrights' views upon the

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[8]Emmett L. Avery, The London Stage 1700-1729, A Critical Introduction, Arcturus Books (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), p. clx.

critical acumen of the audience. Julian L. Ross's article "Dramatist versus Audience in the Early Eighteenth Century" examines the critical opinions of the audience between 1700 and 1750. Dramatists and critics such as Farquhar and Dennis attacked their audience on two grounds: first, they bemoaned the decline of creative genius and literary taste; and secondly, they saw society as having become soft and decadent.[9] Most critics of the eighteenth century merely noted this decline of drama and society and went no further in their analyses. However, John Dennis focused upon the social and political changes which had occurred since the days of the Restoration. In comparing the earlier audience with the one of his day,

> he laid down this premise: that in any nation a good taste for comedy can exist only when a majority of the audience are qualified to judge for themselves, and when those not so qualified are influenced by the authority of those who are. On this basis he set out to show that, though in the Restoration period such a condition had existed, in the eighteenth century it did not.[10]

Dennis' argument is important in connection with the shift from Restoration to sentimental comedy. His analysis of the Restoration period as an age of poetry which gave way to an age of business helps to explain the decline in dramatic taste. Audiences no longer had the leisure and background in education to judge good dramatic pieces. It is

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[9]Julian L. Ross, "Dramatist Versus Audience in the Early Eighteenth Century," Philological Quarterly, XII (1933), 74.

[10]Ibid., p. 79.

clear that the eighteenth century did not invent sentimental comedy--or this genre batard as Voltaire called it--but the fact remains that sentimental comedy flourished in England just as the comedie larmoyante flourished during this period in France. Even though Frederick Wood traces the history of sentimentalism as far back as the medieval mystery and morality plays, which he calls "the expression, in a very concrete form, of the fundamental goodness of human nature and the triumph of virtue over vice, the reformation of the accomplished rake,"[11] the fact is that these early plays were only tinged with sentimentality. It seems clear that we should regard the rise of sentimental comedy in England as a particular dramatic reaction to a changing social and political scene. Causes within the drama itself and its patrons are also important, and in this respect the work of John Harrington Smith sheds illumination on the subject.

Smith sees as the two prime causes of the change in comedy the plays of Shadwell and the presence and influence of the ladies who began to patronize in growing numbers the two chief theatres of the period. Shadwell fancied himself as the inheritor of Ben Jonson's kind of didactic and satiric theatre. In The Virtuoso (1676), for example, we have a satire on contemporary science. In her Introduction to the play, Marjorie Hope Nicolson remarks:

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[11]Wood, "Sentimental Comedy," p. 373.

> Shadwell's was the most extensive treatment of this theme in drama since Ben Jonson's The Alchemist. His satire was more immediate and specific than Jonson's, since his light artillery was trained particularly upon the Royal Society of London.[12]

Before we actually see Sir Nicholas Gimcrack, we are prepared by his wife for his most amusing experiments. In conversation with the young gentlemen Bruce and Longvil, Lady Gimcrack explains her husband's latest occupation:

> Lady Gimcrack. The truth on't is, he is within but upon some private business. But nothing shall be reserved from such accomplish'd persons as you are. The truth on't is, he's learning to swim.
>
> Longvil. Is there any water hereabouts, madam?
>
> Lady Gimcrack. He does not learn to swim in the water, sir.
>
> Bruce. Not in the water, madam! How then?
>
> Lady Gimcrack. In his laboratory, a spacious room where all his instruments and fine knacks are.
>
> Longvil. How is this possible?
>
> Lady Gimcrack. Why he has a swimming master comes to him.
>
> Bruce. A swimming master! This is beyond all precedent. (Aside.) He is the most curious coxcomb breathing.
>
> Lady Gimcrack. He has a frog in a bowl of water, tied with a packthread by the loins, which packthread Sir Nicholas holds in his teeth, lying upon his belly on a table; and as the frog strikes, he strikes; and his swimming master stands by to tell him when he does well or ill. (I, ii, pp. 42-3)

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[12]Thomas Shadwell, The Virtuoso, ed. by Marjorie Hope Nicolson and David Stuart Rodes, Regents Restoration Drama Series (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. xv. All subsequent references to this play will be from this edition and will be indicated in the text by act, scene and page numbers.

Through an investigation of Shadwell's plays, Smith puts forth a proposition for comedy which he claims Shadwell followed. This proposition states that "it is the business of comedy not to reflect the contemporary scene but rather to encourage virtue and discourage vice."[13] This principle is very closely allied to the concept of sentimentalism; however, Shadwell did not always adhere to this formula in his plays. In his first play The Sullen Lovers (1668) Smith makes the point that Shadwell's main characters Lovell and Caroline are not typical Restoration lovers. He says, "their love passages are gay enough-- but he did not permit them to jeer wittily at the eternal verities."[14] In other words, there seems to be in this play a slight shift away from the bantering tone of Restoration raillery and a movement toward a more genteel conception of humour and wit. Smith sees Shadwell's plays up to A True Widow (1678) as not being either consistently sentimental or exemplary, for in his earlier works he had not managed to work out his own conception of comedy.

Squire of Alsatia (1688), which is closely related to Terence's Adelphi, does prefigure the later sentimental school of drama. Sir William Belfond has two sons, the younger one of whom he has entrusted to his brother Sir Edward to raise and educate in the city. Sir William is

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[13]Smith, "The Change in Comedy," p. 25.

[14]Ibid.

brutal and strict and believes in keeping a tight rein on his son in the country. Sir Edward, on the other hand, is far more liberal and lenient. He says to his brother:

> Prithee, consider youth a little. What if he does wench a little, and now and then is somewhat extravagant in wine; where's the great crime? All young fellows that have mettle in them will do the first; and if they have wit and good humour in them, in this drinking country, they will sometimes be forced upon the latter; and he must be a very dull phlegmatical lump whom wine will not elevate to some extravagance now and then.[15]

The plot hinges upon the effect of the two types of upbringing on the two young men. When the older son comes to London he falls prey to dupes and swindlers and overthrows his father's discipline completely. The younger son is also seen as a profligate but he is reformed at the end of the play. It is true that contrary to a fullblown sentimental hero, Young Belfond has cast off his mistress and child before swearing fidelity and love to his fiancee Isabella. But when his character turnabout is taken in conjunction with his uncle's philosophy of education, the charge of sentimentalism seems possible.

Smith stresses the influence of ladies in the transformation of English comedy when he says that "it seems clear that the ladies had more to do with the shaping of comedy in the period than has hitherto been supposed."[16] Their

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[15]Thomas Shadwell, "The Squire of Alsatia," in Thomas Shadwell, ed. by George Saintsbury, The Mermaid Series (London: T. Fisher Unwin, N. D.), p. 257.

[16]Smith, p. 27.

objections to certain plays were not based solely on the grounds of morality or on the prevalence of the theme of cuckoldry. But "they could not have failed to resent the stress of these plays on the failings of their sex--female hypocrisy and vice (when the wife in the play is leagued with the gallant against the husband) or weakness (when the gallant overcame the woman's resistance)."[17] Smith finds evidence of their influence in various prologues of the period in which playwrights often claim that they have written their plays to meet the demands of the fair sex. However, there existed a conflict of interests among the audience, since masculine taste as represented by the gallants still delighted in themes of cuckoldry and sexual licence.

More frequently the plays of the late 1680's and their prologues were designed to curry the favour of the ladies, although plays objected to on the basis of indecency still achieved a certain amount of success. But the ladies did protest the cynicism and licentiousness of plays written in the old manner; and the gallants, for so long the most important group in the audience, were beginning to be counter-balanced in the latter part of the century by the large numbers of ladies in the audience:

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[17] Ibid.

> Constancy in love begins to be regarded with more respect by comic writers. . . . This drift in comedy in the later 1670's and early 80's is doubtless to be attributed in part to the inability of the lesser writers to realize and appreciate the spirit of comedy as written by Etherege and Wycherley and so maintain the integrity of the genre. But no doubt this softening was, at least in part, in response to the wishes of the ladies.[18]

Constancy in love and a less cynical attitude towards marriage are two themes that reflect the changes in the comedies of the late seventeenth century. But this shift in comedy did not wholly replace the bawdiness and licentiousness of the earlier Restoration plays. A curious combination of Restoration and sentimental techniques and themes was often effected. Smith uses the example of Squire of Alsatia, where the rake is persuaded to adopt the path of virtue through the influence of the females in the play. This formula allows the playwright to present his rake "lewd for above four acts"[19] and then have a fifth act conversion and repentance scene. This scene is one of the conventions of sentimental comedy, although it is not enough to use the inclusion of such a scene as the only criterion for labelling a play sentimental. Although the fifth act conversion scene may well be the focus of sentimentalism in a particular play, this does not preclude the play from containing other earlier

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[18]Ibid., p. 30.

[19]Colley Cibber, Love's Last Shift, or, The Fool in Fashion, in The Dramatic Works of Colley Cibber, Esq., I (New York: Ams Press, Inc., 1966), p. 20. All subsequent references to this play will be from this edition and will be indicated in the text by act and page references.

indications of sentimentality. This point will be made clearer in the discussion of Cibber's plays, particularly Love's Last Shift.

Although the language used in sentimental comedies is chastened in contrast to the language of Restoration comedies, it does not necessarily reflect a lack of colloguial vitality. Sexual allusions are largely absent in genteel comedy, but the playwrights had recourse to idioms from elsewhere. Cibber in particular makes excellent use, for example, of the idioms of the tavern, the hunting field and the gaming table. Although excessive sentimentalizing gave rise to a corresponding rise in both rant and rhetoric, especially in the fifth act repentance scenes, not all speeches are so overblown. Cibber's dialogue is, to a large extent, brisk, lively and close to the speech patterns of everyday usage. This can be seen especially in the speeches given to Lady Betty Modish, the coquette in The Careless Husband. In her first scene she meets Lady Easy and tells her friend about her latest acqusition:

> Lady Betty Modish. Oh, my dear! I am overjoyed to see you! I am strangely happy today; I have just received my new scarf from London, and you are most critically come to give me your opinion of it.
>
> Lady Easy. Oh, your servant, madam! I am a very indifferent judge, you know. What, is it with sleeves?

> Lady Betty Modish. Oh, 'tis impossible to tell you what it is. 'Tis all extravagance both in mode and fancy. My dear, I believe there's six thousand yards of edging in it, then such an enchanting slope from the elbow, something so new, so lovely, so noble, so coquet and charming--but you shall see it, my dear.[20]

As William W. Appleton says, "Lady Betty's torrent of words in her opening scene as she describes the latest fashions has the rush of actual conversation, and the dialogue throughout is marked by the breaks, hesitations, and changes of pace that characterize the language of life."[21] Cibber's success in writing dialogue for his characters lay in his ability to control the sentiment so that it would not dictate the terms of his language. He imposed fewer restraints upon his range of vocabulary than are found in the tendentious speeches of Kelly and Cumberland. The language of genteel comedy could and sometimes did achieve a freshness and vitality as long as the characters were not mere cardboard configurations of goodness, virtue and honesty.

We have seen, then, how sentimental comedy differs in certain respects from Restoration comedy. The whole emphasis of comedy has shifted from criticism to emulation, as honourable people dominate the new plays. The language reflects this change as the characters speak more genteely

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[20]Colley Cibber, The Careless Husband, ed. by William W. Appleton, Regents Restoration Drama Series (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 28. All subsequent references to this play will be from this edition and will be indicated in the text by act, scene and page numbers.

[21]Ibid., p. xv.

and morally. Not all of the Restoration trademarks have disappeared; certain typical characters of the comedy of manners reappear in sentimental comedy, although in a somewhat different state. Marriage replaces cuckoldry as one of the chief themes, and sentimental playwrights make much of the character of the reformed rake. Carried to excess, sentimentalism often threatens to swamp the humourous elements in a play, as the stage is literally bathed with tears of sympathy and repentance. But this mawkishness does not approach its nadir until later in the eighteenth century. At this point we can turn back to the beginnings of sentimental comedy to determine the contribution made to this movement by Colley Cibber as a playwright and man of the theatre.

Chapter 2

COLLEY CIBBER: A MAN OF THE THEATRE

It is extremely difficult to know where to place Colley Cibber in the transition from the Restoration to the eighteenth century. But it seems that William Appleton strikes the correct balance when he says: "Uncommitted, easy-going, a trimmer by nature, he straddles the Restoration and eighteenth century."[1] Colley Cibber was one of the leading figures of the eighteenth century London theatre. He was born in 1671 in the city of London. As a young man he petitioned the Duke of Devonshire for preferment, but his heart lay elsewhere and he determined to become an actor. In his Apology he writes:

> 'Twas on the Stage alone I had formed a Happiness preferable to all that Camps or Courts could offer me! and there was I determin'd, let Father and Mother take it as they pleas'd, to fix my non ultra.[2]

Cibber's early career as an actor was difficult, as he endeavoured to secure parts which would show him off to advantage. During the winter of 1694-5, financial considerations

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[1]Colley Cibber, The Careless Husband, ed. by William W. Appleton, Regents Restoration Drama Series (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. xvi. All further references to this play will be from this edition and will be acknowledged in the text by act, scene and page numbers.

[2]Colley Cibber, Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, ed. by Robert W. Lowe, I (New York: Ams Press, Inc., 1966), pp. 73-74.

at last drove him to the writing of a comedy in which he tailored the character of Sir Novelty Fashion to himself.[3] In January, 1696, Love's Last Shift was first produced at Drury Lane and became a hit. Cibber's two-fold career as a comedian and playwright was thereby launched at the age of twenty-five. In the Apology, Cibber mentions an extravagant bit of praise showered on him by Lord Dorset in connection with his double success:

> That it was the best First Play that any Author in his Memory had Produc'd; and that for a Young Fellow to shew himself such an Actor and such a Writer in one Day, was something extraordinary.[4]

Cibber became one of the managers of Drury Lane in 1709 and in this capacity he was extremely successful. He possessed an excellent working knowledge of the theatre and developed an acute sense of what would please the audience. Leonard Ashley stresses this professionalism of Cibber when he says:

> Cibber was a professional man of the theatre who wrote professionally for the theatre, not for posterity. He addressed posterity only, perhaps, in his Apology, for which posterity remembers him best; the rest of the time he was an actor-manager and commercial playwright.[5]

This assessment of Cibber is crucial to an understanding of his dual roles of playwright and professional manager.

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[3]Ibid., 212.

[4]Ibid., 214.

[5]Leonard R. N. Ashley, Colley Cibber, Vol. XVII of Twayne's English Authors Series, ed. by Sylvia E. Bowman (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1965), p. 37.

Unlike Richard Steele, Cibber did not regard himself as a conscious reformer of the stage. He possessed no theoretical ideals which he desired to put into practice. His main criterion in selecting a play for production at Drury Lane was one of commercialism, and he was a competent judge in this respect. Ashley comments on Cibber's success:

> More often than luck can explain, Cibber built sturdy dramatic machines that could, artistically and financially, run. He had a shrewd sense of the commercial potential of a play script, a good ear for the playable line, a good eye for the scene on the stage. He knew his theatre and his actors, and he wrote for them (and himself, as an actor) purposefully and successfully, planning for the dramatic gesture, for the actor's stance and expression, for the right costume, the enhancing lighting, the property's positioning, the effective entrance and the electrifying exit.[6]

Cibber's luck and shrewdness were combined in the timing of the production of Love's Last Shift for "it came out at a time when taste was changing--when wit and cynicism were becoming less acceptable, when priggish characters, emotional scenes, and obtrusive morality were beginning to appear."[7] Furthermore, both the Prologue and Epilogue reinforce the claim that Cibber was not aiming at a wholesale reformation of the stage. The Prologue shows no evidence of a heavy or sententious moral behind it, although the ladies could not have disapproved of the following lines: "Nor do the bad alone his colours share;/Neglected virtue is at least

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[6]Ibid., 36-7.

[7]Richard Hindry Barker, Mr. Cibber of Drury Lane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 22.

shewn fair" (ll. 18-9). The Epilogue demonstrates Cibber's skill at pleasing all sections of the audience, as he refers to both the Restoration and sentimental ingredients of his comedy. His play is calculated to offend nobody, as he comments on its design:

> An honest rake forego the joys of life,
> His whores and wine, t'embrace a dull chaste wife!
> Such out of fashion stuff! But then again,
> He's lewd for above four acts, gentlemen.
> For faith he knew, when once he chang'd his fortune,
> And reform'd his vice, 'twas time--to drop the curtain.
> Four acts for your coarse palates were design'd,
> But then the ladies taste is more refin'd,
> They, for Amanda's sake, will sure be kind.
> (ll. 13-21)

As Fone points out, "the audience was Cibber's instrument; he recognized their desire for lewdness, but he sensed a new temper as well."[8]

Cibber did not publish the first collection of his work until 1721, twenty-five years after the initial production of Love's Last Shift. This is significant because of the changes which the playwright made in the text of the play. Aside from minor omissions and emendations there was one major excision, a scene at the beginning of Act four, which Dougald MacMillan outlines as follows:

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[8]B. R. S. Fone, "Love's Last Shift and Sentimental Comedy," Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research, IX, No. I (May, 1970), 11.

> This is a "low" comedy scene having nothing to do with the main issues of the piece. In it Sir William Wisewou'd, on an evening walk, encounters two bullies, with whom he has an altercation. He is saved from a ducking in the canal by the timely arrival of the Worthy brothers and the two young ladies. The speeches of the bullies are rather heavily sprinkled with dammes and are vulgar, if not actually offensive to decency.[9]

The importance of this excision to the gradual development of sentimental comedy is commented on by MacMillan:

> These excisions and emendations, made by Cibber to conform to the new taste of audiences for refinement of language, show the force the new movement had attained since the first presentation of this comedy; besides the influence of the new morality, they show also in the omission of the scene of the bullies the growing tendency towards gentility in comedy, which Goldsmith later lamented.[10]

In keeping with the general features of sentimental comedy, Love's Last Shift concentrates upon the expression of emotion and the reformation of a rake. Although criticism has accorded this play a prominent place in the history of sentimentalism, modern criticism is divided over the question and extent of sentimentality in the play. Ernest Bernbaum seems to overemphasize the sentimental aspects of the play in The Drama of Sensibility.[11] At the other extreme Arthur Sherbo asserts "that the sentimental element in Love's Last Shift is so small and juxtaposed with intrigue,

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[9]Dougald MacMillan, "The Text of Love's Last Shift," Modern Language Notes, XLVI (1931), 518-9.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ernest Bernbaum, The Drama of Sensibility, Harvard Studies in English, Vol. III (Boston and London: Ginn & Company, 1915), pp. 72-76.

comedy, and the bawdy that it becomes somewhat misleading to speak of the play as sentimental comedy without some accompanying qualifying statement."[12] However, Sherbo does not supply the qualifying statement deemed so necessary. Another critic sees the play as being in the vein of Restoration comedy throughout its first four acts with the final act supplying the sentimental turnabout.[13] Such criticism places a great deal of emphasis on the hero's big reformation scene in Act V and recognizes no evident sentimental strains earlier. The problem of defining the sentimentality in Love's Last Shift has to be viewed in conjunction with Cibber's consummate skill in presenting elements of both the comedy of manners and the comedy of gentility.

Nevertheless, there seems to be better evidence pointing to a more general tone of sentimentality in the play. The failure of critics to recognize the overall sentimentalism is pointed out by Fone:

> No one but Cibber has so far recognized as well, that it is not only the fifth act conversion that is the distinguishing sentimental mark of Love's Last Shift, but the presence of Amanda, and to use Cibber's term, the 'refined taste' which she so clearly evidences throughout the play.[14]

Fone contends that one can see the sentimental fabric of Love's Last Shift from the first act through to the last

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[12]Arthur Sherbo, English Sentimental Drama (Michigan: The Michigan State University Press, 1957), p. 104.

[13]Ashley, Colley Cibber, p. 41.

[14]Fone, "Love's Last Shift," p. 12.

act.[15] His argument, on the whole, is very convincing, although he does push one particular point too hard. When he looks at the language of the first scene he is undoubtedly correct in seeing it as devoid of the lewd and bawdy tone of Restoration comedy. However, in ascribing to Snap, Loveless' servant, "the voice of moderation,"[16] he sets up an artificial tension between morality and immorality. We must take Loveless' opening speech as a truthful assertion of his position since, at this point, he has nothing to gain by dissimulation. He upbraids Snap for his behaviour now that the two men are impoverished:

> Sirrah! leave your preaching. Your counsel, like an ill clock, either stands still or goes too slow. You ne'er thought my extravagancies amiss while you had your share of them; and now I want money to make myself drunk, you advise me to live sober, you dog.[17]

It is quite obvious, then, that Snap speaks reprovingly to his master now that they are in a compromised financial state. He is more than willing to go along with Loveless' schemes as long as there is a substantial promise of gaining something in return. We notice how his first sight of Young Worthy elicits a desire to secure a dinner invitation (I, i, p. 23). Later, in Act four, Snap blithely follows his

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[15] Ibid., 16.

[16] Ibid., 17.

[17] Colley Cibber, Love's Last Shift, or, The Fool in Fashion, in The Dramatic Works of Colley Cibber, Esq., I (New York: Ams Press, 1966), I, i, p. 21. All further references to this play will be from this edition and will be acknowledge in the text by act, scene and page numbers.

master's example and beds down with Amanda's woman. When quizzed later by the now reformed Loveless as to whether he had lain with the woman, Snap gives the expected reply: "Why truly, Sir, imagining you were doing little else with my lady, I must confess I did commit familiarity with her, or so, Sir" (V, p. 91). Snap acted in the manner in which he thought his master would have approved, and he certainly does not speak here with "the voice of moderation."

Fone's most flagrant misreading of Snap's motives occurs in his discussion of the opening scene of the play. After receiving some money from Young Worthy, Loveless plans "a dinner and a brace of whores into the bargain" (I, i, p. 27). Snap prevails upon his master not to seek the whores before dinner and Fone sees Loveless' acquiescence as "a minor hint of his final, major reformation. Event and action suggest then, that the moral intention of the play is clearly established early in the play."[18] This interpretation is surely pushing the point too hard, for all that Snap asks is "let's have dinner first;" and this seems to be a reasonable request by someone who hasn't enjoyed a square meal in a long time. Snap is, above all, a practical man who is grateful for all opportunities presented. We notice how effusively he thanks, flatters and toadies to Young Worthy after that gentleman has supplied Loveless with money:

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[18]Fone, "Love's Last Shift," p. 18.

> Bless my eye-sight, a guinea! Sir, is there ever a whore you would have kicked, any old bawd's windows you would have broken? Shall I beat your tailor for disappointing you? Or your surgeon that would be paid for a clap of two years standing? If you have occasion, you may command your humble servant.
> (I, i, p. 27)

Fone is closer to the mark in his discussion of the three couples in the play, Elder Worthy and Hillaria, Young Worthy and Narcissa and Loveless and Amanda:

> It has not been previously appreciated that Elder Worthy and Hillaria are perfect examples of the sententiously moral couple of sentimental comedy, and that Young Worthy and Narcissa are on their way to becoming like them, and, at the end of the play, Loveless and Amanda have become paragons of the type.[19]

Elder Worthy is the most obvious example of the moral man. He is perfectly in accord with the convention of marriage as an economic union, as evidenced in his reply to his brother: "I had need to have the best goods when I offer so great a price as marriage for them" (I, i). But he does, as Fone points out, regard marriage as "a sacramental union."[20] He would never show as cynical an attitude towards marriage as Young Worthy does. The young man, in justifying marriage to Loveless, makes the following comment:

> I . . . have e'en thought fit, like the rest of my raking brotherhood, to purge out my wild humors with matrimony. By the way, I have taken care to see the dose well sweetened with a swinging portion.
> (I, i, p. 29)

It is important to notice that this remark of Young Worthy's

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[19] Ibid., 16.

[20] Ibid., 20.

is neatly calculated to appeal to both the ladies and gallants in the audience. The ladies would have been pleased with the mention of marriage as having a stabilizing effect on a rake, while the gallants would have chuckled over Young Worthy's foresight in marrying a rich woman to ease his pains. The phrase "by the way" connotes a slight degree of flippancy as Young Worthy demonstrates an aloof and debonair attitude. So at one and the same time, Cibber has identified Young Worthy with Loveless while giving the young man an opportunity to upbraid the follies of his friend.

Young Worthy is a fortune hunter, but unlike Loveless he demonstrates an appropriate degree of practicality and common sense. He starts off with the knowledge of his position and builds from there, thus leaving nothing in jeopardy. His handling of his brother proves how effectively he can calm someone else and still advance his own scheme. Fone makes an interesting point about Young Worthy and the language he uses. In the scene with Loveless (I, i, pp. 23-27) he speaks the language of reproach and virtue for the most part. On the other hand, in the scene with his brother he changes his language and speaks more like a flippant young man. In contrast to Young Worthy's conversation, the Elder Worthy's language "is freighted with philosophical cant and the moralizing terms of sermon literature."[21] We can specifically look at his opening speech, which goes far in establishing

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[21] Ibid., 21.

his character for the rest of the play:

> How hard it is to find that happiness which our short-sighted passions hope from women! It is not their cold disdain or cruelty should make a faithful lover curse his stars; that is but reasonable. It is the shadow in our pleasure's picture. Without it love could never be heightened! No, it is their pride and vain desire of many lovers that robe our hope of its imagined rapture; the blind are only happy! For if we look through reason's never erring perspective, we then survey their souls and view the rubbish we were chaffering for. And such I find Hillaria's mind is made of.
>
> (I, i, p. 28)

The Elder Worthy suffers from chronic jealousy and suspicion of Hillaria--much as Charles Myrtle agonizes over Lucinda's behaviour in The Conscious Lovers, and Faulkland tortures Julia's indecision in The Rivals of Sheridan. An incident of meaningless flirtation between Hillaria and Sir Novelty Fashion throws the Elder Worthy into a paroxysm of temper and stubbornness. He is not capable of viewing or evaluating situations below the surface; for him, appearance means all. This is not to say that he condones a moral exterior which masks a base nature and immoral behaviour, for, as Fone points out, "his ideals are the ideals of romantic love and virtuous chastity."[22] Young Worthy attempts to humour his brother out of his ill disposition by saying, "Why, thou art as hard to please in a wife, as thy mistress in a new gown" (I, p. 29). As far as Young Worthy is concerned the fact that Hillaria possess beauty, money, sense and wit should be more than sufficient to ensure his brother's

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[22] Ibid., 20.

contentment. Conspicuously absent in the young man's list of Hillaria's good qualities is virtue, and this absence bothers the Elder Worthy since he fears Hillaria will easily be prey to folly and deception.

Whereas the Elder Worthy sounds and acts the same way throughout the play, his younger brother shifts according to the company he keeps. In this connection Cibber sets up an interesting "structure of equivocation," as Parnell terms it.[23] When Young Worthy urges Amanda to adopt his scheme for reclaiming her husband Loveless, he speaks very artfully. This is Cibber writing at his very best. Since Young Worthy's scheme aims to effect a moral end by relying heavily on an immoral deception, his words have to be very carefully chosen. Furthermore, Young Worthy has to emphasize that Loveless is worthy of being reclaimed, and this he makes clear in his first two sentences. Only after this point is established, does the young man introduce the idea of artifice by having Amanda masquerade as Loveless' mistress:

> You know, madam, it was not above four or five months after you were married but, as most young husbands do, he grew weary of you. Now I am confident it was more an affectation of being fashionably vicious than any reasonable dislike he could either find in your mind or person. Therefore, could you by some artifice pass upon him as a new mistress, I am apt to believe you would find none of the wonted coldness in his love, but a younger heat and fierce desire. (I, p. 34)

After Amanda has offered only a token resistance to the plan,

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[23]Parnell, "Equivocation of Love's Last Shift," Studies in Philology, LVII (July, 1960), 520.

Young Worthy allows himself an aside to the audience in which he appears not as the virtuous man but more like the rake. He says, "At least she'll have the pleasure of knowing the difference between a husband and a lover, without the scandal of the former" (I, p. 34).

Cibber could never have succeeded with this equivocal structure had he not been a master of language. He was able to juxtapose his scenes so cleverly that the sentimental and the anti-sentimental are constantly alternated. For example, after showing Amanda's fairly rapid acquiescence to Young Worthy's suggestion, Cibber shows her in a scene with both Hillaria and Narcissa, who are "typical coquettes."[24] Immediately, we are prepared for Amanda's virtue and long suffering patience to be stressed and for her to say, "All the comfort of my life is that I can tell my conscience I have been true to virtue" (I, p. 31). She has to stand out in contrast to both Hillaria and Narcissa, who are given the roles of trying to humour her out of her dedication to Loveless (much the same way as the Younger Worthy tries to humour his brother). Hillaria and Narcissa perform the same role in this scene that Young Worthy performed in the opening scene with Loveless. Both Amanda and Loveless are acting in such extreme fashions that unless some sort of compromise is attempted no reconciliation between the couple will be possible.

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[24]Barker, Mr. Cibber of Drury Lane, p. 24.

When Amanda is asked for her opinion of Young Worthy, she replies: "He puts me in mind of a man too like him, one that had beauty, wit, and falsehood!" (I, p. 32). This statement once again links Young Worthy with Loveless and operates on two levels: it assures the gallants that Young Worthy is not as straight-laced as he might seem and further distinguishes him from his older brother, and it also assures the ladies that Loveless is, at bottom, an honest rake. If Loveless is capable of being reformed, he has to be quite similar in character to Young Worthy and the parallel between the two men is established by Amanda's comment.

Amanda is the most blatantly sentimental of the three principal women. When Hillaria criticizes her continued hopeless grief over her husband, Amanda replies in true exemplary fashion:

> Because 'tis hopeless. For if he be alive, he is dead to me. His dead affections, not virtue itself can e'er retrieve: wou'd I were with him, tho' in his grave! (I, p. 30)

However, we should note that the sentimental elements involved in the plot to reclaim Loveless do not fully emerge until <u>after</u> Amanda has masqueraded as a mistress and has entertained him. It is only then that Loveless is brought to a point where he is forced to take some sort of moral stand.

Both Loveless and Amanda are made to play roles they are not very comfortable with. Although it takes Amanda con-

siderably less time to reconcile herself to courting her husband as his mistress than it takes Loveless to realize the error of his ways, they both undergo a certain amount of soul searching. Since Cibber's emphasis has to be placed on the reformation of the rake, more time has to be spent on Loveless' soul-searching than on Amanda's. Nevertheless, Cibber does introduce one further opportunity for her to struggle nominally against her desire. However, after Amanda seeks justification from Hillaria for the carrying out of the deception, it takes only two fairly short speeches until Amanda finally says: "To say truth, I find no argument yet strong enough to conquer my inclination to it" (III, i, p. 51).

The stage is very carefully prepared for Loveless' reformation. When he enters Amanda's house he is immediately put at his ease with food, wine and conversation. Loveless relaxes and looks approvingly at Amanda's woman. In an aside he comments:

> I'gad, I like this girl: she takes off her glass so feelingly, I am half persuaded she's of a thirsty love: if her lady don't make a little haste, I find I shall present my humble service to her. (IV, p. 70)

However, there is an important difference between Loveless' response to his situation and the language he uses to express it, and the language spoken by a typical Restoration rake. In this scene the language is not one of sexual innuendo and double entendre; there are no puns and complicated witty allusions as, for example, in the famous china scene in William Wycherley's The Country Wife (IV, iii).

Almost immediately after Amanda comes onto the scene she sets the tone and controls the type of behaviour she expects from Loveless. This, of course, is done subtly, for Loveless must never suspect he is being manipulated. By the trick of mistaken identity she forces Loveless to see if he can match or surpass his rival's good qualities and to say:

> . . . now, if you have so much generosity to let me know what title my pretended rival has to your person or your inclinations, perhaps the little hopes I then may have of supplanting him, may make me leave your house: if not, my love shall still pursue you, tho' to the hazard of my life, which I shall not easily resign, while this sword can guard it. (IV, p. 72)

Rather excessive love rhetoric, but then Loveless does not wish to lose his opportunity with such an appealing creature. Through Amanda's asides we learn her reaction to her husband's words and determination--for example, "Oh, were this courage shewn but in a better cause, how worthy were the man that own'd it!" (IV, p. 72). This type of comment contains the seeds of sentimentalism, since it implies that Loveless is really an "honest" rake who has been misled and misguided but who is basically good and virtuous.

Amanda's speech of surrender to Loveless sounds as if her heart is not really in this first part of the scheme as her words seem both conventional and rhetorical. Cibber seems to be overwriting here:

> Stand off, distant as the globes of heav'n and earth, that like a falling star I may shoot with a greater force into your arms, and think it heav'n to lie expiring there. (IV, p. 73)

Her sentimental nature is more in tune with forgiving Love-

less as her husband. There is a subtle distinction in the fact that in the big reformation scene Amanda never castigates Loveless for his sins; however, in her overwhelming degree of forgiveness there lies an implicit judgment of her moral goodness as being magnanimous enough to take a reformed husband back into her heart. Even though Cibber presents Loveless as a "reformable" rake, there is still the issue of his previous infidelities and questionable behaviour, which are contrasted to Amanda's fidelity and constancy.

The second scene of Act Five contains Loveless' turnabout reformation. Amanda's opening speech milks all the possibilities of true sentiment and exaggerated sentimentality:

> . . . but now I tremble to pull off the mask, lest barefac'd virtue should fright him from my arms forever. Yet sure there are charms in virtue, nay, stronger and more pleasing far than hateful vice can boast of; else why have holy martyrs perish'd for its sake? While lewdness ever gives severe repentance and unwilling death.--Good heaven inspire my heart, and hang upon my tongue the force of truth and eloquence, that I may lure this wand'ring falcon back to love and virtue.--He comes, and now my dreadful talk begins. (V, pp. 81-82)

Amanda's words reflect a certain moral superiority which she feels she possesses over her husband. The audience is meant to sympathize completely with Amanda during her approaching confrontation with Loveless.

When Loveless enters he is questioned by his wife about his life. He tries to parry her initial remarks by resorting to flattery but this does not deter her. The manner in which Loveless describes his marriage and the dis-

content he felt at being constantly nagged reinforce the impression that his extravagances and whoring were precipitated more by foolishness than by a deliberate course of action:

> . . . she was always exclaiming against my extravagancies, particularly my gaming, which she so violently oppos'd, that I fancy'd a pleasure in it, which since I never found; for in one month I lost between eight and ten thousand pounds, which I had just before call'd in to pay my debts. This misfortune made my creditors come so thick upon me, that I was forc'd to mortgage the remaining part of my estate to purchase new pleasure; which I knew I cou'd not do on this side of the water, amidst the clamours of insatiate duns, and the more hateful noise of a complaining wife. (V, p. 83)

We can appreciate Loveless' surprise and scepticism upon hearing Amanda declare that she has been faithful to her husband, but the last laugh is on Loveless as it later transpires. His surprise is given a further jolt as his wife works the conversation insistently around to the subject of virtue as she presses him to proffer his opinion:

> Most of your sex confound the very name of virtue: for they wou'd seem to live without desires; which cou'd they do, that were not virtue, but the defect of unperforming nature, and no praise to them: for who can boast a victory, when they have no foe to conquer? Now she alone gives the fairest proofs of virtue, whose conscience, and whose force of reason can curb her war desires, when opportunity would raise them: that such a woman may be found, I dare believe. (V, p. 85)

The stage is now set for Amanda's moral lecture on the virtuous and abused wife couched in sentimental terms. Her emotions rise accordingly as she puts her heart into this final appeal to her wayward husband. It is important to notice that it is Amanda who throws herself on Loveless'

mercy, begging for his forgiveness. Such an appeal is calculated to affect her husband, and no doubt a large segment of the audience rooted silently for the success of her words. Amanda is the typical sentimental heroine prone to kneeling, crying and fainting to add weight to her plea. It only takes Loveless a few lines to progress from utter disbelief at seeing his wife alive to guilt: ". . . oh, I am confounded with my guilt, and tremble to behold thee" (V, p. 86).

Once Loveless has confessed his guilt, husband and wife rhapsodize together, Loveless seeking repentance and forgiveness, and Amanda letting loose a torrent of sentimental cant. The couple's dialogue is so wrought with full blown sentimentality that no description can do it adequate justice; let Cibber speak for himself:

> Love. Oh! thou hast rouz'd me from my deep lethargy of vice: for hitherto my soul has been enslav'd to loose desires, to vain deluding follies, and shadows of substantial bliss; but now I wake with joy, to find my rapture real.--Thus let me kneel and pay my thanks to her, whose conquering virtue has at last subdu'd me. Here will I fix, thus prostrate, sigh my shame, and wash my crimes in never-ceasing tears of penitence.
>
> Am. O rise! this posture heaps new guilt on me: now you overpay me.
>
> Love. Have I not used thee like a villain? For almost ten long years deprived thee of my love, and ruin'd all thy fortune? But I will labour, dig, beg, or starve, to give new proofs of my unfeign'd affection.
>
> Am. Forbear this tenderness, lest I repent of having mov'd your soul too far. You shall not need to beg, heaven has provided for us beyond its common care. 'Tis now near two years since my uncle, Sir William Wealthy, sent you the news of my pretended death; knowing the extravagance of your temper, he thought

> it fit you shou'd believe no other of me: and about a month after he had sent you that advice, poor man, he dy'd, and left me in full possession of two thousand pounds a year, which I now cannot offer as a gift, because my duty, and your lawful right, makes you undisputed master of it.
>
> Love. How have I labour'd for my own undoing! while in despite of all my follies, kind heav'n resolv'd my happiness. (V, p. 87)

The masque ending Love's Last Shift has Love triumphing over Reason, Honour and Marriage and presents the moral which Loveless reiterates in the aphoristic couplet which ends the play: "And sure the nearest to the joys above,/Is the chaste rapture of a virtuous love" (V, p. 97). While it is quite true that "the play, through and through, reflects the language of the sentimental tradition,"[25] we cannot disregard the emphasis placed by Cibber on the climactic reformation scene. It is not only mawkishly sentimental but sustains its mood for a considerable length of time. There is no other scene like it in the play, although there are many earlier strains of sentimentality evident.

Cibber contined his career as playwright after the success of Love's Last Shift. On December 7, 1704, The Careless Husband opened at Drury Lane with Cibber as Lord Foppington and Anne Oldfield as Lady Betty Modish. The play was well received and had sixteen performances in its initial season. In his Apology, Cibber praises the brilliant performance of Anne Oldfield:

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[25]Fone, "Love's Last Shift," p. 22.

> Whatever favourable Reception this Comedy has met with from the Publick, it would be unjust in me not to place a large Share of it to the Account of Mrs. Oldfield; not only from the uncommon Excellence of her Action, but even from her personal manner of Conversing. There are many Sentiments in the Character of Lady Betty Modish that I may almost say were originally her own, or only dress'd with a little more care than when they negligently fell from her lively Humour: . . .[26]

Until the actress' death in 1736, no other person attempted the part of Lady Betty.

As does Love's Last Shift, The Careless Husband shows evidence of Cibber's ability to gauge public taste. The play successfully combined both the old and the new. A number of the characters were familiar Restoration types. For example, Lady Betty neatly epitomizes the belles of Restoration comedy although her language is more genteel than her dramatic ancestors. Lady Graveairs comes from the long tradition of the cast-off mistress, and Lord Foppington is closely related to the Restoration fops. On the other hand, the character of Sir Charles Easy marks a new development on the stage. Although he initially resembles the unfaithful husband of earlier comedy, it is soon clear that his infidelity is caused more by boredom than by inclination. Early in the play he makes this apparent when he says:

> So! the day is come again. Life but rises to another stage, and the same dull journey is before us. How like children do we judge of happiness! When I was stinted in my fortune almost everyting was a pleasure to me because, most things then being out of my reach, I had always the pleasure of hoping for 'em; now Fortune's in my hand she's as insipid as an old acquaintance. It's mighty silly, faith. Just the same

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[26]Cibber, Apology, I, p. 309.

> thing by my wife too; I am told she's extremely handsome--nay, and have heard a great many people say she is certainly the best woman in the world--why I don't know but she may (be), yet I could never find that her person or good qualities gave me any concern. In my eye the woman has no more charms than her mother.
> (I, p. 13)

Sir Charles is, then, fundamentally an honest and good-hearted man who has been sated by wealth and ease. He has lost the necessary perspective for judging the true worth of his wife and her abiding love for him.

Like Love's Last Shift, The Careless Husband contains a heavy dose of sentimentality. There is a climactic scene in which Lady Easy discovers her husband and her maid asleep in two easy chairs. Lady Easy gives vent to an impassioned speech in which she restrains her anger and hurt and shows instead a concern for her husband, who is sleeping bare-headed!

> Ha!
> Protect me virtue, patience, reason!
> Teach me to bear this killing sight, or let
> Me think my dreaming senses are deceived!
> For sure a sight like this might raise the arm
> Of duty, even to the breast of love. At least
> I'll throw this vizor of my patience off,
> Now wake him in his guilt,
> And barefaced front him with my wrongs.
> I'll talk to him till he blushes, nay till he
> Frowns on me, perhaps--and then
> I'm lost again. The ease of a few tears
> Is all that's left to me--
> And duty, too, forbids me to insult
> Where I have vowed obedience. Perhaps
> The fault's in me, and nature has not formed
> Me with the thousand little requisites
> That warm the heart to love.
> Somewhere there is a fault,
> But heaven best knows what both of us deserve.
> Ha! Bareheaded and in so sound a sleep!
> Who knows, while thus exposed to the unwholesome air,
> But heaven, offended, may o'ertake his crime,

> And, in some languishing distemper, leave him
> A severe example of its violated laws.
> Forbid it mercy, and forbid it love!
> This may prevent it.
> Takes a steinkirk from her neck and lays it gently over his head.
> And if he should wake offended at my too-busy care, let my heart-breaking patience, duty, and my fond affection plead my pardon. (V, v, pp. 97-8)

Lady Easy speaks passionately and at some considerable length. In the vein of a true sentimental heroine, her language reflects the belief that she is to blame for her husband's infidelity.

Instead of employing trickery and deception to bring Sir Charles back to his senses, Cibber has this basically good man feel remorse for his actions on his own. Once he discovers his wife's steinkirk on his head, he is moved to grief and a desire for forgiveness. The ensuing scene between husband and wife begins in a restrained and low-keyed fashion until Sir Charles presents his wife with an opportunity to castigate him:

> Sir Charles Easy. I'll speak more plainly to you. Be free and tell me--where did you leave this handkerchief?
>
> Lady Easy. Hah!
>
> Sir Charles Easy. What is't you start at? You hear the question.
>
> Lady Easy. What shall I say? My fears confound me.
>
> Sir Charles Easy. Be not concerned, my dear. Be easy in the truth and tell me.
>
> Lady Easy. I cannot speak--and I could wish you'd not oblige me to it. 'Tis the only thing I ever yet refused you, and although I want a reason for my will, let me not answer you.

> Sir Charles Easy. Your will then be a reason, and since I see you are so generously tender of reproaching me, 'tis fit I should be easy in my gratitude, and make what ought to be my shame of joy. Let me be therefore pleased to tell you now, your wondrous conduct has waked me to a sense of your disquiet past, and resolution never to disturb it more. And (not that I offer it as a merit, but yet in blind compliance to my will) let me beg you would immediately discharge your woman.
>
> Lady Easy. Alas! I think not of her. Oh, my dear! Distract me not with this excess of goodness. Weeping. (V, vi, pp. 102-3)

The dialogue between Sir Charles and Lady Easy is an excellent example of sentimentality. We especially notice the turnabout whereby Sir Charles, ostensibly the guilty party, hastens to reassure and comfort his long suffering wife. By casting her husband in the role of an honourable man, Lady Easy makes it mandatory for him to beg her forgiveness. She at no time speaks the language of reproach but instead puts her faith in her husband's innate goodness and honesty; and her trust is amply rewarded. In Lady Easy's overwhelming joy to see her husband so reformed and repentant, she reacts much as Amanda does in Love's Last Shift. Both heroines overreact with gratitude towards their now reclaimed men.

Cibber's next important sentimental comedy was The Lady's Last Stake, which opened at the Haymarket on December 13, 1707. This play has a two-fold plot and both actions are moral and sentimental in nature. Unlike Love's Last Shift and The Careless Husband, The Lady's Last Stake is not enlivened with any Restoration type characters or dialogue. The main action concerns the marital hostility between Lord

and Lady Wronglove who were originally estranged over a trifle but who have become totally isolated from each other. Unlike Lady Easy, Lady Wronglove scorns to win her husband back by affection and instead she deliberately follows him wherever he goes. The couple decides upon a separation by mutual consent, but before this can take place Cibber makes use of a benevolent deus ex machina figure in the person of Sir Friendly Moral. Sir Friendly convinces Lady Wronglove of the wisdom of using affection to regain her husband. She is reduced to tears of contrition which, combined with Sir Friendly's wise advice, work a transformation on Lord Wronglove. He confesses his vulnerability to tears and the couple is finally reunited.

The sub-plot devotes itself entirely to an attack upon gambling. The virtuous Lady Gentle has been addicted to cards and is placed in a most compromising situation by Lord George. The latter has been led to commit his folly in the mistaken hope that in so doing he will be considered a gallant. Once again Sir Friendly Moral appears as the champion of virtue and truth, although he is aided by Lord George's love, Miss Conquest. Both Lady Gentle and Lord George realize that their behaviour has been far from irreproachable and the play ends with all parties reformed and happy.

This play is important in the development of sentimental comedy in that there are no humourous or farcical characters in it to enliven and relieve the overriding

sentimentalism. Sir Friendly Moral is consistently optimistic and continually demonstrates his faith in the perfectability of human nature. His faith is, of course, singularly rewarded at the end of the play. He stands as the ultimate model for everybody to follow and, by his example and advice, he effects a turnabout in all the misguided sinners.

Love's Last Shift, The Careless Husband and The Lady's Last Stake confirm Cibber's important place in the switch from Restoration to sentimental comedy. With the success of his first play he had hit upon a formula which continued to please the audience. Cibber did not go entirely over to the side of the sentimentalists mainly because he was not consciously committed to reforming the stage. Above all else, Cibber's interest in the theatre was a practical one; he made his living from writing and acting in his plays and once he had gauged the temper and taste of his audience he tried to keep them happy. Had he appeared on the theatrical scene during the heyday of Restoration comedy, he probably would have written plays in the mode prevailing at that time. Cibber always had the ability to tailor his plays to the contemporary demands of his patrons.

Chapter 3

RICHARD STEELE, REFORMER OF THE STAGE

Although the world of the stage played a prominent part in his life, Sir Richard Steele was more than a man of the theatre. He was born in 1672 in Dublin and received his education at the Charterhouse and at Oxford. He left the university before taking a degree and enlisted in the Horse Guards. Steele's association with Joseph Addison and their collaboration together led to The Tatler (1709-1711) and The Spectator (1711-1712) papers. These periodical essays came out at regular intervals and were readily available at coffeehouses and taverns. They supplied news of the town and a running commentary on the literature as well as the manners and morals of the day. Both Addison and Steele filled their essays with fictitious characters who presented various opinions and viewpoints. The tea-table morality of The Tatler and The Spectator papers was very appealing to readers and assured the periodicals' success. In addition to his work on these periodicals Steele wrote four plays, with the first one, The Funeral, produced at Drury Lane in 1701. He was also active in the administration of Drury Lane theatre, although his tenure there was stormy and led to his suspension in 1720. This year saw the publication of his periodical The Theatre, which dealt with many aspects

of drama and the stage.

In Steele's contributions to the various periodicals which he authored, he quite frequently wrote about the theatre, criticizing it for its immorality and lack of decorum. For example, in Spectator number 65 Steele writes disapprovingly of Etherege's The Man of Mode and concludes his discussion with the following paragraph:

> To speak plainly of this whole Work, I think nothing but being lost to a Sense of Innocence and Virtue can make any one see this Comedy, without observing more frequent Occasion to move Sorrow and Indignation, than Mirth and Laughter. At the same time I allow it to be Nature, but it is Nature in its utmost Corruption and Degeneracy.[1]

In another Spectator paper Steele criticizes the comic writers who "gratified a loose age with a scandalous representation of what is reputable among men, not to say what is sacred."[2] Commenting upon Ravenscroft's The London Cuckolds, Steele called it "that heap of vice and absurdity."[3] At the other extreme, he commended two of Cibber's plays, The Lady's Last Stake and The Careless Husband.[4]

Steele's approval of Cibber's works was quite in keeping with Steele's lifelong critical defense of sentimen-

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[1]Richard Steele, Spectator number 65, in The Spectator, ed. by Donald F. Bond. 5 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), I, p. 280.

[2]Steele, Spectator number 270, II, pp. 552-555.

[3]Steele, Tatler number 4, in The Tatler (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1861), p. 8.

[4]Steele, Town Talk (1715), number 2 and Tatler number 182, pp. 345-347.

tal comedy. He strongly believed--far more so than did Cibber--that the stage had to be moral and clean. He disliked the bawdy and ribaldry which had characterized much of Restoration comedy. Instead he argued for what he considered to be the necessary didacticism of sentimental comedy. It is interesting to note that Steele found the lessons presented by the sentimental dramatists to be happy and pleasurable ones. The Horation concept of dulce et utile was the key to his theory of comedy and he makes this point very clear in a Tatler paper:

> The whole soul is insensibly betrayed into morality by bribing the fancy with beautiful and agreeable images of those very things that in the books of the philosophers appear austere, and have at best but a kind of forbidden aspect. In a word, the poets do, as it were, strew the rough paths of virtue as full of flowers that we are not sensible of the uneasiness of them, and imagine ourselves in the midst of pleasures, and the most bewitching allurements at the time we are making a progress in the severest duties of life. . . . The grave and serious performances of such as write in the most engaging manner, by a kind of divine impulse, must be the most effectual persuasiveness to goodness.[5] [underlining mine]

The last phrase of this comment is important when we look at Steele's own contributions to the stage, since his avowed aim as a playwright was to persuade his audience into goodness. This was not merely an empty phrase for Steele; he really meant it to be taken seriously. At times, he took it too seriously himself and consequently his plays suffered from too much moral preaching and too little refreshing humour.

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[5]Steele, Tatler number 98, pp. 210-212.

Bernbaum accuses Steele of being vague about his sentimentality,[6] but I consider this an unfair accusation. Elvena M. Green is closer to the truth when she says:

> . . . Steele is fairly consistent and persistent in his plea for display of morality on stage. This display takes the form of the presentation of exemplary men and women in commendable actions. It need not have distressed Bernbaum that Steele does not mention anything about his sentimentality. Such sentimentality was, it seems, the inevitable consequence, given his moral aim and the virtuous instruments of that aim.[7]

In her analysis of Steele's theory of comedy, Miss Green considers three specific aspects of this theory:

> (1) that the theatre has a moral, didactic purpose;
> (2) that in order to fulfill its purpose, the theatre must show innocent, virtuous characters instead of the vicious, licentious ones of the Restoration;
> (3) that as a result of the substitution of virtuous characters of wicked ones, the comedy of ridicule and laughter is replaced by a comedy of pity and tears.[8]

All four of Steele's comedies show varying degrees of adherence to this theory. He tried as much as possible to tailor his plays to the moral aims which he espoused.

In The Funeral, or Grief a la Mode (1701), for example, sentiment is conspicuous in the characters of Lady Sharlot, Lady Harriot and Mr. Trusty, the faithful steward. However, the sentimentalism is not the mainspring of the

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[6]Ernest Bernbaum, The Drama of Sensibility, Harvard Studies in English, Vol. III (Boston and London: Ginn & Company, 1915), p. 95.

[7]Elvena M. Green, "Three Aspects of Richard Steele's Theory of Comedy," ETJ, XX, No. 2 (May, 1968), 146.

[8]Ibid., 141.

action, since the prevailing note of the play is satiric rather than sentimental. The Lying Lover (1703) is Steele's first real sentimental comedy and the characters are modelled on those of Cibber and Farquhar. Because of its contribution to the development of sentimental comedy, The Lying Lover will be examined in some detail later on in the chapter. The plot of this play follows the formula of the reformation of the rake and the end is consciously didactic. The title of The Tender Husband (1705) suggests a sentimental play but this impression is misleading since only the minor parts are conceived sentimentally, with the majority of the play being a combination of farce and comedy of manners. Steele's last play, The Conscious Lovers (1722), most fully expresses his understanding of sentimentalism and will therefore be discussed at some length.

In looking at both Steele's plays and his theoretical writings, Miss Green makes an interesting point:

> What Steele's three aspects amount to is a dramatic theory based primarily on morals rather than on aesthetics. It is seen that Steele does not attempt to make any distinction really between comedy and tragedy. That is, he fails to distinguish much between the subject matter, the methods, and the objects of these two genres. His few comments on the tragedy of his day show a striking similarity to what he expects of comedy.[9]

This inability of Steele to distinguish between the demands of comedy and tragedy is not unique for him. It can be partially explained by the closeness existing between senti-

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[9]Ibid., 145-146.

mental comedy and tragedy. Frederich Wood makes just such a connection:

> Sentimental comedy stands on the border line where comedy and tragedy merge one into the other. It is an attempt to write a comedy by the methods of tragedy. Its development, indeed, is closely connected with the rise of that domestic tragedy . . .[10]

It is a difficult task for a playwright to maintain the precarious balance in a sentimental comedy between tragedy and comedy and Steele does not always succeed. Perhaps the most difficult obstacle to overcome in this regard is the sentimentalist's belief in the perfectibility of human nature. Such a belief invariably led to formula plays whereby the central character would learn a painful lesson and then demonstrate his innate sense of goodness.

Such preliminary remarks now lead us to take a closer look at two of Steele's plays which show his dedication to the sentimental school. The Lying Lover opened Thursday December 2, 1703, at Drury Lane and ran for six nights, a run long enough to enable Steele to have his benefit. However, after this initial run the play dropped out of the repertory and was not revived until the 1746 season.[11] In his dedication to the Duke of Ormond, Steele makes his aim very clear when he says: "The design of it is

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[10]Frederick T. Wood, "The Beginnings and Significance of Sentimental Comedy," Anglia, LV (1931), 370.

[11]For a complete performance record see The London Stage, Pt. 2, 1700-1729, 2 vols., and Pt. 3, 1729-1747, vol. one.

to banish out of conversation all entertainment which does not proceed from simplicity of mind, good-nature, friendship, and honour."[12] This intention is repeated in the Prologue:

> He offers no gross vices to your sight,
> Those too much horror raise for just delight;
> And to detain the attentive knowing ear,
> Pleasure must still have something that's severe.
> If then you find our author treads the stage
> With just regard to a reforming age;
> He hopes, he humbly hopes, you'll think there's due
> Mercy to him, for justice done to you.
> (ll. 13-20, p. 103)

Steele took the basic plot from Corneille's Le Menteur, a plot which focuses upon a young man of good education and breeding who "makes false love, gets drunk, and kills his man; but in the fifth Act awakes from his debauch, with the compunction and remorse which is suitable to a man's finding himself in a gaol for the death of his friend, without his knowing why" (Preface, pp. 101-2). This structure closely follows the usual sentimental pattern, with the major turnabout coming in the fifth Act repentance and conversion scene. Steele realized that he was treading on delicate ground with this scene and in his Preface he attempts to defend its inclusion in the play: "The anguish he there expresses, and the mutual sorrow between an only child and a tender father in that distress, are, perhaps, an

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[12]Steele, The Lying Lover, in British Theatre, ed. by Natascha Wurzbach, X (Frankfurt: Minerva GMBH, 1969), p. 99. All further references to this play will be from this edition and will be acknowledged in the text by act, scene and page number.

injury to the rules of comedy, but I am sure they are a justice to those of morality" (Preface, p. 102). Steele's rationalization of this scene fits in with Elvena Green's point that the playwright concentrates more upon morals than aesthetics.

This moral bias on Steele's part can also be seen when we look at the characters. With the exception of Storm and Charcoal, the two "con" men at Newgate, all the characters are conventional and stereo-typed. Young Bookwit is the typical sentimental hero whose college days have not prepared him for the exciting life which he believes is available in London. In his attitude to women he is naively admiring rather than lecherous or predatory, for Steele is careful to have the hero say nothing which would compromise his basic honesty. Bookwit states his attitude in the following terms:

> As he that is not honest or brave is no man; so she that is not witty or fair is no woman, No, no, Jack, to come up to that high name and object of desire, she must be gay and chaste, she must at once attract, and banish you. I don't know how to express myself, but a woman, methinks, is a being between us and angels. She has something in her that at the same time gives awe and invitation; but I swear to you I was never out in't yet, but I always judged of men as I observed they judged of women. There's nothing shows a man so much as the object of his affections. (I, i, p. 107)

He puts women on a pedestal and speaks extravagantly yet seriously. His words of praise build up a picture of a methodical young man who delights in his freedom and is anxious to try out his man-of-the-world technique on young women:

> . . . I can know her mind by her eye as well as her doctor shall her health by her pulse; I can read approbation through a glance of disdain; can see when the soul is divided by a sparkling tear that twinkles and betrays the heart. A sparkling tear's the dress and livery of love--of love made up of hope and fear, of joy and grief. (I, i, p. 108)

Young Bookwit, however, does not have a good command of witty love rhetoric and his language is full of conventional imagery.

Bookwit's flagrant lies about his military campaigns, lies with which he impresses Penelope and Victoria, are most unconvincing to the reader. Steele is not content to allow his hero to get away with a modicum of exaggeration, but drags out the scene far too long. Bookwit speaks to aggrandize his own ego and please the ladies, but the effect is somewhat different. All of the young man's speeches have the effect of presenting him as an insufferable prig and ass:

> There's an intimate of mine, a general officer, who has often said, Tom, if thou would'st but stick to any one application, thou might'st be anything. 'Tis my misfortune, madam, to have a mind too extensive. I began last summer's campaign with the renowned Prince Eugene, but was forced to fly into Holland for a duel with that rough Captain of the Hussars, Paul Diack. They talk of a regiment for me--but those things, besides, it will oblige me to attend it, and then I can't follow honour where'er she's busiest, but must be confined to one nation; when indeed 'tis rather my way of serving with such of our allies as most want me. (I, i, p. 114)

The reason that Bookwit's speeches are not successful lies in the seriousness with which the young man takes himself. He is very rarely capable of playing either with love or with words. His lies are overdone but not absurd in the sense of being delightful flights of fancy.

Bookwit manages to capture the imagination in only one instance when he describes the love feast which he gave. Here the young man manages to pull off a delicate bit of play acting and the character comes alive for a brief moment:

> Why you must know my humour grew poetic. I pulled off my sword-knot, and with that bound up a coronet of ivy, laurel, and flowers; with that round my temples, and a plate of richest fruits in my hand, on one knee I presented her with it as a cornucopia, an offering from her humble swain of all his harvest--to her the Ceres of our genial feast and rural mirth. She smiled; the ladies clapped their hands, and all our music struck sympathetic rapture at my happiness; while gentle winds, the river, air, and shore echoed in notes more soft than they received. Methought all nature seemed to die for love like me. To all my heart and every pulse beat time. Oh, the pleasures of successful love! (I, i, pp. 118-9)

He is able to play on the jealousy of Lovemore and projects himself into such a wildly improbable situation that we smile at his fancies. Bookwit has managed to slough off momentarily his stultifying seriousness and indulge in some youthful bragadaccio. In the extravagant tableau sketched by the young man's speech, Steele pokes gentle fun at the wooing and courting procedure. But, as with all of Steele's ironies, it is done so sketchily that the impact is quite minimal and restrained.

There is a good comparison between Young and Old Bookwit on the one hand and Bevil Junior and his father of The Conscious Lovers on the other hand. The situation in each case is similar, as both fathers have a specific girl in mind for their sons to marry and each son wants to avoid

such a marriage because of prior committments. Bevil Junior is so dutiful that he goes along with his father's instructions, but Young Bookwit invents a fantastic story about a marriage to thwart his father's plans (II, ii, pp. 138-140). Filial obligation is not stressed in this play as strenuously as it is in The Conscious Lovers. The weak point in Bookwit's scheme occurs when Latine falls prey to his friend's deception; he of all people should know Bookwit better than that. Latine's credulousness is a flaw which points to sentimentality, since we have here evidence of the innate "reformability" of man. Bookwit's performance is so convincing that Latine cannot believe his friend to be a dissimulator in the grand style.

Lovemore is the typical jealous lover who comes to realize the grave consequences of his behaviour. There is a strong connection between him and Charles Myrtle of The Conscious Lovers although Lovemore is more pompous and sentimentalized than Myrtle. Although it is quite clear from the context of the plot that Lovemore is a fairly young man, we often have the feeling that he is closer to a stuffy middle age. In Act Two, Scene One, Penelope talks to her maid Lettice while Lovemore is in the room and thus pretends to ignore him. This scene is clumsily handled by Steele and gives us the impression that Lovemore and Penelope are not capable of carrying it by themselves. This suspicion is confirmed in the last act when the two lovers are finally reconciled, for here their entire dialogue is impregnated

with overwhelming sentimentality (V, iii). In the earlier scene with Penelope, Lovemore displays an overwhelming modesty which is hard to take. He has to temper both his anger and jealousy by blaming himself for being unworthy of Penelope's love:

> Of you I am not jealous:
> 'Tis my own indesert that gives me fears,
> And tenderness forms dangers where they're not;
> I doubt and envy all things that approach thee:
> Not a fond mother of a long-wished-for only child
> beholds with such kind terrors her infant offspring,
> as I do her I love. She thinks its food, if she's
> not by, unwholesome; and all the ambient air made up
> of fevers and of quartan agues, except she shrouds
> it in her arms. Such is my unpitied, anxious care for
> you; and can I see another-- (II, i, p. 130)

Lovemore's words of self-abasement negate any chastisement he gives Penelope and with the briefest of encouragement he would be ready to throw himself at his lover's feet.

Although she tries hard to be flippant and blase, Penelope is a typical sentimental heroine. She desperately wants her lover to be daring and exciting and, like Lydia Languish in The Rivals, she speaks the cant of love and romance:

> . . . I must confess I have terrors when I think of
> marrying Lovemore, He is, indeed, a man of honest
> character. He has my good opinion, but love does
> not always follow that. He is so wise a fellow,
> always so precisely in the right, so observing and
> so jealous; he's blameless indeed, but not to be
> commended. What good he has, has no grace in it;
> he's one of those who's never highly moved, except
> to anger. Give me a man that has agreeable faults
> rather than offensive virtues. (I, i, p. 111)

But Penelope is very careful to speak cautiously. When we examine her words we discover that she really wants a conventional lover who conforms to the social system. She is

too wooden a character to possess any sparkling individuality which would lift her above the sentimental norm. She is not much different from her friend Victoria and it is extremely difficult to distinguish between them when they meet Young Bookwit at Covent Garden (III, ii).

The relationship between the two ladies is interesting, since it throws light upon the sentimentalist's view of friendship. In an early scene between Penelope and Victoria they hatch a plan to write to Young Bookwit and each woman tries to outfox the other under the guise of friendship. Penelope's final comment in this scene sums up this false friendship:

> Well, madam, will you promise, then, to be as free with me?--Thus does she hope to work me out of my lover, by being made my confident--but that baseness has been too fashionable to pass any more. I have not trusted her, the cunning creature. I begin to hate her so--I'll never be a minute from her.
> (II, i, p. 135)

In a later scene the two women carry out the pretense of their friendship for each other even further, as each falsely compliments the other while adjusting dress and make-up. The appearance of friendship and politeness is crucial, but it is Victoria's maid Betty who has the necessary perspective to understand the situation when she remarks, "How civilly people of quality hate one another" (III, i, p. 145). This use of the servant as the figure of reality who sees through pretense and nonsense is a common device in eighteenth-century comedy and stems from the tricky slave who outwits his master so often in Roman comedy.

Up to this point the relationship between Penelope and Victoria has been reasonably credible and the motivations for each one's actions have been quite plausible. However, this credibility is completely destroyed near the end of the play. With the heavy hand of a sentimentalist and moralist, Steele has to show his audience that the dictates of the heart demand confession and honesty on the part of his characters. He has the two women admit their basic dishonesty toward each other:

> Vict. However, let your heart answer me one question more, as well as it can. Does it love me as well as ever it did?
>
> Pen. Does not, madam, that question proceed from a change in your own?
>
> Vict. It does, Penelope; I own it does--I had a long conflict with myself on my pillow last night.
>
> Pen. What were your thoughts there?
>
> Vict. That I owed it to our friendship to acknowledge to you that all the pleasure I once had in you is vanished. Ah, Penelope! I'm sorry for every good quality you have.
>
> Pen. Since you are so frank, I must confess to you something very like this. But however I envied that sprightly, ingenuous, native beauty of yours, I see it now so much the figure of your mind that I can conquer, I think I can, any inclination in myself that opposes the happiness of so sincere a friend. (V, iii, p. 175)

This exchange is too lengthy and unbelievable-especially Penelope's final remark. She is so self-effacing, humble and sincere. Her words have all the earmarks of a sentimental pitch for virtue.

A significant change in tone occurs in the fifth act

for here the sentimentality is full blown and no attempt is made by Steele to temper its excesses. We have only to look at the opening speech by Latine in prison as he grieves over the misfortune of his sleeping friend:

> How quietly he rests! Oh that I could,
> By watching him, hanging thus over him,
> And, feeling all his care, protract his sleep!
> Oh, sleep! thou sweetest gift of Heaven to man,
> Still in thy downy arms embrace my friend,
> Nor loose him from his inexistent trance
> To sense of yesterday and pain of being;
> In thee the oppressed soothe their angry brow,
> In thee the oppressed forget tyrannic power,
> In thee--
> The wretch condemned is equal to his judge,
> And the sad lover to his cruel fair;
> Nay, all the shining glories men pursue,
> When thou art wanted, are but empty noise.
> Who then would court the pomp of guilty power,
> When the mind sickens at the weary show,
> And flies to temporary death for ease;
> When half our life's cessation of our being--
> He wakes--
> How do I pity that returning life,
> Which I could hazard thousand lives to save!
> (V, i, pp. 170-171)

The poorness of this verse is emphasized by its length. Every hackneyed expression is used and, when coupled with Latine's overwhelming solicitude and pity, makes for a bathetic scene.

This last act simply consists of an accumulation of such bathetic scenes until a climax of emotion is reached and a denouement is contrived. Steele employs several clumsy devices in an attempt to increase audience sympathy for his characters. Chief among these devices is the scene where Frederick, accompanied by the disguised Lovemore, visits Penelope and tells her of Lovemore's death in an

attempt to test the depth of her love. Her weeping and self-recriminations occupy a large portion of the scene, and the following is typical of her speech:

> Oh, could I see him now, to press his livid lips,
> And call him back to life with my complaints,
> His eyes would glare upon my guilt with horror,
> That usesd to gloat and melt in love before me.
> Let mine for ever then be shut to joy,
> To all that's bright and valuable in man!
> I'll to his sacred ashes be a wife,
> And to his memory devote my life. (V, iii, p. 178)

Another clumsy device occurs at the height of an emotional scene between Young Bookwit and his father, who has just fainted. The young man breaks out into a paroxysm of grief and anguish which is virtually uncheckable:

> Good Heav'n forbid it--guard him and protect him.
> He faints, he's cold, he's gone; (running to him)
> He's gone, and with his last breath called me parricide.
> "You've broke your father's heart!" Oh, killing sound!
> I'm all contagion; to pity me is death:
> My griefs to all are mortal but myself.
> "You've broke your father's heart!" If I did so,
> Why thus serene in death, thou smiling clay?
> Why that calm aspect to thy murderer?
> Oh, big unutterable grief--merciful Heaven!
> I don't deserve this ease of tears to melt
> With penitence--Oh, sweet, sweet remorse;
> Now all my powers give way
> To my just sorrow, for the best of fathers. (Aloud)
> Thou venerable fountain of my life,
> Why don't I also die, derived from thee?
> Sure you are not gone--Is the way out of life
> Thus easy, which you so much feared in me? (Takes him by
> Why stay I after? But I deserve to stay, the hand)
> To feel the quick remembrance of my follies.
> Yet if my sighs, my tears, my anguish can atone--
> (V, iii, p. 181)

This overwhelming bathos has followed hard upon the heels of Bookwit's lengthy confessions of his guilt and desire for atonement. This reformation scene is milked for all it is worth by Steele. There is no distinction between

any of Young Bookwit's speeches as they are all the same; there is even an explicit condemnation of duelling:

> Honour! The horrid application of that sacred word to a revenge against friendship, law, and reason is a damned last shift of the damned envious foe of human race. The routed fiend projected this, but since the expansive glorious law from Heaven came down--Forgive. (V, ii, p. 173)

There is only one way out of the excessive emotion and complication of this act. Frederick is made to play the role of the benevolent deus ex machina who arranges everything--from straightening out Lovemore to extricating Young Bookwit from prison. Clearly, if left to their own devices, the other characters would not be able to extricate themselves at all. Latine would persist in taking the blame for the duel and Young Bookwit would continue his embarassing mea culpa speeches. Frederick is, then, the only person who possesses enough common sense to untangle all the problems.

Between The Lying Lover and The Conscious Lovers, Steele's concern for a moral theatre remained constant. In The Theatre, a periodical which he authored during 1720, Steele discussed various problems which had arisen from his dispute at Drury Lane, but he also explored themes which had occupied him previously. In number II he writes: "If the Stage may proceed in its Improvement, there may soon, by a right Choice of proper Plays, and the utter Rejection of others, be establish'd such Representations as may give a Man, from an Evening spent at the Playhouse all the Pleasures and Advantages which he could reap from having been so long

in the very best Conversation."[13] It is clear from The Theatre that Steele had been planning and working on The Conscious Lovers for several years and that he drew from this play in creating the character of Sir John Edgar of The Theatre. Furthermore, portions of the plot of The Conscious Lovers are outlined in The Theatre.[14]

John Loftis has explored the development of The Conscious Lovers and its relationship to Steele's other work. He points out the play's close resemblance in ideological content to The Tatler, The Spectator and The Guardian.[15] Loftis also presents important evidence from Swift and Bishop Berkeley to show that Steele was working on The Conscious Lovers as early as 1713.[16] The significance of Loftis' research is that it dispels a popular notion about the play and its relationship to Steele's development as a playwright:

> It was not a product of his middle age, of the years after his health had broken and he had encountered serious personal reverses; rather it was conceived, and perhaps in part written, during the vigorous years when he was writing the essays on which his fame rests. The Conscious Lovers was planned under the stimulus of the ideas which led to the many essays on the character of 'fine gentleman' and which led to the denunciation of the type

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[13]Steele, The Theatre 1720, ed. by John Loftis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 8.

[14]Ibid., pp. 11-14.

[15]John Loftis, "The Genesis of Steele's The Conscious Lovers," Essays Critical and Historical Dedicated to Lily B. Campbell (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), p. 173.

[16]Ibid., pp. 174-176.

> of comedy represented by The Man of Mode. It was planned, at the time Steele was writing about comic theory, as an example of the new type of comedy which he was advocating--exemplary rather than satirical comedy. What is new and most significant about The Conscious Lovers, its exemplary characters, thus represents a bond with the essays, which were conceived contemporaneously.[17]

The Conscious Lovers was first produced in 1722; it was well received by the audience and enjoyed both praise and condemnation in the periodicals. John Loftis points out the reason behind the play's reception in the newspapers:

> The play evoked more comment in the periodicals than had any other up to that time--for reasons which were both literary and political. A self-conscious experiment in reformed comedy, The Conscious Lovers posed a direct challenge to critics of a neo-classical bias in its introduction of exemplary characters and pathetic incident into comedy. Further, Steele was a political celebrity, firmly identified with the Walpole Whigs.[18]

The Freeholder's Journal of November 14, 1722 condemns the play as being a poor imitation of Terence's Andria and examines specific scenes from both plays to back up its point:

> After this then, would not one expect, that a Play copy'd after so excellent a Model, should answer our Hopes? Would not one expect, that the Picture of the English Gentleman, would be finely drawn, when the Roman sat for him? Nay, when the light of Christianity was made use of to beautify the Piece, and add substantial Ornaments to it, which could not be expected to be found in the other? If therefore the Roman Gentleman appears upon Examination, far to transcend the Christian, the Poet surely hath not done that Honour to his Religion, which he ought, however good his Intentions might be.[19]

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[17]Ibid., p. 182.

[18]John Loftis, "Essays on the Theatre from Eighteenth Century Periodicals," Augustan Reprint Society, Nos. 85-86 (1960), p. 3.

[19]Ibid., pp. 20-21.

In rebuttal to this criticism, The St. James's Journal of November 18, 1722, came out in support of the play and its author:

> The Author of this Comedy has certainly more Merit, as a Writer, than any Man now alive, and the whole Nation have been oblig'd to him for Entertainments entirely new, and for very many Hours of Pleasure which they would never have known without him. His Wit seems now to flourish anew, to blossom even in old Age. He must always be agreeable, till he ceases to be at all. And yet I know not how it is, but whether he has been too liberal of his delicious Banquets, and cloy'd us with the rich Products of his Fancy, it has been almost Fashionable to use him ill: Block-heads of Quality, who are scarce capable of Reading his Works, have effected a sort of ill-bred merit in despising 'em: And they who have no Taste for his Writings, have pretended to a Displeasure at his Conduct. If he had been less Excellent, he might very possibly have had more Admirers; as, if he had been less devoted to the Interests as well as the Entertainments of the Publick, he might have been more at Ease in his private Affairs.[20]

Steele's Preface to the play is interesting in that it sets out his design and comes out in support of comedy which emphasizes sentiment. He says, ". . . anything that has its foundation in happiness and success must be allowed to be the subject of comedy."[21] The Prologue reaffirms Steele's aim not to present ribaldry and licentiousness on stage as he firmly comes out in support of sentimental comedy.

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[20]Ibid., p. 30.

[21]Steele, "The Conscious Lovers," in Eighteenth Century Plays, ed. by Ricardo Quintana, The MOdern Library (New York: Random House, Inc., 1952), p. 110. All further references to this play will be from this edition and will be acknowledged in the text by act, scene and page number.

He recognizes the success enjoyed by Restoration dramatists but then outlines his own approach:

> But the bold sage, the poet of to-night,
> By new and desp'rate rules resolved to write;
> Fain would he give more just applauses rise,
> And please by wit that scorns the aid of vice;
> The praise he seeks from worthier motives springs,
> Such praise as praise to those that give it brings.
> . . . . . .
> No more let ribaldry, with licence writ,
> Usurp the name of eloquence or wit;
> No more let lawless farce uncensur'd go,
> The lewd dull gleanings of a Smithfield show.
> 'Tis yours with breeding to refine the age,
> To chasten wit, and moralize the stage.
> (Prologue, ll. 15-20, 22-27, p. 112)

But perhaps the most important part of the Preface is the following, where Steele says:

> . . . the whole was writ for the sake of the scene in the fourth act, wherein Mr. Bevil evades the quarrel with his friend, and hope it may have some effect upon the Goths and Vandals that frequent the theatres, or a more polite audience may supply their absence. (p. 110)

Steele is here using the stage to call attention to the practice of duelling which he abhors (as we have seen in The Lying Lover) and to recommend a more genteel code of behaviour.

Steele's play does not contain a balance between sentiment and manners as Cibber's do; there is no equivalent of Sir Novelty Fashion in The Conscious Lovers. Ashley characterizes the difference between the two dramatists when he says:

> And [Steele] lacked some of Cibber's restraint: the play is a trifle too saccharine for modern palates; unlike Cibber, Steele did not know when to stop adding sweeteners.[22]

Loftis goes even further in distinguishing between the techniques of Cibber and Steele. He says:

> The quality of The Conscious Lovers that was felt to be most original and that proved to be most controversial, however, was not the appeal to pathos but the employment of admirable characters providing models for conduct--notably Bevil, Jr., the "fine gentleman"--rather than the traditional witty yet debauched characters familiar in Restoration comedy. It is the insistence on the exemplary characters that most conspicuously differentiates The Conscious Lovers from Steele's earlier plays (though The Funeral possesses such characters less fully developed) and from the plays, for example, of Cibber, who shares with Steele in popular opinion the leadership of the movement toward sentimental comedy; and it is assuredly the nature of the characters that was responsible for the frequent comparisons of Dorimant and Bevil, Jr., during the critical controversy stirred up by the play.[23]

Loftis also points out the relationship between sentimental and exemplary comedy when he says: "sentimental comedy is by no means always exemplary comedy; but exemplary comedy can scarcely be laughing comedy without loss of didactic effectiveness. In short, sentimental comedy and exemplary comedy are frequent companions, but they are not identical."[24]

There are delightful comedy scenes between the ser-

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[22]Leonard R. N. Ashley, Colley Cibber, Vol. XVII of Twayne's English Authors Series, ed. by Sylvia E. Bowman (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1965), p. 30.

[23]John Loftis, Steele at Drury Lane (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1952), p. 196.

[24]Ibid., p. 199.

vants Tom and Phillis, as the former reminisces about his first encounter with the latter while washing windows (III, pp. 141-145). These characters and their dialogue were largely the work of Cibber, who produced the play at Drury Lane. He realized that the play needed some levity as an antidote to its gravity. The rest of the characters are studies in seriousness. Even Cimberton the coxcomb seems a pale shadow of a Restoration rake, and most of his lines, particularly when he is in conversation with Mrs. Sealand, sound very pretentious. A good example of this pretentiousness occurs when he speaks to her about the morals and manners of the ladies of their society:

> Why, really Madam, the young women of this age are treated with discourses of such a tendency, and their imaginations so bewildered in flesh and blood, that a man of reason can't talk to be understood. They have no ideas of happiness but what are more gross than the gratification of hunger and thirst.
> (III, p. 147)

Steele took much of his plot material from Terence and the device of rediscovering a long lost daughter is a conventional one. Bevil Junior, and indeed the four principal characters, are highly conventional in their attitudes toward love and marriage. Any individuality they possess is due to an excess of sensibility. Thus Bevil Junior shows an inordinate sense of filial duty to his father; he chastises his servant Tom for not ushering his father immediately with the comment, "I thought you had known, Sir, it was my duty to see my father everywhere" (I, ii, p. 124). He carries his obedience to the wishes of his father to such an extreme

that he is prevented from revealing his true feelings to Indiana. He explains the predicament which he finds himself in to the trusty and reliable family servant, Humphrey:

> My tender obligations to my father have laid so inviolable a restraint upon my conduct that till I have his consent to speak I am determined, on that subject, to be dumb forever. (I, ii, p. 129)

Indiana's story and Bevil Junior's role in her rescue come straight out of romances where the gallant and virtuous hero plucks the virgin maiden away from the lustful greed of the villain. Furthermore, the relationship between the two young people is highly sentimentalized. Our first glimpse of Indiana shows her to be in the vein of a sentimental heroine, for she never really doubts the sincerity of Bevil's actions. Her aunt Isabella looks on young Bevil as hypocritical, but such a charge elicits this typical response from Indiana:

> I will not doubt the truth of Bevil; I will not doubt it. He has not spoke it by an organ that is given to lying; his eyes are all that have ever told me he was mine. I know his virtue, I know his filial piety, and ought to trust his management with a father to whom he has uncommon obligations. What have I to be concerned for? my lesson is very short. If he takes me forever, my purpose of life is only to please him. If he leaves me (which heaven avert), I know he'll do it nobly, and I shall have nothing to do but to learn to die, after worse than death has happened to me. (II, ii, p. 135)

In discussing Bevil Junior's anonymous generosity to Indiana, Louis Bredvold makes a connection between Steele and Shaftesbury. The latter "believed that there are universal standards for judging both the good and the beautiful."[25] Bevil's

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[25]Louis I. Bredvold, The Natural History of Sensibility (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1962), p. 15.

distinguished generosity quite obviously meets these standards and whether or not Steele had read Shaftesbury's works the analogy between the two men is striking.

It is true that the audience knows Bevil Junior's honourable intentions toward Indiana, but the striking feature in their relationship is their excessive caution--a caution which seems out of keeping with the strong emotion of love which they purport to feel for each other. In conversation with Indiana, Bevil is careful not to say anything which would implicate him, and this makes for a curious "ping pong" effect in the dialogue (II, ii). However, the characterizations are not subtly drawn and the language lacks both sparkle and wit. There is a great difference between this scene and the brilliant one with Mirabell and Mrs. Millamant in Congreve's The Way of the World (IV).

Lucinda and Charles Myrtle supply the second love entanglement of the play. Myrtle stands in contrast to Bevil Junior, for Myrtle is impetuous, jealous and rash in behaviour. Whereas Bevil trusts Indiana's discretion and feels sure of her feelings toward him, Myrtle constantly sees threats to his relationship. If anyone praises Lucinda too strongly Myrtle's jealous nature is aroused; but if her qualities are not acknowledged Myrtle is also discontented. His emotional instability is paralleled by Lucinda's behaviour for she does not possess the serenity of mind and resolve of purpose seen in Indiana's speeches. On the contrary, Lucinda rails against being sought after on the

marriage market:

> Every corner of the land has presented me with a wealthy coxcomb. As fast as one treaty has gone off, another has come on, till my name and person have been the tittle-tattle of the whole town. What is the world come to! No shame left! To be bartered for like the beasts of the fields, and that in such an instance as coming together to an entire familiarity and union of soul and body; oh! and this without being so much as well-wishers to each other, but for increase of fortune.
> (III, p. 146)

She will do nothing actively to disobey either her mother's or her father's plans for her marriage, although she does offer her unfavourable opinion of Cimberton in asides.

The major responsibility for extricating the four lovers from their problems falls upon the servants, Tom, Phillis and Humphrey. As in The Lying Lover, there is need of outside characters to resolve the conflicts. We have a further development from the tricky slave of Roman comedy, for these servants not only outwit their masters but also solve their problems. They see the problems in clearer perspective and in their own affairs dispense with much of the formality. When Lucinda asks Phillis why she allows Tom to kiss her, the servant replies:

> Why, Madam, we vulgar take it to be a sign of love. We servants, that have nothing but our persons to bestow or treat for, are forced to deal and bargain by way of sample, and therefore, as we have no parchments or wax necessary in our agreements, we squeeze with our hands and seal with our lips to rarify vows and promises. (III, p. 145)

Phillis' speech supplies a comment on the economic basis of marriage which, in this play, causes so much complication. Sir John Bevil and Mr. Sealand arrange for the marriage of

their children much like two businessmen would arrange a merger transaction (IV, ii). Too much hedging on the part of the lovers retards their attaining happiness. Phillis once again speaks with the voice of reality when she says:

> What a deal of pother and sputter is here between my mistress and Mr. Myrtle from mere punctilio! I could, any hour of the day, get her to her lover, and would do it--but she, forsooth, will allow no plot to get him; but, if he can come to her, I know she would be glad of it. I must, therefore, do her an acceptable violence and surprise her into his arms. I am sure I go by the best rule imaginable. (IV, iii, p. 162)

She is the originator of the plan to get Myrtle into the Sealand household disguised as Sir Geoffrey Cimberton. Left to his own devices Myrtle is only capable of adding to the problems by challenging his friend Bevil Junior to a duel (IV, i, p. 154).

For Steele this was the key scene of the play, a scene which pointed out the evils of duelling and made a clear distinction between the characters of Bevil and Myrtle. Even the hostile Freeholder's Journal found this scene to be commendable:

> There is one Scene indeed, wherein the Poet raises his Hero far above anything that Morality can dictate. I mean that in the fourth Act wherein Bevil cools himself by the Sentiments of Religion, and the Prospect of a future State, in the midst of a violent Passion, raised by the ungrateful Provocation of a Friend, whose Injuries must be more afflicting, and his Taunts of Cowardice more pungent. The unlawfulness as well as the madness of Duelling, is here finely exposed, by a Way of Reasoning which Christianity only could dictate.[26]

Bevil's initial reaction to Myrtle's challenge is one of

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[26]Loftis, "Essays on the Theatre from Eighteenth Century Periodicals," p. 23.

anger, but Steele is careful to have the young man reconsider his actions and rise above his feelings. In a long aside, Bevil demonstrates an overly sentimental attitude:

> Shall I (though provoked to the uttermost) recover myself at the entrance of a third person, and that my servant, too, and not have respect enough to all I have ever been receiving from infancy, the obligation to the best of fathers, to an unhappy virgin too, whose life depends on mine? (shutting the door--to Myrtle) I have, thank heaven, had time to recollect myself, and shall not, for fear of what such a rash man as you think of me, keep longer unexplained the false appearances under which your infirmity of temper makes you suffer, when perhaps too much regard to a false point of honour makes me prolong that suffering. (IV, i, p. 156)

The concepts of true and false honour are often used as touchstones of a character's conduct, both by the character himself and by others. Young Bookwit in The Lying Lover makes the same kind of comment as Bevil does, but in his case Steele is showing the consequences of a man being fooled by the concept of false honour.

The last scene of The Conscious Lovers (V, iii) is unquestionably the most sentimental one. Besides untangling the various strands of the plot and working things out to everybody's satisfaction, the scene dwells upon the goodness, virtue and beauty of the principal characters. Mr. Sealand is immediately struck with Indiana's beauty and presence as he questions her about Bevil Junior. Even when faced with the information that her adored benefactor is betrothed to another woman, Indiana does not lose either her composure or her faith in Bevil. She uses all her powers of persuasion to convince Sealand of the young man's honesty and virtue. Her plea on his behalf seems excessive, especially when she pushes for the marriage between Bevil and Lucinda:

> Let not me, miserable though I may be, do injury to my benefactor. No, Sir, my treatment ought rather to reconcile you to his virtues. If to bestow without a prospect of return; if to delight in supporting what might, perhaps, be thought an object of desire, with no other view than to be her guard against those who would be so disinterested--if these actions, Sir, can in a careful parent's eye commend him to a daughter, give yours, Sir, give her to my honest, generous Bevil. What have I to do but sigh and weep, to rave, run wild, a lunatic in chains, or, hid in darkness, mutter in distracted starts and broken accents my strange, strange story! (V, iii, p. 172)

Even at the height of Indiana's emotional outburst Steele does not allow us to lose sight of the sentimentality, for there occurs the discovery scene between father, sister, and daughter. This scene has a contrived effect, as Sealand finally recognizes his daughter by a bracelet which she lets drop in her disorder. Once more tears and kneelings take the place of words as the three rapturous people embrace each other. Nor is Bevil Junior forgotten as this last obstacle to his happiness falls. In an extraordinary burst of language Sealand sends Isabella off to inform the young man of the joyful news. Never before has Sealand spoken with such a rush of hyperbole as he does now:

> Oh! make him, then, the full amends, and be yourself the messenger of joy. Fly this instant! tell him all these wondrous turns of Providence in his favour! Tell him I have now a daughter to bestow which he no longer will decline; that this day he still shall be a bridegroom; nor shall a fortune, the merit which his father seeks, be wanting; tell him the reward of all his virtue waits on his acceptance.
> (V, iii, pp. 173-4)

Sealand continues to speak in this vein and his outburst stands out in marked contrast to his earlier stiffness and

formality.

Finally, Myrtle's and Lucinda's match is quickly confirmed with the lady getting in one last bit of sentiment when she says: "Mr. Myrtle, though you have ever had my heart, yet now I find I love you more because I bring you less" (V, iii, p. 176). We can imagine Phillis and Tom secretly sighing in relief that their respective masters and mistresses have at long last resolved their difficulties. Sir John Bevil has the final word as he steps forward to deliver the moral of the play, and perhaps the motto of sentimental and exemplary comedy itself:

> Now, ladies and gentlemen, you have set the world a fair example. Your happiness is owing to your constancy and merit, and the several difficulties you have struggled with evidently show
>
> Whate'er the generous mind itself denies,
> The secret care of Providence supplies.
>
> (V, iii, p. 176)

Steele's plays are deliberately didactic in that they present a model for virtuous living. Each of his plays was written with an eye to satisfying the criticisms and strictures of Jeremy Collier and other critics of the stage. Early in his career, as we have seen, Steele worked out a theory of comedy to which he tried to adhere when writing his plays. He totally rejected the satirical theory of comedy used by the Restoration playwrights; he did not believe in ridicule as being an effective technique for reformation of manners and morals. Instead, he presented a gallery of exemplary characters whose conduct is held up for admiration and esteem. The few less than exemplary charac-

ters which Steele included in his plays serve a definite function. They stand in contrast to the goodness of the heroes and heroines and they are usually given the opportunity to reform their own conduct. Above all, Steele was a firm believer in the perfectibility of human nature and he used his plays as vehicles to express this belief. Far more than Cibber, Steele actively campaigned for a reformation of the stage and he wholeheartedly agreed with Collier's criticisms of the profaneness and lewdness of the theatre. For Steele, sentimental comedy offered a solution to the problem of licentiousness on stage and his plays did much to bolster the cause of sentimentality in the theatre.

Chapter 4

HUGH KELLY, RICHARD CUMBERLAND AND THE EXCESSES OF SENTIMENTAL COMEDY

The plays of both Hugh Kelly and Richard Cumberland have not survived the eighteenth century except as museum pieces which exemplify a further development of sentimental comedy. Both men were second-rate playwrights and their works do not deserve to be ranked as first class accomplishments. In Hugh Kelly's False Delicacy (1768) and in Richard Cumberland's The West Indian (1771), we can clearly see what road sentimental comedy has taken from the days of Richard Steele. Although False Delicacy and The West Indian have many similarities, there are sufficient differences between them to show various aspects of sentimental comedy. Both these plays are solidly based on the concepts of sentimental comedy, but Kelly's allegiance to this genre is somewhat more ambiguous than Cumberland's is. False Delicacy contains certain non-sentimental elements which are important to the understanding of Kelly's idea of comedy. But by and large, False Delicacy is chiefly important for the light it sheds on sentimentality. The plays of Kelly and Cumberland, then, offer an invaluable picture of the latter stages of sentimental comedy in the eighteenth century.

Hugh Kelly was born in 1739 in Dublin, the son of a

tavern-keeper. He early became familiar with the stage and its actors. In 1760 Kelly came to London hoping to make a living through literary pursuits. His first play, False Delicacy, was accepted by Garrick for production at Drury Lane. It opened on Saturday, January 23, 1768 and was played eighteen more times during that year. Between 1769 and 1776 Kelly's play was performed six further times. False Delicacy did better than Oliver Goldsmith's first play, The Good Natur'd Man, which opened at Covent Garden just six days later on January 29, 1768.[1]

Much as Colley Cibber had been responsible for doctoring certain of the plays he had accepted for production under his management, Garrick quite often did the same thing. He no doubt had a hand in the speeches of Mrs. Harley and Mr. Cecil, the two liveliest and most humourous characters in False Delicacy. Garrick's contributions to Kelly's play were dictated by his managerial role, for, like Cibber, Garrick was an astute man of the theatre who succeeded in giving the public what it wanted. Dougald MacMillan makes this point very clear:

> He objected to the rise of sentimental comedy, but he approved of individual examples of the species, especially encouraging Kelly and Cumberland. Finally in passing judgment upon plays submitted

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[1]The London Stage 1660-1800: Part Four 1747-1776, ed. by George W. Stone, 3 vols. This work has a complete record of all dramatic performances. Goldsmith's The Good Natur'd Man was performed 11 times in 1768, 3 times in 1771 and once in 1773 which gave a total of 15 performances. This compares with the 25 performances of False Delicacy during the same period.

> to him for performance at Drury Lane, he seems to have accepted or rejected solely on the basis of the actability of the play at his theatre. This is probably the correct attitude for a manager to take.[2]

According to Dougald MacMillan, False Delicacy is in "the sententiously tearful manner of the French adopted by Hugh Kelly."[3] This assessment is generally true, although it does not tell the whole story. The play does possess the ingredients of sentimental comedy, not the least of which is the moral spoken at the end of the fifth act by Winworth, who says: "The stage should be a school of morality; and the noblest of all lessons is the forgiveness of injuries."[4] Although the exigencies of the plot do not allow Kelly an opportunity to include a climactic reformation scene in Act V, he does come up with an interesting variation. He has three pairs of lovers in the play who are initially mismatched. Because of the ladies' excessive reliance upon "delicacy," a term which requires some discussion, they are not able to extricate themselves from their predicaments. It is only through the efforts of the good-hearted Mrs. Harley and Lord Cecil that the whole situation is unwound in the last act, with each lover ultimately united with his

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[2]Dougald MacMillan, "David Garrick as Critic," SP, XXXI, No. 1 (January, 1934), 82.

[3]MacMillan and H. M. Jones, eds., Plays of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century, p. 347.

[4]Hugh Kelly, "False Delicacy" in Plays of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1931), pp. 34-35. All further references to this play will be from this edition and will be indicated in the text by act, scene and page numbers.

particular beloved. Lord Cecil and Mrs. Harley represent good sense in contrast to the "delicacy" espoused by the three pairs of lovers.

Since Kelly sets up this contrast between good sense and delicacy (or perhaps, false delicacy), we must attempt to define the latter term. In a discussion of Kelly's play, C. J. Rawson makes the following point:

> In it, "delicacy" is a key-word, in something like the sense in which "prudence" is a key-word in Pamela or "benevolence" in Tom Jones. Around multiple usages of the key-word is built such moral framework as the play possesses.[5]

What is "delicacy" and how is it used in this play? Rawson gives a definition which does much to entangle the confusion surrounding the term. He says, "delicacy is closely allied in meaning to 'sensibility' but refers particularly to fineness rather than intensity of feeling, while 'sensibility' might cover both."[6] He goes on to say:

> If "sensibility," then, is the term for that compound of qualities most cherished by the eighteenth-century woman, "delicacy" is the term for some of sensibility's most important attributes. Closest to the meaning of "sensibility" is the conception of delicacy as a heightened emotional susceptibility.[7]

Sentimental comedy is an almost perfect vehicle for a

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[5]C. J. Rawson, "Some Remarks on Eighteenth-Century 'Delicacy,' With a Note on Hugh Kelly's False Delicacy (1768)," JEGP, LXI (1962), p. 6.

[6]Ibid., p. 1.

[7]Ibid., p. 1-2.

heightening of emotional susceptibility. The reason for the close relationship between sentimental comedy and excessive emotionalism lies in the structure of sentimental comedy. This genre allows scenes of grief, forgiveness and death to be prolonged and repetitious. A good example of this sentimental technique is pointed out by Arthur Sherbo. He discusses Colonel River's verbose and prolonged parting words to his daughter in Act V scene ii of False Delicacy.[8]

Delicacy works in the play in various ways. First and foremost, we notice how often the characters speak of delicacy as being the motivating force of their actions. In the opening speech of the play, for example, Sidney speaks truer than he knows when he remarks to Winworth: "Still I can't help thinking but Lady Betty Lambton's refusal was infinitely more the result of an extraordinary delicacy, than the want of affection for your lordship" (I, i, p. 720). Sidney's use of the word delicacy is repeated and expanded in Act II, scene i, when Lady Betty and Mrs. Harley are together. Almost every speech sets up a relationship between sensibility, good sense and delicacy; Lady Betty is the representative of delicacy while Mrs. Harley is the representative of good sense. Lady Betty openly admits that delicacy dictated her refusal of Winworth's marriage proposal. She says: "And you are also sensible I have frequently argued that a woman of real delicacy should never admit a second

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[8]Sherbo, English Sentimental Drama (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1957), pp. 62-3.

impression on her heart" (II, i, p. 724; underlining mine). There are two principal reasons why Lady Betty has refused Winworth: her disapproval of second marriages is "a standard element of the sentimental code,"[9] and she feels that it is indelicate to accept a man's first proposal. Mrs. Harley gently mocks Lady Betty for these qualities of delicacy, and in exasperation she finally remarks:

> Well, the devil take this delicacy; I don't know anything it does besides making people miserable. And yet somehow, foolish as it is, one can't help liking it. (II, i, p. 725)

Mrs. Harley's remarks are important in two respects: first, her words deflate the delicacy espoused by Lady Betty and set up Mrs. Harley as a critic of the other characters; secondly, the speech also establishes the fact that Mrs. Harley is not totally opposed to delicacy. If she were the pure coquette--or even closer in temperament to Lady Betty Modish of Cibber's The Careless Husband--she would not have any sympathy at all for the delicacy and sentimentalism of her friend. Mrs. Harley is shrewd enough to realize the folly of carrying delicacy to its extreme, but she cannot dissociate herself completely from it. As Mark Schorer points out:

> In the character of Mrs. Harley and of the bluff Cecil, Kelly himself establishes in False Delicacy a kind of chorus which, through constant references to the ridiculous sensibility of the play's remaining characters, advises his audience not to take all this "amiability" too seriously.[10]

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[9]Rawson, p. 7.

[10]Mark Schorer, "Hugh Kelly: His Place in the Sentimental School," PQ, XII, No. Iv (Oct., 1933), 390-1.

However, this satiric chorus is not completely successful since it does not adequately stand outside the object of its attack. To be successful, Cecil and Mrs. Harley should not be concerned with the intimate details of the plot. Cecil, in particular, becomes a figure of some sympathy when he soliloquizes about his love for Miss Marchmont. Both Cecil and the audience know that he is destined not to succeed in love. When coupled with the tender feelings which he reveals, Cecil's function as part of the chorus is very much weakened. Commenting upon his feelings for Miss Marchmount he says:

> Here was I, fancying that all the partiality I felt for poor Hortensia Marchmont proceeded upon my friendship for her father; when, upon an honest examination into my own heart, I find it principally arises from my regard for herself. I was in hopes a change of objects would have driven the baggage out of my thoughts, and I went to France; but I am come home with a settled resolution of asking her to marry a slovenly rascal of fifty, who is, to be sure, a very likely swain for a young lady to fall in love with. But who knows! The most sensible women have sometimes strange tastes; and yet it must be avery strange taste that can possibly approve of my overtures. I'll go cautiously to work, however,--and solicit her as for a friend of my own age and fortune; so that if she refuses me, which is probable enough, I shan't expose myself to her contempt. What a ridiculous figure is an old fool sighing at the feet of a young woman! Zounds, I wonder how the grey-headed dotards have the impudence to ask a blooming girl to throw herself upon a moving mummy, or a walking skeleton. (II, i, p. 726)

Cecil is almost as caught up in the torrent and passion of love as Sir Harry is, although the older man is more discreet in his behaviour. But Cecil speaks in the vein of a love-sick man who places the object of his desire upon a pedestal. He denigrates his own good qualities in order to

see Miss Marchmont as an almost perfect specimen of womanhood. Cecil disqualifies himself from being a touchstone of sensible behaviour in the play by the admission of his own unrequited love for Miss Marchmont, and so he cannot be an effective choric speaker.

Mark Schorer is undoubtedly correct when he mentions that Kelly placed a moral emphasis on his original conception of "laughing [people] into correction," and this leads naturally into sentimentalism.[11] Nowhere can such a development be seen more clearly than in Kelly's handling of Cecil and Mrs. Harley. In the hands of a Cibber, these two characters would probably have attained considerable stature as comic figures. In the hands of Kelly, by contrast, Cecil and Mrs. Harley are tinged with an excess of the delicacy which they profess to criticize in others. Although Cecil occasionally possesses the ability to rail with wit in conversation, his overall tone is still sentimental. A prime example of his language occurs in a conversation which he has with Sir Harry. The latter has been acquainting Cecil with his plan of elopement:

> Sir Harry. Cecil, I scorn a base action as much as you, or as much as any man; but I love Miss Rivers honorably. I ask nothing from her father; and as her person is her own, she has a right to bestow it where she pleases.

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[11] Ibid., p. 393.

> Cecil. I am answered. Her person is her own, and she has a right to be miserable her own way. I acknowledge it and will not discover your secret to her father. (II, i, p. 726)

Cecil is here conforming to the code of delicacy which dictates that he should not openly tell Colonel Rivers of his daughter's plan. If Cecil were truly an unsentimental figure, his reaction to Sir Harry's plan would be more enthusiastic. As it is, his language is but a pale reflection of stock Restoration raillery. His passiveness in the elopement plan condemns him. As a kind of satiric chorus Cecil is not as successful as Mrs. Harley. She alone of all the characters has no emotional entanglements, a freedom which makes it easier for her to divorce herself from delicacy, tact and sensibility of the action.

C. J. Rawson goes further than Mark Schorer does in the discussion of the satirical intent of the Harley-Cecil chorus. Rawson makes the claim that "whether Kelly's play is funny or not, it is meant to be."[12] However, Rawson's observation of Kelly's intent is not the same as another claim which the critic makes; namely, that Kelly deliberately set out to ridicule sensibility and excessive delicacy. Although it is true that, in the end, "good sense" triumphs over "delicacy," the convolutions of the plot are so improbable and unrelated to life that, "the real interest of the play is not in a picture of human absurdities but in a picture of human distresses from which springs a ridiculous

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[12]Rawson, p. 10.

display of sensibilities that bear no relation to valid emotion, and which expect the audience to sympathize with and weep for that virtue and honesty made distraught by too much genteel woe."[13]

It is difficult to take seriously, as Rawson does, what he sees as "the sustained mockery of sensibility"[14] in False Delicacy. The title of the play does indicate that part of Kelly's concern was to poke fun at delicacy carried to an extreme. However, Kelly's own ambivalence towards sensibility and sentimentalism militates against such mockery being successful. Both Schorer and Rawson agree that Kelly was quite sympathetic towards contemporary sentimentalism.[15] It is quite unfair, however, to make a comparison, as Rawson does, between the sentimentalism of Kelly and the sentimentalism of Goldsmith.[16] While the relationship of Goldsmith to sentimental comedy poses a definite problem which will be looked at in the next chapter, he publicly denounced "weeping" comedy, and this is something which Kelly never did. Goldsmith's The Good Natur'd Man does contain within it certain indelible strains of sentimentalism, but they do not swamp the play in the same way as the emphasis on delicacy overwhelms False Delicacy. Furthermore, by the time Goldsmith

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[13]Schorer, p. 401.

[14]Rawson, p. 12.

[15]Rawson, p. 12; Schorer, p. 393.

[16]Rawson, pp. 10-11.

wrote She Stoops to Conquer, he had discarded all vestiges of sentimentality, and the play, in fact, often makes fun of the sentimental mode. Such a development cannot be claimed for Kelly, whose plays "summarized the tradition of sentimental comedy as it had developed during the first half of the century."[17]

Colonel Rivers and his daughter Theodora (we note the derivation of the girl's name from romantic novels of the period) receive the focus of sentimental treatment in the play. Before Theodora consents to the elopement with Sir Harry, she speaks like a true sentimental heroine who does not want to deceive her father. On the contrary, she seems fully prepared to follow his demands. She says:

> Indeed, Sir Harry, you upbraid me very unjustly. I feel the refusal which my father has given you severely; nevertheless, I must not consent to your proposal. An elopement would, I am sure, break his heart; and as he is wholly ignorant of my partiality for you, I cannot accuse him of unkindness. (III, i, p. 729)

In this respect Theodora greatly resembles Bevil Junior in The Conscious Lovers; although, as a female, Theodora is more restricted in her movements than Bevil Junior is in his. Filial love and obedience are striking qualities of sentimental characters. When Theodora's servant Sally is severely reprimanded by her mistress after speaking disparagingly about Colonel River's temper and obstinacy, Theodora demonstrates, once again, that she is a respectful and dutiful daughter. She remarks:

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[17]Schorer, p. 401.

> Sally, I insist that when you speak of my father, you always speak of him with respect. 'Tisn't your knowledge of secrets which shall justify these freedoms; for I would rather everything was discovered this minute, than hear him mentioned with so impudent a familiarity by his servants.
> (III, i, p. 729)

The most blatantly sentimental scene in the play is the parting scene between Colonel Rivers and his daughter. Kelly obtained a full measure of sentimental effect by his techniques of prolongation and repetition. The Colonel has five long speeches in which he "reviews everything he has done for his daughter, reminds her what a fond parent he has been, assures her that he will not prevent her elopement, gives her twenty thousand pounds, and goes off in a paoxysm of self-pity."[18] In his speeches the Colonel practices a potent form of emotional blackmail which proves highly effective:

> Little, Theodora, did I imagine I should ever have cause to lament the hour of your birth; and less did I imagine, when you arrived at an age to be perfectly acquainted with your duty, you would throw every sentiment of duty off. In what, my dear, has your unhappy father been culpable, that you cannot bear his society any longer? What has he done to forfeit either your esteem or your affection? From the moment of your birth to this unfortunate hour, he has labored to promote your happiness. But how has his solicitude on that account been rewarded? You now fly from these arms which have cherished you with so much tenderness when gratitude, generosity, and nature should have twined me round your heart.
> (IV, ii, p. 737; underlining mine)

Colonel Rivers continues speaking in this interminable fashion. Had Kelly restricted the Colonel to one speech

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[18]Sherbo, p. 63.

instead of allowing him to belabor his point, the scene would not have been so poor. We are literally lost in the torrent of words which the injured father gushes out at his daughter.

For a man who is so affected by the sight of his daughter, Colonel Rivers spends an inordinately long time in dismissing her. He leaves once, only to return and give Theodora twenty thousand pounds. We notice how often the Colonel's language is studded with sentimental terms as he bases his appeal on the emotions. The scene is a stagey one, for the Colonel is appealing to both his daughter and the audience at one and the same time. Here is an opportunity for the audience to sigh over the Colonel's self-pity and sorrow and to feel a mixture of sympathy and contempt for the errant Theodora. The moral dilemma is very neatly presented--on one side stands filial affection being abused while opposite to it stands the impetuosity of youthful love and passion. Kelly weights the scales heavily in favour of Colonel Rivers and against Theodora. She is never given any opportunity either to defend her actions or to seek a reconciliation. She is condemned to remain silently on stage, the target of her father's words, and a victim of the emotional blackmail which he skilfully practices on her.

Kelly used a dramatic technique which is somewhat unlike the technique used by typical sentimentalists. Instead of alternating his pathetic and humourous scenes, a technique which Cibber developed to a very polished degree

in his plays, Kelly attempted to mix both elements at once. As Schorer points out, "the effect he tried to attain was one that mingled pity for the distresses of his characters with amusement for those qualities in them that brought about their distresses."[19] We can agree with Schorer that Kelly was not very successful in this method largely because the pathetic scenes subsumed most of the humour. A technically more competent dramatist than Kelly was would have been needed to even the balance between sentimentality and humour.

Act II, scene ii, is an example of "false" delicacy in action and, as such, it demonstrates Kelly's attempt "to unite the high comedy of Molière with the sentimental comedy of Marivaux."[20] After being rejected in marriage by Lady Betty, Lord Winworth determines to ask Miss Marchmont for her hand. He visits Lady Betty and asks for her assistance in the matter. Both Lady Betty and Lord Winworth are bound by the code of delicacy which they believe in, and Lady Betty is especially constrained because she half hopes and half fears that Lord Winworth will renew his suit to her. Her frame of mind, then, allows her to construe the gentleman's preliminary remarks as being a prelude to a second marriage proposal. She is confused and her speech communicates this hesitation and fluster:

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[19]Schorer, p. 392.

[20]Bernbaum, The Drama of Sensibility (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1915), p. 226.

Winworth. You eternally oblige me madam--and I now take courage to tell you, that my happiness, in a most material degree, depends upon your ladyship.

Lady Betty. On me, my lord?--Bless me!

Winworth. Yes, madam, on your ladyship.

Lady Betty. (Aside) Mrs. Harley was right, and I shall sink with confusion.

Winworth. 'Tis on this business, madam, I have taken the liberty of requesting the present interview,--and as I find your ladyship so generously ready--

Lady Betty. Why, my Lord, I must confess-I say, I must acknowledge, my lord,--that if your happiness depends upon me--I should not be very much pleased to see you miserable. (II, ii, p. 727)

Flattery is the key-note of the scene and Lady Betty has all she can handle in responding to Lord Winworth's compliments. She cannot stand back from the action and rally conversationally with Winworth. Her sentences are short and jerky, as her nervousness threatens to render her totally speechless.

There is no evidence in this scene that Kelly is being subtle in his mingling of sentiment and humour. Instead of a mockery of the false delicacy which impels the actions and speech of both Lady Betty and Winworth, the entire scene revolves around the lady's shocked exclamation, "Miss Marchmont! my Lord!" and her almost immediate recovery of outward composure. This brief outburst on Lady Betty's part does not in the least faze Winworth, since he has been thoroughly conditioned to believe that the lady does not

love him. In fact, he then launches into a fairly long speech which is a typical example of the sentimental style. We notice once more the heightening of emotion in rhetorical terms as he speaks of anguish and rejection:

> Yes, madam, Miss Marchmont. Since your final disapprobation of those hopes which I was once presumptuous enough to entertain of calling your ladyship mine, the anguish of a rejected passion has rendered me inconceivably wretched; and I see no way of mitigating the severity of my situation, but in the esteem of this amiable woman, who knows how tenderly I have been attached to you, and whose goodness will induce her, I am well convinced, to alleviate, as much as possible, the greatness of my disappointment. (II, ii, p. 727; underlining mine)

Lord Winworth's remaining comments in this scene are in the same sentimental vein. In fact, he resorts to aphorism when he makes reference to Miss Marchmont's past history: "For, when virtue is unhappily plunged into difficulties, 'tis entitled to an additional share of veneration" (II, ii, p. 728). Mark Schorer's following comment seems particularly apt at this point:

> Platitudes without specific reference to the dramatic action and phrased in the most elegant of genteel language, are, if not a motivation for, at least a proper preface to Kelly's didactic conclusion. The characters exclaim from beginning to end, mouthing commonplaces that are not only without dramatic value but are without moral effectiveness because they are as shallow as they are glib.[21]

Glibness is taken up again by Lady Betty after Lord Winworth's exit. She communicates her misery to Mrs. Harley and then has recourse to aphorism in a kind of unconvincing mea culpa:

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[21]Schorer, p. 396.

> There has been a sort of fatality in the affair--and I am punished but too justly. The woman that wants candor, where she is addressed by a man of merit, wants a very essential virtue; and she who can delight in the anxiety of a worthy mind, is little to be pitied when she feels the sharpest stings of anxiety in her own. (II, ii, p. 728)

Miss Marchmont is the true sentimental heroine--very much like Indiana in The Conscious Lovers. Both women have suffered great misfortune early in life and were rescued from compromising positions by goodhearted benefactors. Kelly expands upon Steele's technique of having the sentimental heroine narrate the story of her previous trials to someone very close to the heroine. Miss Marchmont speaks to her secret admirer and her recital is fraught with details calculated to wring sympathy and admiration from both Cecil and the audience. However, it is a falsely induced reaction, since Miss Marchmont's words are almost unbelievable in their egregious sentimentality:

> My life was marked out early by calamity, and the first light I beheld, was purchased with the loss of a mother. The grave snatched away the best of fathers, just as I came to know the value of such a blessing; and hadn't it been for the exalted goodness of others, I, who once experienced the unspeakable pleasure of relieving the necessitious, had myself, perhaps, felt the immediate want of bread. (III, ii, pp. 732-3)

Such a tearful recital leads naturally into the second half of her speech in which Miss Marchmont shows her true sentimental colours. She tries to present herself as a noble self-sacrificing woman but fails, and we receive instead the impression of her empty and forced altruism:

> And shall I ungratefully sting the bosom which has thus benevolently cherished me? Shall I basely wound the peace of those who have rescued me from despair; --and stab at their tranquility, in the very moment they honor me with protection?--O, Mr. Cecil! they deserve every sacrifice which I can make. May the benignant hand of Providence shower endless happiness upon their heads; and may the sweets of still-increasing felicity be their portion, whatever becomes of me! (III, ii, p. 733)

We notice how Miss Marchmont begins her remarks with two rhetorical questions to which the audience is expected to answer "yes." A strong, direct assertion would be more honest and effective as drama. By preparing to sacrifice herself for what she considers to be the happiness of others, Miss Marchmont places herself in a position of moral superiority which is born out of gratitude. Although this is unconsciously done by her, her action and words call to mind the overtly conscious behaviour of other sentimental characters such as Cibber's Amanda and Lady Easy, and Steele's Bevil Junior.

False Delicacy concludes with the expected moral, but to it Kelly adds a pitch for a comic theory which is rather artificially contrived:

> Sir Harry. If this story was to be represented on the stage, the poet would think it his duty to punish me for life, because I was once culpable.
>
> Winworth. That would be very wrong. The stage should be a school of morality; and the noblest of all lessons is the forgiveness of injuries.
>
> Rivers. True, my lord.--But the principal moral to be drawn from the transactions of to-day is, that those who generously labor for the happiness of others, will, sooner or later, arrive at happiness themselves. (V, ii, p. 744)

In Schorer's words:

> Not only does Kelly assume that men are benevolent, but that Providence is, as well. An earthly reward for sweetness, tenderness, generosity, and moral excellence, and a reward that comes in the terms of a substantial fortune is the sentimentalist's easiest and most damnable assumption.[22]

This false optimism betrays a shallow psychology to which the school of sentimental comedy is prey. Sentimental comedy seems to imply that all characters will eventually do what is right because they are motivated by goodness. However, these people are also indubitably recompensed in material terms for their righteousness even though the sentimentalists continually stress the fact that people will do what is right without expectation of reward. The characters of a sentimental play are grouped into two broad categories, good and bad, and the only shift occurs when a seemingly irresponsible person is reformed and joins the virtuous group. For this he is handsomely rewarded.

From an examination of False Delicacy, we can now move to a consideration of the contribution made to sentimental comedy by Richard Cumberland. Along with Kelly, Cumberland shared "the leadership of sentimental comedy."[23] Cumberland was born in 1732 in Cambridge, the son of a clergyman. He had a brief political career after which he turned to writing. Until his death in 1811, Cumberland pro-

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[22] Ibid.

[23] George Henry Nettleton, English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 272.

duced over fifty plays including twenty-six sentimental comedies, various poems, three novels and his Memoirs. Cumberland was destined to be known chiefly for his sentimental comedies and he was parodied by Sheridan as Sir Fretful Plagiary in The Critic (1770).

The West Indian opened at Drury Lane on Saturday, January 19, 1771 and was performed thirty-eight times that season. Between 1772-1776 the play received forty-two more performances and proved to be one of the most popular comedies of its time.[24]

Cumberland was outspokenly and committedly didactic in his comedies. His didacticism becomes even more evident when we read his Memoirs, in which he discussed certain aspects of sentimental comedy about which he felt particularly strongly. Cumberland was largely responsible for representing on stage those types and nationalities of people who had been previously either maligned or satirized in drama. He championed the virtue of the ethnic and religious underdog:

> I fancied there was an opening for some originality, and an opportunity for showing at least my good will to mankind. If I introduced the characters of persons who had been usually exhibited on the stage as the butts for ridicule and abuse, and endeavored to present them in such lights as might tend to reconcile the world to them, and them to the world. I therefore looked into society for the purpose of discovering such as were the victims

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[24]The London Stage, 1747-1776.

> of its national, professional or religious prejudices, in short, for those suffering characters which stood in need of an advocate; . . .[25]

Both the Irish Major O'Flaherty and the West Indian Belcour are presented in a very favourable light in this play, and this was a departure from earlier stage representations of foreigners.

Aside from championing the Irish and West Indian, Cumberland's play has all the usual ingredients of sentimental comedy--the young lovers thwarted by financial inequality, the testing of a young man by his father, the secret marriage revealed at the opportune moment, and the reformation of a basically good young man through the office of a true and virtuous love. Whereas Kelly had attempted to mingle humour and sentimentality, Cumberland's method is more straightforward. He emphasizes a plot which is full of action, as one scene seems to bustle into the next. Such a framework allows very little room for any in-depth character development, and falls into the camp of sentimental comedy. Characters are conventionalized types insofar as each type is tailored to meet the need of the dramatist's moralizing. In Nettleton's words:

> Cumberland has the sentimental dramatist's lack of differentiation of character. He invests the good with a moral halo, and stamps the bad with the mark of Cain. For power of character he substitutes strength of sentiment, and for truth to nature an artificial manipulation of circumstance.

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[25]Richard Cumberland, Memoirs (London: 1806), pp. 115-116.

> The 'happy endings' of Cumberland's sentimental plays are not the logical outcome of natural comedy but are achieved by a tour de force of moralized melodrama. Dramatic probability, as well as mirth, is sacrificed on the altar of sentiment.[26]

The language of the play is uniformly sentimental and seems platitudinous at times. There is much talk of a good heart and the nobility of relieving distress by charitable deeds. In Act II, scene vi, Belcour anonymously assists Captain Dudley with the two hundred pounds necessary to rejoin his regiment.[27] Belcour's action here parallels Young Honeywood's benevolence in The Good Natur'd Man. Both men do not seek any reward for their generosity, although Belcour is very aware of his altruism. Cumberland stresses this when he has Belcour say to himself, "it's a point that must be managed with some delicacy" (II, vi, p. 758).

Belcour, whose name means "good heart," often speaks most disparagingly of himself, and his words are interpreted as humility by his father Stockwell. However, Belcour's tendency to denigrate his virtue seems somewhat forced especially since we know that within the structure of a sentimental comedy the young man is basically goodhearted and virtuous. For example, in an early scene between father and son, Belcour remarks:

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[26]Nettleton, p. 275.

[27]Cumberland, "The West Indian" in Plays of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century, pp. 758-9. All further references to this play will be from this edition and will be indicated in the text by act, scene and page numbers.

> I am the offspring of distress, and every child of sorrow is my brother. While I have hands to hold, therefore, I will hold them open to mankind. But, sir, my passions are my masters; they take me where they will; and oftentimes they leave to reason and to virtue nothing but my wishes and my sighs.
> (I, v, p. 751)

Cumberland is deliberately leading up to the young man's later rashness in taking Louisa for an unvirtuous woman. Right from the beginning, then, we have Belcour's own words to prepare us for his fall from goodness and gentlemanly propriety. Nothing could be less subtle dramatically than this technique of having the hero presented as a typical case study of youthful rashness. All subsequent actions on Belcour's part are now easily explained with reference to his own assessment of his character.

Cumberland is not even content with relying upon Belcour's own words since he has Stockwell prepare the ground before we meet the young man. The merchant's remarks lead us to believe that Belcour is the typical sentimental hero, wild on the surface but possessed of a good heart:

> All the reports I have ever received give me favourable impressions of his character, wild, perhaps, as the manner of his country is, but, I trust, not frantic or unprincipled.
> (I, iv, p. 751)

Stockwell's words refer not only to the innate goodness of Belcour, they bring up the subject of the "noble savage" which was widely discussed during the eighteenth century. The concept of the primitive who far surpassed civilized man in nobility and virtue is later expressed by Belcour himself. In response to his father's remark that he seems "disordered,"

the young man replies:

> Disordered, sir! Why did I ever quit the soil in which I grew? What evil planet drew me from that warm sunny region where nature walks without disguise into this cold, contriving, artificial country? (IV, x, p. 778)

However, the picture of the "noble savage" is so sentimentalized that we tend to laugh at Cumberland's cant rather than take the idea behind the words seriously. The utter pomposity of Belcour's speech overwhelms all other considerations.

Cumberland employs a conventional device whereby Stockwell can determine the worth of his son before acknowledging his paternity. The sentimental hero must undergo a test of character. Although the trial of character in this play is very similar to the one which Sir Oliver Surface uses to discriminate between his two nephews in Sheridan's The School for Scandal, Cumberland is unable to see any comic possibilities in the scheme. Every detail of Belcour's behaviour toward Louisa Dudley is carefully scrutinized by Stockwell (IV, x), and the every criticism which the older man offers there is a corresponding remark of justification made by Belcour. Finally, after the ground has been carefully prepared, Stockwell says:

> I see it was a trap laid for you, which you have narrowly escaped. You addressed a woman of honour with all the loose incense of a profane admirer, and you have drawn upon you the resentment of a man of honor who thinks himself bound to protect her. Well, sir, you must atone for this mistake. (IV, x, p. 780)

Cumberland obviously did not think it was sufficient to

allow the working out of the action to demonstrate Belcour's basic goodness; the dramatist has to resort to explicit statements like Stockwell's speech above. It is almost as if Cumberland were afraid to show his hero indulging in any sort of rakish behaviour for its own sake; such behaviour is only tolerated because it teaches other people a valuable lesson.

The resolution of the love conflict between Belcour and Louisa Dudley is given an expected sentimental treatment. The young man begs forgiveness and places the woman on a pedestal. Belcour has not lost his habit of over humbling himself and he says:

> I know I am not worthy your regard; I know I'm tainted with a thousand faults, sick of a thousand follies; but there's a healing virtue in your eyes that makes recovery certain. I cannot be a villain in your arms. (V, v, p. 783)

Belcour's reference to Louisa's eyes is significant since Cumberland is here sentimentalizing an earlier love convention which had validity. This convention implied that the eyes of a lover were the windows to the soul.

Louisa poses a question which should be asked of all fifth act conversions when she says: "Are sudden reformations apt to last" (V, v, p. 783). Unfortunately, she does not pursue this line of thought and immediately believes in the sincerity of Belcour's reformation. She gives a typically sentimental reason for not wanting to marry him; it is now she who is so far beneath the young man because of the lack of money. Louisa says:

> Whomever you shall honor with your choice, my life upon't, that woman will be happy. It is not from suspicion that I hesitate; it is from honor. 'Tis the severity of my condition; it is the world that never will interpret fairly in our case. (V, v, p. 783)

"Honor" is probably one of the most abused words in sentimental comedy. Sentimental heroines like Louisa and Miss Marchmont of False Delicacy speak of the honor of sacrificing their love for someone else.

The West Indian is consistently sentimental and does not have any satirically oriented characters to point up the fallacies of sentimentality. All the dialogue is cast in a moral tone and even the polygamous soldier, O'Flaherty, has sentimental traits. For example, he comments upon Lady Rusport's lack of charity and then says: "Upon my soul, I know but one excuse a person can have for giving nothing, and that is, like myself, having nothing to give" (II, viii, p. 761). But the most egregious bit of sentimentality occurs in Dudley's speech near the end of the play. He comments upon the sudden reversal of the family fortune and says:

> Name not fortune; 'tis the work of Providence, 'tis the justice of heaven that would not suffer innocence to be oppressed, nor your base aunt to prosper in her cruelty and cunning. (V, vi, p. 783)

Dudley's words confirm the triumph of justice, since God is on the side of the deserving. Such an appeal to a benevolent deity who makes all things come out right is the inevitable ending of all sentimental comedies.

Kelly and Cumberland represent the dramatists of excess who took sentimentality to an extreme. As Osborn

Waterhouse points out, "the pervading, serious tone of most of these plays, renders the term comedy, when applied to them, almost a misnomer; and were it not that the plots often threatening to end ill ~~end~~ invariably end well, we would be more justified in terming them domestic tragedies."[28] Gone is the fresh and for the large part chaste language of Cibber; instead we have dialogue written to a sentimental formula. Gone too are the fops and coquettes, rakes and lovers whom Cibber allowed to retain some of their Restoration heritage. Kelly and Cumberland people their plays with largely monotonous characters whose actions are merely convenient vehicles for carrying the moral of the play. Again as Waterhouse says, "their plots are designed to specially emphasize some moral truth: their characters are specially drawn to exemplify virtue, and to fit the plot which has been designed to work out a pre-conceived moral aim."[29]

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[28]Osborn Waterhouse, "The Development of English Sentimental Comedy in the Eighteenth Century," Anglia, XXX (1907), p. 271.

[29]Ibid., p. 281.

Chapter 5

OLIVER GOLDSMITH AND A PARTIAL RETURN TO "LAUGHING COMEDY"

By the middle of the eighteenth century, "laughing comedy" seemed to have deserted the London stage as audiences flocked to sigh, weep and sympathize over the plight of ordinary people faced with problems. Good hearts and tender natures were held up as shining examples to be emulated. Gentility and decency were ideals striven after by playwrights as they banished "low" scenes from their works.

However, Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan succeeded in bringing back a modified form of "laughing comedy" to the London stage and humour again held a prominent place in the theatre. Goldsmith's contribution to the revival of "laughing comedy" is far outweighed by the contribution of Sheridan who was a superior playwright. However, in the context of a study devoted mainly to sentimental comedy, Goldsmith's play[5] and theoretical writings shed important light on the uneasy relationship between sentiment and humour.

On April 4, 1759, Goldsmith published An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe. In chapter eleven entitled "Upon Criticism" Goldsmith comments upon the strictures placed by critics on comic writers:

> . . . by the power of one single monosyllable, our critics have almost got the victory over humour amongst us. Does the poet paint the absurdities of the vulgar; then he is low: does he exaggerate the features of folly, to render it more thoroughly ridiculous, he is then very low. In short, they have proscribed the comic or satyrical muse from every walk but high life, which, though abounding in fools as well as the humblest station, is by no means so fruitful in absurdity. . . . The truth is, the critic generally mistakes humour for wit, which is a very different excellence. Wit raises human nature above its level; humour acts a contrary part, and equally depresses it. To expect exalted humour, is a contradiction in terms; and the critic, by demanding an impossibility from the comic poet, has, in effect, banished new comedies from the stage.[1]

Goldsmith's two plays were written to combat the sentimental mode of comedy for, as he says, "humour at present seems to be departing from the Stage, and it will soon happen, that our Comic Players will have nothing left for it but a fine Coat and a Song."[2] Samuel Macey makes the point that in the plays of both Sheridan and Goldsmith "there comes at last a noteworthy though not unequivocal attack on sentiment in the drama."[3] This study does not examine the plays of Sheridan because his works possess a unique blending of sentiment and humour which adds up to a different kind of comedy.

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[1]Oliver Goldsmith, An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe, in Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith, ed. by Arthur Friedman, I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 320-321.

[2]Oliver Goldsmith, An Essay on the Theatre, in Collected Works, III, p. 213.

[3]Samuel Macey, "Sheridan: The Last of the Theatrical Satirists," Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research, IX, No. 2 (November, 1970), 35.

On the other hand, with Goldsmith's plays the problem of his relationship to sentimentality has to be faced. W. F. Gallaway Jr. in his article "The Sentimentalism of Goldsmith" clears the dramatist "from two obsessions of the sentimentalist--the natural goodness of human kind, and the superior happiness and virtue of savages on South Sea isles."[4] Gallaway goes on to define Goldsmith's sentimentalism in terms of "a natural sensitivity of heart which led to love of home, of brother, of the 'old familiar faces,'. . ."[5]-- in essence, a sentimentalism closer to true emotionalism and combined with prudence. By clearing away many contradictions found in Goldsmith's plays Gallaway's essay is very valuable. His assessment of the playwright's relationship to sentimentalism is correct and his point becomes clearer in the context of a discussion of The Good Natur'd Man.

The Good Natur'd Man was written in 1766 or 1767 and Goldsmith submitted this play to Garrick for presentation at Drury Lane. Garrick did not refuse the play outright, but he did raise many objections to it. Consequently, on July 19, 1767, Goldsmith submitted the play to George Colman for production at Covent Garden; it was finally put on there on January 29, 1768. Rivalling this play at Drury Lane was

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[4]W. F. Gallaway, Jr., "The Sentimentalism of Goldsmith," Publications of the Modern Language Association, X: VIII (1933), 1167.

[5]Ibid.

Hugh Kelly's False Delicacy which had its opening six days before Goldsmith's effort. The Good Natur'd Man was quite successful, with Goldsmith receiving about 400 pounds from his three benefits; however, False Delicacy attained a greater popularity. The first night audience at Goldsmith's play hissed at the scene with the two bailiffs, objecting that it was too "low." In his Preface, Goldsmith defends his delineation of "low" life as being necessary to comedy: "those who know anything of composition, are sensible, that in pursuing humour, it will sometime lead us into the recesses of the mean."[6]

The Good Natur'd Man has at its centre Young Honeywood, "a man of excessive benevolence." He is the recipient of Goldsmith's satiric thrusts at imprudent benevolence. Honeywood's overwhelming trust and generosity almost lead him to calamitous ruin and he is saved only by the good sense of his uncle, Sir William Honeywood, and the love of Miss Richland. Young Honeywood has to learn the lesson that excessive benevolence equals false benevolence and as such is hypocritical. Gallaway says that "the title of the play indicates that Goldsmith's fundamental purpose was to ridicule extravagance disguised as generosity and gullibility masked as universal benevolence."[7] In addition, the title

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[6]Oliver Goldsmith, The Good Natur'd Man, in Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith, ed. by Arthur Friedman, V (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 13. All subsequent quotations from this play will be from this edition and will be indicated in the text by act and page references.

[7]Gallaway, "The Sentimentalism of Goldsmith," p. 1179.

would lead an audience to expect sentimental comedy; this may be one reason why the play was not a total success. Although Sir William censures his nephew, he does so rather ambiguously. He makes an important distinction to Jarvis about Young Honeywood's actions when he says:

> What a pity it is, Jarvis, that any man's good will to others should produce so much neglect of himself, as to require correction. Yet, we must touch his weaknesses with a delicate hand. There are some faults so nearly allied to excellence, that we can scarce weed out the vice without eradicating the virtue. (I, p. 20)

It is as if Sir William has somewhat qualified his statement about his nephew's rashness. His language is the language of careful equivocation striking a balance between censure and praise. This is an important point to bear in mind since, at the end of the play, Honeywood ends up with both the money and Miss Richland. Goldsmith seems to be very subtle in his treatment and contrast of true and false benevolence here. Young Honeywood is not so misguided in his early behaviour that he cannot learn from experience and reap the reward of his lesson.

Honeywood's false benevolence is contrasted to Miss Richland's action on behalf of the beleaguered young man. (We note the significance of her name). In Act III she witnesses Honeywood's most embarassing moments as he gamely attempts to pass off the two bailiffs as naval officers. This was the scene hissed by the audience as being too "low", and what a delightful scene it is. Miss Richland controls her concern for Honeywood with a brief aside to the audience

as she spies the two bailiffs: "Who can these odd looking men be! I fear it is as I was informed. It must be so" (III, p. 48). Such a situation opens the possibilities for a long sentimental interlude--the virtuous and sympathetic woman viewing her lover in distress--but Goldsmith resists the temptation and allows the scene to run entirely on its comic momentum. The bailiff and his follower take full advantage by monopolizing the conversation and Honeywood jumps in frequently to interrupt. Near the end of the scene occurs a neat bit of interplay between Honeywood and Miss Richland who has not been sitting docilely by:

> Honeyw. My dear Mr. Twitch, I discern what you'd be at perfectly, and I believe the lady must be sensible of the art with which it is introduced. I suppose you perceive the meaning, Madam, of his course of law.
>
> Miss Rich. I protest, Sir, I do not. I perceive only that you answer one gentleman before he has finished, and the other before he has well begun. (III, p. 50)

Miss Richland displays a lively ability to bandy with words as she disconcerts Honeywood in his effort to conceal his straitened financial circumstances.

Goldsmith sets up constant little tests for his characters to undergo. In the case of Miss Richland, he exposes her motives for helping Honeywood to the scrutiny of Sir William. That the young woman is sincere in her desire to help Honeywood is made clear and this point receives further emphasis with the arrival on the scene of Lofty. His dissimulations, vanity and unctuousness make us immediately aware of the vast difference between his avowal

of friendship for Honeywood and Miss Richland's. His suggestion to help the young man is a totally impractical one, and it is, furthermore, calculated mainly to reflect upon Lofty's high social connections:

> My dear Madam, what can a private man like me do? One man can't do every thing; and then, I do so much in this way every day: Let me see, something considerable might be done for him by subscription; it could not fail if I carried the list. I'll undertake to set down a brace of Dukes, two dozen Lords, and half the lower house, at my own peril. (III, pp. 52-53)

We note that it is Lofty's supreme egotism which pervades his speech: he is far more concerned with his own reputation than with his erstwhile friend's problems. His speech does not possess the flagrant panache of a Restoration cheat and swindler but it is far more alive than the speeches of the stereotyped fops and n'er-do-wells of sentimental comedy.

Lofty's character does not escape the notice of Sir William, who sees through his veneer of self-importance. Consistently throughout the play, Sir William acts as the benevolent but prudent deus ex machina who resolves all problems. Alone among the characters he possesses an intelligent overview of the situation and in this respect he closely resembles Squire Burchell in The Vicar of Wakefield. Appearances do not deceive Sir William; he does not accept any man's claim simply at face value. In the following lines, which he speaks alone on stage, he gives his opinion of Lofty, an opinion which is not shared by his more gullible nephew:

> Ha, ha, ha! This too is one of my nephew's hopeful associates. O vanity, thou constant deceiver, how do all thy efforts to exalt, serve but to sink us. Thy false colourings, like those employed to heighten beauty, only seem to mend that bloom which they contribute to destroy. I'm not displeased at this interview; exposing this fellow's impudence to the contempt it deserves, may be of use to my design; at least, if he can reflect, it will be of use to himself. (III, pp. 55-56)

In the last line, Sir William is explicitly moralistic and this strikes somewhat of a false note in the play. Sir William's words betray a certain degree of sententious moralizing in the vein of sentimental comedy but his speech is kept fairly short. Goldsmith knows how to maintain a correct balance between sententiousness and humour.

Honeywood is not so insufferably good that he appears unbelievable, and his courting of Miss Richland on Lofty's behalf somewhat strains the imagination and falls into the sentimental school of drama. His conception of friendship does not allow him to work on his own behalf, and his words of love certainly convince the young lady. It is no half-hearted attempt at wooing which Honeywood puts forward, although before he undertakes the job he suffers pangs of torment. Here Goldsmith easily could have sunk into the bathetic, but he is careful not to do so. Honeywood demonstrates no jealousy of Lofty, as the following speech shows:

> Open, generous, unsuspecting man! He little thinks that I love her too; and with such an ardent passion! --But then it was ever but a vain and hopeless one; my torment, my persecution! What shall I do! Love, friendship, a hopeless passion, a deserving friend! Love, that has been my tormentor; a friend, that has, perhaps distress'd himself, to serve me. It shall be so. Yes, I will discard the fondling hope from my

> bosom, and exert all my influence in his favour. And yet to see her in the possession of another! --Insupportable. But then to betray a generous, trusting friend!--Worse, worse, Yes I'm resolved. Let me be the instrument of their happiness, and then quit a country, where I must for ever despair of finding my own. (IV, p. 59)

Honeywood repeats words like "generous" and "friendship" constantly and the entire speech should be read ironically. Here is the deluded altruist Honeywood speaking passionately about a friend whom we know to be base and false. It is typical of Honeywood that he makes a resolution to seek exile in another country. His desire to serve Lofty increases his obtuseness towards Miss Richland's emotions. Rather than see hope for his own cause increase when Lofty's name provokes only cold disdain in Miss Richland, Honeywood puzzles over his failure to secure her agreement to a marriage with Lofty:

> How is this! she has confessed she lov'd him, and yet she seemed to part in displeasure. Can I have done anything to reproach myself with? No; I believe not; yet, after all, these things should not be done by a third person; I should have spared her confusion. My friendship carried me a little too far. (IV, p. 66)

Honeywood is here again examining his motives and yet speaks almost dispassionately and cooly about his behaviour.

Honeywood's puzzlement leads him to speak later of repentance and self reproach. Rather than amend his behaviour and pursue a more prudent course of action, Honeywood resolves upon retiring from the world. This is a rather sentimental ploy. He realizes that his desire to please everybody who approached him has been disastrous, but he does

not know how to extricate himself from the resulting predicament. While full of plans to help others, Honeywood is singularly incapable of helping himself. The solution which he proposes is one of escape and negation:

> Obstinate man, still to persist in his outrage! Insulted by him, despis'd by all, I now begin to grow contemptible, even to myself. How have I sunk by too great assiduity to please! How have I overtax'd all my abilities, lest the approbation of a single fool should escape me! But all is now over; I have survived my reputation, my fortune, my friendships, and nothing remains henceforward for me but solitude and repentance. (V, pp. 75-76)

This use of a soliloquy by Honeywood to express his feelings adds to the sentimentality of the scene. It would have been far more effective as comedy had Goldsmith included comments critical of Honeywood's position by another character. Then there would be a continuity of contrast present between Honeywood's overbearing altruism and self-pity and the common sense ideal expressed by Goldsmith.

Honeywood speaks of his love for Miss Richland as being an "insolence" on his part, then quietly takes his leave without allowing the young woman to respond to his confession. With Sir William's identity revealed and Lofty's designs unmasked, the way seems clear for the young man to reverse his decision to leave. Honeywood, however, still feels indebted to Lofty, and thinks it was he who rescued him from the bailiffs, thus continuing to push Lofty's cause. Such persistence on his part provokes Lofty into admitting his dissimulation. But we note how lowkeyed Lofty's confession is; there are no long speeches of self reproach;

rather a simple statement suffices:

> Mr. Honeywood, I'm resolved upon a reformation, as well as you. I now begin to find, that the man who first invented the art of speaking truth was a much cunninger fellow than I thought him. And to prove that I design to speak truth for the future, I must now assure you, that you owe your late enlargement to another; as, upon my soul, I had no hand in the matter. So now, if any of the company has a mind for preferment, he may take my place. I'm determined to resign. (V, p. 80)

Lofty asks for no forgiveness from anybody and this distinguishes him from a typical sentimental character. He quietly fades out of the picture after this speech and no words are wasted moralizing about his past conduct.

But still Honeywood cannot step in and claim Miss Richland, and the benevolent Sir William has to arrange matters. The play ends as the uncle gives a few words of advice to his nephew, and the young man speaks of the lesson which he has finally learned:

> Sir Will. Henceforth, nephew, learn to respect yourself. He who seeks only for applause from without, has all his happiness in another's keeping.
>
> Honeyw. Yes, Sir, I now too plainly see my errors. My vanity, in attempting to please all, by fearing to offend any. My meanness in approving folly, lest fools should disapprove. Henceforth, therefore it shall be my study to reserve my pity for real distress; my friendship for true merit, and my love for her, who first taught me what it is to be happy. (V, p. 81)

The moral of the play is very plain but it is not verbalized very fully. The preceeding action has been sufficient to convey Goldsmith's idea of moderation--in benevolence and in every facet of human behaviour--which contrasts with Young

Honeywood's false notions.

The Good Natur'd Man shows Goldsmith not completely free of the grip of sentimentalism. The irony which is directed at Young Honeywood is not altogether successful, since Goldsmith sometimes does not seem very sure in the handling of his irony. In addition, this was Goldsmith's first venture into the theatre and he used this play to learn the techniques of comic writing, and this stood him in good stead with his second play.

She Stoops to Conquer, Goldsmith's finest play, opened on March 15, 1773, at Covent Garden. Once again Goldsmith had been kept in suspense a long time concerning the date of production, but Samuel Johnson had pressured Colman into accepting the play. In a conversation on opening night between the artist Northcote and Goldsmith, the playwright asked: "Did it make you laugh?" "Exceedingly," said Northcote. "That is all I require," said Goldsmith.[8] Northcote's reaction was a general one and the play proved financially successful for its author. It enjoyed a good run of nine performances, and a tenth performance by royal command. For the plot, Goldsmith fell back upon the incident of his own youthful blunder of mistaking the house of a squire for an inn.

Much more than his first play, She Stoops to Conquer

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[8]As quoted in Clara M. Kirk, Oliver Goldsmith, Twayne's English Authors Series, ed. Sylvia E. Bowman (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1967), p. 137.

shows Goldsmith's sureness in handling dramatic exposition and plot. Its comic potentialities are exploited to their fullest extent and Goldsmith's attack on sentimentalism is much more effectively handled. The Prologue by Garrick bemoans the sickness and imminent death of the comic muse and this sets the overall tone of the play:

> The Comic muse, long sick, is now a dying!
> And if she goes, my tears will never stop;
> For as a play'r, I can't squeeze out one drop:
> I am undone, that's all--shall lose my bread--
> I'd rather, but that's nothing--lose my head.
> When the sweet maid is laid upon the bier,
> Shuter and I shall be chief mourners here.
> To her a mawkish drab of spurious breed,
> Who deals in sentimentals will succeed![9]

The play contains many elements of farce, particularly the incident where Tony Lumpkin leads his mother on a "circumbendibus" trip which returns to her own garden. Exhausted by the journey and terrified by the "strange" surroundings, she mistakes her husband for a highwayman (V, ii, p. 207). Sentimentalism is attacked chiefly in two scenes: during the alehouse scene (I, ii, pp. 116-118) and in the first meeting between Kate Hardcastle and Young Marlow in the beginning of Act II. Still, there are hints of sentimentalism in the play--as, for example, in Mr. Hardcastle's reply to his wife's complaint of her husband's fondness for old things:

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[9]Oliver Goldsmith, She Stoops to Conquer, in Collected Works, V, p. 102. All subsequent quotations from this play will be from this edition and will be indicated by act, scene and page references.

> I love everything that's old: old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine; and, I believe, Dorothy (taking her hand) you'll own I have been pretty fond of an old wife.
> (I, i, p. 107)

As Alan Rodway says, "he [Mr. Hardcastle] is what he is, not because Goldsmith is making some comic point, but merely to raise a laugh by his oddity and subserve the funny situation to come, when Marlow takes him for an old-fashioned innkeeper."[10]

Miss Neville's character contains elements of sentimentalism, although practicality is her dominant trait as she connives to secure her jewels from her aunt before marrying Hastings. When pressed by her lover to elope, she replies with a note of caution. In this instance, Constance shows more prudence than the rash Hastings. She is very prudent and is not prey to the sentimentalized romanticism of Lydia Languish in The Rivals, the young lady who had "projected one of the most sentimental elopements!" (V, i). Quite the contrary, Constance makes the following restrained comment which places her securely in the category of the non-sentimental heroine:

> I have often told you, that though ready to obey you, I should leave my little fortune behind with reluctance. The greatest part of it was left by my uncle, the India Director, and chiefly consists in jewels. I have been for some time persuading my aunt to let me wear them. I fancy I'm very

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[10]Alan Rodway, "Goldsmith and Sheridan: Satirists of Sentiment," in Renaissance and Modern Essays, Presented to Vivian de Sola Pinto in celebration of his seventieth birthday, ed. by G. R. Hibbard (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1966), pp. 69-70.

> near succeeding. The instant they are put into my possession you shall find me ready to make them and myself yours. (II, p. 141)

In Constance's speech emotion is definitely subservient to the idea of financial security. She knows exactly how much she is worth and has no illusions about being able to live comfortably without money. She keeps a constant check on her lover's impetuosity, and, in contrast to him she is very rarely ruffled.

The alehouse scene (I, ii, pp. 116-118) has Tony at the head of a table of shabby and boisterous fellows. He sings a rollicking song extolling the virtue of liquor and takes a swipe at the sanctimoniousness of Methodist preachers in the second stanza:

> When Methodist preachers come down,
> A preaching that drinking is sinful,
> I'll wager the rascals a crown,
> They always preach best with a skinful.
> But when you come down with your pence,
> For a slice of their scurvy religion,
> I'll leave it to all men of sense,
> But you my good friend are the pigeon.
> (I, ii, p. 117)

Several of Tony's companions comment upon his song and make fun of the strictures critics have made against "lowness" and the need for gentility:

> Second Fellow. I loves to hear him sing, bekeays he never gives us nothing that's low.
>
> Third Fellow. O damn any thing that's low. I cannot bear it.
>
> Fourth Fellow. The genteel thing is the genteel thing at any time. If so be that a gentleman bees in a concatenation ackoardingly.

> Third Fellow. I like the maxum of it, Master Muggins. What, tho' I am obligated to dance a bear, a man may be a gentleman for all that. May this be my poison if my bear ever dances but to the very genteelest of tunes. Water Parted, or the minuet in Ariadne.
>
> (I, ii, pp. 117-118)

This scene supplies a perfect capsule comment on dull genteel comedy whose good humour has been totally expunged and replaced by long passages of tedious moralizing. Tony's language possesses a great deal of colloquial vigour, as when he dismisses his chums with a "I'll be with you in the squeezing of a lemon" (I, ii, p. 119). This is one of the most successful scenes in the play because Goldsmith allowed Tony Lumpkin, one of the most delightful characters in English drama, to be in full command of the situation. Nowhere is the humour forced; it has a quality of the goodnatured humour which seemed to have been Goldsmith's trademark.

In Act II, Marlow and Kate meet for the first time. We already know about the young man's bashfulness and discomfort in speaking with ladies of quality. He explains his problem to his friend Hastings:

> Why, George, I can't say fine things to them. They freeze, they petrify me. They may talk of a comet, or a burning mountain, or some such bagatelle; but to me a modest woman, dressed out in all her finery, is the most tremendous object of the whole creation.
>
> (II, pp. 129-130)

His admiration for women like Kate is quite typical of gentlemen of his time and perhaps of gentlemen of any time. Such women are looked up to for their qualities of modesty, beauty and virtue. Their goodness is often exaggerated and they are seen in a somewhat unrealistic light. We also know

about Kate's refreshing good humour and openness prior to her encounter with Marlow. She represents the epitome of gracious breeding and zestful joy in life. She possesses a mind of her own, although she is obedient to her father's wishes. She says to him:

> You know our agreement, Sir. You allow me the morning to receive and pay visits, and to dress in my own manner; and in the evening, I put on my housewife's dress to please you. (I, i, p. 111)

The interview between Kate and Marlow mocks the conventional meeting between a pair of sentimental lovers. Marlow makes a typically timid remark to which Kate replies with an ironic comment on sentimentalism. As always with Goldsmith, the irony is delicate and subtle:

> Marl. But I love to converse only with the more grave and sensible part of the sex.--But I'm afraid I grow tiresome.
>
> Miss Hard. Not at all, Sir; there is nothing I like so much as grave conversation myself; I could hear it forever. Indeed I have often been surprised how a man of sentiment could ever admire those light, airy pleasures where nothing reaches the heart. (II, p. 146)

Kate proceeds throughout the interview to rescue Marlow from his hesitancy and stuttering and confesses herself entertained by his conversation. After Marlow leaves the stage, Kate elaborates upon her first impression as she laughs at the sentimental nature of their meeting. Here is not the soberness and rigid propriety of a sentimental heroine who has fallen for the overdone delicacy of a young man:

> Ha! ha! ha! Was there ever such a sober, sentimental interview? I'm certain he scarce looked in my face the whole time. Yet the fellow, but for his unaccountable bashfulness, is pretty well, too. He has good sense, but then so buried in his fears, that it fatigues one more than ignorance. If I could teach him a little confidence, it would be doing somebody that I know a piece of service. (II, p. 148)

This speech indicates that Kate is neither shy nor bashful and has the ability to comment upon an action even while that action is taking place. She has a keen eye for detail and perceives the good qualities of Marlow beneath the surface of his outlandish behaviour. She is such a level-headed girl that she does not fall for absurd sentimentality but realizes that it is nothing but cant.

The treatment of marriage in the play reveals the eighteenth century view of this institution. This is particularly evident in Marlow's speech to the disguised Kate, for although he admits an attraction to her, the difference in their social positions precludes a marriage between them:

> Excuse me, my lovely girl, you are the only part of the family I leave with reluctance. But to be plain with you, the difference of our birth, fortune, and education, make an honourable connexion impossible; and I can never harbour a thought of seducing simplicity that trusted in my honour, or bringing ruin upon one whose only fault was being too lovely.
> (IV, p. 185)

We notice how fluently he is able to talk. The latter part of the speech particularly distinguishes Marlow from the Restoration heroes who would not think twice about seducing a pretty girl. Marlow is not above titillating his senses, but his code of honour does not allow him to take advantage of a girl who is socially inferior to him.

Kate is also a firm believer in marriage between social equals, although she does admire Marlow's tender words. Later in the play she will not permit Marlow to persist in his addresses to the "barmaid." When he says to her, "what at first seemed rustic plainness, now appears refined simplicity" (V, iii, p. 210), Marlow makes an eighteenth century distinction. Between Constance and Hastings (we note how closely the lady's name resembles "constancy" and the gentleman's "haste"), the lady maintains her commitment to prudence. She declares to Hastings:

> No, Mr. Hastings, no. Prudence once more comes to my relief, and I will obey its dictates. In the moment of passion, fortune may be despised, but it ever produces a lasting repentance. I'm resolved to apply to Mr. Hardcastle's compassion and justice for redress. (V, ii, pp. 208-9)

The happy resolution of the play does not rely upon the intervention of an older benevolent figure such as we saw in The Good Natur'd Man. Tony Lumpkin plays an important part in sorting out misunderstandings which he had a hand in initiating. He is not, then, merely the buffoon or bumpkin (although his name calls this to mind); his characterization is more rounded than that. He demonstrates great skill in the false wooing scenes he plays with Constance, and his naive exterior is a clever cover for his inner shrewdness.

The argument between the sentimentalists and Goldsmith really concerns a difference in point of view. Gallaway makes the distinction between Goldsmith's approach to life and the approach of the sentimentalists when he says:

> [Goldsmith] is aware that the sentimentalist is an idealist viewing life through the false glasses of romance, and not seldom an unconscious hypocrite seeking an escape from a realism he found unpleasant and a morality he found severe. Goldsmith the writer must be identified not with the Vicar, though one phase of the man is mirrored there, but with the more sensible and prudent Sir William Thornhill.[11]

Intellectually, Goldsmith did respond to the prudence preached by Sir William Thornhill in The Vicar of Wakefield, but it does seem fair to say that emotionally he had more of a leaning toward the less sensible Vicar. This is a conflict within Goldsmith's own character, a conflict which was never firmly resolved; consequently, his two plays do not provide any final answer either.

The sentimental view of life necessitates creating characters who, in the main, do not ring true. Their overwhelming goodness detracts from the humorous possibilities open to the dramatist in the plot development. Much of the sentimental language is dull, heavy and rhetorical, and contains much sententious moralizing. Goldsmith attempted to offset this development in comedy by presenting plays which would make the audience laugh rather than weep. His two plays, in particular, She Stoops to Conquer, have survived the test of time far better than the sentimental comedies of Cibber, Steele, Kelly and Cumberland. Perhaps Goldsmith's appeal to a revival of laughter on the stage was not a vain attempt, although his plays did not initiate a large-

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[11]Gallaway, "The Sentimentalism of Goldsmith," pp. 1180-1181.

scale resurgence of comedies written in the old Restoration style. Unfortunately the public's taste in drama would not support a total return to "laughing comedy." As Goldsmith wrote, ". . . we find that every new play is very fine till it ceases to be new; like losing gamesters we vainly expect every last throw to retrieve the former unfortunate run."[12]

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[12]Oliver Goldsmith, "On the Present State of Our Theatres," Weekly Magazine, No. III (12 January, 1760), in Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith, III, p. 54.

Chapter 6

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We are now in a position to summarize and draw together the main features of sentimental comedy as it developed from Cibber to Cumberland and as it was attacked by Goldsmith. Cibber combined shrewdness and ability with a certain amount of luck in writing plays which appealed to both the gallants and ladies in the audience. He retained the fops and coquettes of Restoration comedy but gave them speeches which were largely free of immoral and licentious sentiments. Nevertheless, much of Cibber's language possesses a freshness and sparkle which are lacking in later sentimental comedies. He did not believe in the sentimentalist's view that people are basically good, honest and virtuous. Consequently, Cibber's plays are not stultifying pieces of didacticism but strike a fairly satisfying balance between the comedy of manners and sentimental comedy.

The development from Restoration comedy to sentimental comedy was the result of several factors. Undoubtedly, the broadening of theatre audiences and the greater proportion of women present affected the kinds of plays presented. In addition, moral indignation at what was termed the profanity and licentiousness of Restoration plays was expressed by Jeremy Collier and other crusading pamphleteers. Many prolo-

gues and epilogues of plays written in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries attest to the playwrights' attempts to please the changing taste of the audiences. Some eighteenth-century critics like John Dennis felt that the theatrical public showed a deterioration in taste which was paralleled by an overall decline in the quality of society. However, it should be noted that the emergence of sentimental comedy in England paralleled a similar development in France, where comedie larmoyante enjoyed success.

Although each sentimental dramatist presented his material in his own way, there are several trademarks to be found in all sentimental comedy. First, an appeal is made to the heart rather than to the intellect. Secondly, sentimental comedy examines human behaviour in an unsatirical fashion and places the emphasis upon human goodness and virtue. The sentimental dramatists are largely didactic in their exhortation of moral and virtuous living and the audience is expected to sympathize strongly with those characters who are wronged and abused.

Steele made an important contribution to the development of sentimental comedy in his presentation of exemplary characters in The Conscious Lovers. These characters are consistently good throughout the play and stand as impeccable models of behaviour for both the audience and other characters on stage to emulate. In an exemplary comedy like The Conscious Lovers there is no need for a climactic fifth act repentance and conversion scene as we find in other sentimental comedies.

The entire action of Steele's play revolves around Bevil Junior's virtue and filial obedience and in due course he reaps the reward of his goodness.

The failure of sentimental comedy to live as sparkling and vital comedy results from the sentimentalists' most damning premise, namely that human nature is perfectible and that the duty of playwrights is to inculcate a proper standard of morality. We cannot laugh at the contrived plots necessary for a consistently happy ending--as, for example, the plots in the plays of Kelly and Cumberland. When comedy exposes human frailty and explodes conventions of society as it does in many Restoration plays, it achieves a more positive moral purpose than the negative morality put forth by the sentimentalists who falsely believed that men are always good and that goodness is always rewarded.

Although sentimental comedy achieved notable popularity on the English stage during the eighteenth century, it did not totally supplant other forms of comedy. Goldsmith's two plays--especially She Stoops to Conquer--restored a healthier balance between sentiment and humour and he openly attacked the sentimental mode of writing in his various essays on the theatre. He revived the impulse to criticize and satirize notions of sentimentality such as false benevolence, hypocrisy and pretentious moralizing. In the final analysis, then, we can say that sentimental comedy arose to satisfy audiences and critics who damned Restoration comedy as being licentious. However, sentimental comedy never totally replaced "laughing" comedy and Goldsmith's plays represent a

partial return to this more vital type of comedy.

APPENDIX

The purpose of this appendix is to offer statistics on the performance records of each of the eight major plays discussed in the study. Each play's popularity is tabulated from its opening night until 1776. The statistics are all from The London Stage.

The appendix also gives a breakdown of the various types of comedy which were produced at both Drury Lane and Covent Garden between 1747 and 1776. Such a breakdown demonstrates the extent of the popularity of sentimental comedy and provides and interesting insight into the overall public taste in plays.

Love's Last Shift (1696)

A. 1696-1717

Drury Lane	25
Lincoln Inn's Field	7
Queen's	3
TOTAL	35

B. 1717-1729

Drury Lane	34
Lincoln Inn's Field	13
TOTAL	47

C. 1729-1736

Drury Lane	5
Covent Garden	11
Lincoln Inn's Field	9
Richmond	2
Goodman's Fields	11
TOTAL	38

D. 1736-1747

Covent Garden	26
Drury Lane	32
Lincoln Inn's Field	1
Goodman's Fields	2
TOTAL	61

E. 1747-1755

Drury Lane	17
Covent Garden	5
TOTAL	22

F. 1755-1767

Drury Lane	2
Covent Garden	15
TOTAL	17

G. 1767-1776

Covent Garden	5
GRAND TOTAL	225 (no performances after January 1773)

The Careless Husband (1703)

A. 1704-1717

Drury Lane	40
Queen's Theatre	10
Lincoln Inn's Field	1
TOTAL	51

B. 1707-1729

Drury Lane	48

C. 1729-1736

Drury Lane	17
Goodman's Fields	24
Richmond	1
Haymarket	5
Covent Garden	1
Lincoln Inn's Field	2
TOTAL	50

D. 1736-1747

Lincoln Inn's Field	7
Drury Lane	21
Covent Garden	18
Goodman's Fields	3
Mayfair	1
Haymarket	3
James St.	1
TOTAL	54

E. 1747-1755

Covent Garden	5
Drury Lane	20
TOTAL	25

F. 1755-1767

Drury Lane	29
Covent Garden	6
TOTAL	35

G. 1767-1776

Drury Lane	4
GRAND TOTAL	267

The Lying Lover (1703)

A. 1703-1717

Drury Lane	6	These were six consecutive performances from opening night, Thursday, December 2, 1703 until Wednesday, December 8.
		There were no performances until 1746.

B. 1746

Drury Lane	4
GRAND TOTAL	10

The Conscious Lovers (1722)

A. 1722-1729

Drury Lane	39
Mrs. Defenne's School	1 (performed by the girls)
TOTAL	40

B. 1729-1736

Drury Lane	20
Covent Garden	7
Goodman's Fields	10
Lincoln Inn's Field	14
Richmond	1
TOTAL	52

C. 1736-1747

Drury Lane	42
Covent Garden	43
Goodman's Fields	5
Haymarket	4
TOTAL	94

D. 1747-1776

Drury Lane	93
Covent Garden	73
TOTAL	166
GRAND TOTAL	352

False Delicacy (1768)

A. 1767-1776

Drury Lane	25

No performances after April, 1773.

The Good Natur'd Man (1768)

A. 1767-1776

Covent Garden 15

No performances after May, 1773.

The Theatrical Monitor, No. XI, 6 February, 1768 reviews the play in a lukewarm, judicial manner (London Stage, pt. 4, v. 3, p. 1308).

The West Indian (1771)

A. 1771-1776

Drury Lane	65
Haymarket	3
Covent Garden	12
TOTAL	80

She Stoops to Conquer (1773)

A. 1773-1776

Covent Garden	35
Haymarket	3
TOTAL	38

After opening night the Westminster Magazine wrote: "On the Whole the Comedy has many excellent qualities: though we cannot venture to recommend it as a pattern for imitation. Still attached to the laudable intent of it, we wish it may keep possession of the stage till a better comedy comes to relieve it" (London Stage, pt. 4, v. 3, p. 1702).

A. Drury Lane between 1747-1776

1. 107 different comedies were played, giving 30 comedies per season on the average.
2. 2,941 performances of comedy were given, there were 101.4 performances per season on the average:

Type	Number of performances	Average per season
Shakespeare	491	17
Humours	266	9.1
Manners	1,102	40
Intrigue	392	13
Sentiment	690	24

3. 15 most popular comedies comprised 3 Shakespeare, 2 Humours, 5 Manners, 4 Sentimental and 1 Intrigue:

The Suspicious Husband (S)	127
Much Ado About Nothing (Sh)	106
The Strategem (M)	97
The Provok'd Wife (M)	97
Cymbeline (Sh)	96
The Conscious Lovers (S)	93
The Provok'd Husband (S)	87
The Clandestine Marriage (M)	86
The Tempest (Sh)	78
Every Man In His Humour (H)	78
The Wonder	78

The Alchemist (H)	76
The Jealous Wife (M)	75
The Way to Keep Him (M)	65
The West Indian (S)	63

B. Covent Garden between 1747-1776

1. 98 different comedies were played, giving 30 comedies per season on the average.
2. 2,238 performances of comedy were given, there were 80 performances per season on the average:

Type	Number of Performances	Average per season
Shakespeare	246	9.5
Humours	246	9.5
Manners	840	31
Intrigue	522	18
Sentiment	384	14

3. 15 most popular comedies comprised 2 Shakespeare, 2 Humours, 4 Manners, 4 Intrigue and 3 Sentimental:

The Busy Body (I)	111
The Provok'd Husband (S)	102
The Strategem (M)	87
The Merry Wives of Windsor (Sh)	85
The Miser (H)	79
Every Man In His Humour (H)	74
The Conscious Lovers (S)	73
The Recruiting Officer (M)	63
She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not	58
The Merchant of Venice (Sh)	57
Loves Makes a Man (I)	55

A Bold Strike for a Wife (M)	53
The Country Lasses (I)	52
The Suspicious Husband (S)	51
The Way of the World (M)	51

C. Drury Lane and Covent Garden between 1747-1776

1. 205 different comedies were played.

2. 5,179 performances of comedy were given:

Type	Number of Performances	Average per Season
Shakespeare	737	26.5
Humours	512	18.6
Manners	1,942	71
Intrigue	914	31
Sentiment	1,074	38

3. 5 most popular comedies which played at both houses comprised 3 Sentimental, 1 Manners and 1 Humour:

The Suspicious Husband (S)	178
The Stratagem (M)	184
The Conscious Lovers (S)	166
The Provok'd Husband (S)	189
Every Man In His Humour (H)	152

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