THE THEMATIC UNITY
OF WYCHERLEY'S PLAYS

by

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Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to arrive at an understanding of Wycherley's vision and portrayal of human nature through an analysis of the principal themes contained in each of his four plays. The primary theme is the distinction between appearance and reality in human nature. The implications of this theme are explored as they operate through certain subsidiary themes: love, marriage, friendship, honour, affectation, plain-dealing, and jealousy.

In examining each of these themes, a pattern emerges within each play whereby men reveal that they are fundamentally hypocritical creatures, motivated by selfish desires. They strive to satisfy these desires by manipulating and exploiting their fellow men. Initially, however, they conceal their inner natures by maintaining a superficial appearance of decorum and respectability. As each play progresses, Wycherley penetrates the outer appearance of each character to reveal his true nature, a nature which is essentially evil. He strengthens this impression by the creation within each play of either an individual or place through which the sordidness of human nature appears completely stripped of any veneer of civilized behaviour. Within each play also, there is an individual or couple whose virtuous example further stresses the corruption of the other characters.

Nevertheless, while the same pattern emerges within each play, there are differences in tone, emphasis, characterization, plot, and complexity which reflect Wycherley's developing ability as a dramatist. His first play, Love in a Wood is a typical comedy in which the love chase predominates, but in which Wycherley demonstrates his belief in man's innate depravity. His second play, The Gentleman Dancing-Master is a farce in which Wycherley examines
affectations and vanities of a topical nature. With his third play, *The Country-Wife*, the satirical tone darkens and intensifies. In his final play, *The Plain-Dealer*, Wycherley broadens the scope of the play to create a sense of an all-pervasive corruption, existing on every level of society. In these last two plays, Wycherley further emphasizes his belief in man's depravity by the use of imagery. Images of disease, food, drink, gambling, and animals serve to strengthen the impression that man is a brutish creature. While Wycherley portrays human nature with greater complexity and subtlety in his last two plays, his focus and conclusion remain essentially unchanged. It is this fact which gives unity and coherence to his drama, and which demonstrates Wycherley's developing skill as an artist. This skill, combined with the intensity of his vision of human nature, gives his plays a brilliance and impact which is generally overlooked or underestimated.
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Introduction: A Résumé of Past Criticism

A review of the critics of Restoration comedy in general, and of the plays of Wycherley in particular, reveals a wide variety of approaches and opinions. These we will group, somewhat arbitrarily, into two main categories: those critics who consider the plays from the point of view of manners and morals, and those who examine them from the point of view of style and form. These groupings frequently overlap with certain writers combining different aspects of both.

We begin, however, with an exception. Charles Lamb, one of the earliest critics, treats the Restoration plays as a "world of themselves almost as much as a fairyland." In this unreal world, "there is neither right nor wrong,--gratitude or its opposite,--claim or duty,--paternity or sonship." Lamb concludes that "the whole is a passing pageant, where we should sit as unconcerned at the issues, for life or death, as at a battle of the frogs and mice."

By denying that the plays of the Restoration exhibit any moral point of view, Lamb denies that they are works of art, to be considered seriously. Rather, he sees them as offering a means of escape into an irresponsible, unreal world representing "...a speculative scheme of things, which has no reference whatever to the world that is..."  

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2 Ibid., p. 144.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., P. 143.
From Lamb, who regarded the plays as unreal and therefore amoral, we move to a consideration of the critics who examine the plays in terms of Restoration manners and morals. These writers view the plays as mirrors of the artificial, gay, sophisticated society of the period. In addition to seeing Wycherley's plays as reflections of the period, critics also tend to see them as a projection of Wycherley's supposedly "manly", lecherous, misanthropic nature.

T.B. Macaulay, one of the earliest of the "manners" critics, focuses upon the plays as mirrors of the age-- an age which he regarded as representing "the Nadir of national taste and morality."\(^5\) He maintains that the plays are a reflection "... of the real town and of the passing day."\(^6\) He further contends that "... the morality ... is the morality, not as Mr. Charles Lamb maintains, of an unreal world, but of a world which is a great deal too real."\(^7\) Nevertheless, Macaulay concludes that the plays are "... a class of works ... which illustrates the character of an important epoch in letters, politics, and morals ... ."\(^8\)

Numerous critics agree with Macaulay's assessment, but do not feel constrained to judge the plays as he does, in terms of his own personal tastes and that of the society in which he lived.

Bonamy Dobrée, for example, can contemplate the immorality of the plays without condemning them. Rather he seeks to explain Wycherley's work as a

\(^5\)The Works of Lord Macaulay, ed. Lady Trevelyan (London: Longmans, Green, 1898), VI, 516.

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 497.

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 498.

\(^8\)Ibid., pp. 490, 491.
product of both the man and the period. For example, he talks of Wycherley as "... forever striving after the absolute, but always bewildered as to which extreme to choose."\(^9\) He goes on: "Involved in the manners of a society he now hated, now loved, he could not forbear reviling even himself."\(^10\) Dobrée also ponders whether Wycherley, "by steeping himself in the mud [felt that] he would achieve some kind of catharsis ... ."\(^11\) He sees Wycherley, in his first play, "... poking with his finger the strange, crawling heap he saw the world to be ... ."\(^12\) Of The Plain-Dealer he states: "All through the play men are stripped naked, to reveal, not the human animal, but the inhuman brute: the virulence is absolutely ruthless."\(^13\) Of The Country-Wife he asks: "Is it a comedy at all? Not in the ordinary sense. The clever, cynical dialogue, the scathing irony, the remorseless stripping of all grace from man, are too overpowering."\(^14\) Dobrée concludes: "If he [Wycherley] preached the happy mean, it was only by accident. In the end perhaps, not thinking it possible, or even desireable, he merely wished people to be more honest."\(^15\)

In the latter quotations, Dobrée seems to be moving away from an historical/biographical point of view, but he never completely divorces him-

\(^10\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 81.
\(^11\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 86.
\(^12\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 102.
\(^13\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 89.
\(^14\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 94.
self from it, and for this reason, Dobrée remains with the "manners" critics.

John Palmer, in his examination of Wycherley, also analyzes the plays in terms of Restoration manners and of Wycherley's personality. For example, he says of Wycherley: "Fundamentally he was a Puritan. Superficially, in his life and writing, he accepted the pageant, and portrayed it; but frequently the moral fury of a satirist breaks violently through the fine gentleman."\(^{16}\)

And yet, in spite of such a statement, to Palmer, The Country-Wife is "the most perfect farce in English dramatic literature—a whirlwind of inspired buffoonery."\(^{17}\) The Plain-Dealer is "one of the most unpleasant extant pieces of English literature."\(^{18}\) Moreover, Palmer concludes that "Wycherley's main business is still with manners, not with morals. . . . Ordinarily he accepted life."\(^{19}\)

Kathleen Lynch writes in the same vein. For example, she maintains that "in his most powerful scenes Wycherley devotes himself, with more bitterness than any of his contemporaries, to the unlovelier aspects of Restoration society."\(^{20}\) Even though "on some occasions, Wycherley assails some of the most cherished ideals of the age. . . ."\(^{21}\) Lynch contends that ". . . the social standard of the age is accorded an ultimate triumph."\(^{22}\)

\(^{16}\) Comedy of Manners (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), pp. 93, 94.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 128.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 122.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., pp. 120, 121.


\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 174.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.
A further example of the manners critic is Louis Kronenberger who asserts that "... with sex alone could he [Wycherley] find the right key to a callous, cold-hearted, dissolute Restoration society."  

He further maintains that "his [Wycherley's] age and place in society led him to write for the theatre with little restraint and with consistent coarseness and license. ... A moral misfit in his own age, wallowing in sinfulness and stammering out repentance, he displays some of that self-consuming, self-poisoning rage that we associate with Swift."

Writing more recently, John Wain adheres to the same criteria. He writes that, "... at its usual level, it [Restoration Comedy] is partly a yell of triumph ... and partly a prolonged indulgence in wish-fulfilling fantasy ... . The success of this rather pitiful bravado is one reason why most Restoration comedy is so bad; it was aimed at a prepared audience, who knew in advance what they wanted." In addition, Wain looks upon the comedy as repudiating "all standards." Specifically with regard to Wycherley, he maintains that "Wycherley, at any rate, never achieved clarity on any basic moral issue." He goes on to state that "the whole plot of The Plain-Dealer is simply a piece of crude misanthropy and getting one's own back." Wain concludes that the chief merit of the plays lies in their sensitivity "to 

the dominant confusions of their epoch. . . ." 29 With this observation we have come full circle back to Macaulay and his assessment of the plays as illustrations of " . . . the character of an important epoch. . . ." 30

Such an assessment offers a limited understanding and appreciation of the plays. The critics we have discussed judge the plays in terms of the man and his age, not the writer and his work. In addition to overlooking the intrinsic nature of Wycherley's drama, all the critics mentioned concern themselves primarily with Restoration drama in general. They concentrate, therefore, on similarities, trends, and generalities. They do not explore Wycherley's plays in any depth or detail, but note the elements or characteristics which best substantiate their point of view. Nor do they make any attempt to evaluate Wycherley's overall development as a dramatist. The majority of critics ignore his first two plays completely, or dismiss them as immature, trivial productions.

From those who consider the plays from an historical/biographical point of view, we move to those who concern themselves with the style and form of the plays. These critics find fault with the Restoration dramatists for limitations of their artistic style, which they see as reflecting the limitations of their observations and experience of life. For example, L.C. Knights, the main exponent of such a view, maintains that "the observation to start from is that the prose in which Restoration comedy is written---

29 Ibid., p. 33.
select which dramatist you like—is poor and inexpressive . . . ." He concludes, therefore, that "the criticism that defenders of Restoration comedy need to answer is not that the comedies are 'immoral', but that they are trivial, gross, and dull."32

Such criticism as this is again of a general nature, giving no special consideration to Wycherley's style. It also represents a narrow, limited approach which fails to recognize the colour, forcefulness, flexibility, wit, and grace of the language of the plays.

Other writers judge Wycherley's plays by the degree to which they conform to the demands of either comedy or satire. Those who examine the plays in relation to comedy find them lacking in comic restraint, moderation, and balance. For example, Henry Ten Eyck Perry criticizes Wycherley, in The Plain-Dealer particularly, for losing "that philosophical detachment so essential to any true expression of the Comic Spirit."33

Other critics examine the plays as satire. T.W. Craik, for example, in an article entitled "Some Aspects of Satire in Wycherley's Plays" contends that "the conclusion to be drawn appears to be that although Wycherley is, in a sense, a satirist, his satire is not intended to be more than a source of amusement for his fashionable audience, and does not spring from a consistently moral view of society as does that of Jonson and Molière in their best plays . . . ."34

32 Ibid., p. 157.
34 English Studies, XLI (1960), 179.
More recently, a book entitled *Wycherley's Drama: A Link in the Development of English Satire* has appeared. Its author, Rose A. Zimbardo, relates Wycherley historically and theoretically to satire and to satiric drama in particular. Having done so, she maintains that

Wycherley's focus . . . is neither upon the ideal world nor upon the world of false appearance, but is rather upon the difference between them. His method, the traditional method of the satirist, is to present to our eyes a scene of moral corruption. The love-chase plays no part in his design, because there is neither a hero nor an ideal couple who claim our attention. Because the satirist's interest is vice itself, it is the scene of vice in action rather than any particular character in it that he must illuminate.35

She goes on to state that "Wycherley's 'heroes' are not heroes but satiric spokesmen. . . . Wycherley uses the satiric spokesman to show the difference between our public and private selves, to unmask what we pretend to be and reveal what we are, to show how far what we are deviates from what we should be."36

Zimbardo then proceeds to study the plays in terms of satire, linking them to the productions of earlier English writers, and attempting to prove that Wycherley is, as her title indicates, in the mainstream of the English satiric tradition. Such a study is extremely interesting and valuable, but by examining the plays in relation to a certain criterion and tradition, Zimbardo tends to ignore significant deviations, contradictions, complexities, and inconsistencies in the plays.

Another recent critic, Thomas Fujimura, explores the role of wit in the plays, and concludes that "wit is the very quintessence of Restoration

comedy." He analyzes the plays in terms of those characters who are True Wits, those who possess both fancy and judgment; those who aspire to be True Wits, the Witwouds; and those who are completely lacking in any desire or ability to be witty, the Witlesses.

Fujimura criticizes those writers who feel that the plays have no serious moral purpose. He contends that "the morality of Restoration comedy is naturalistic, and that the dramatists dealt with moral issues, though wittily rather than soberly." Such a scheme, although highly ingenious, is difficult to apply with any consistency, especially to Wycherley's plays. Again this approach offers new but limited insight into the plays, taking as it does a narrow, specialized outlook.

Norman Holland seeks to examine and explain Restoration comedy in terms of "the conflict between 'manners' (i.e., social conventions) and anti-social 'natural desires'," or, in other words, in terms of "the discrepancy between 'appearance' and 'nature'." Specifically, with regard to Wycherley, Holland states: "Wycherley's unique contribution to Restoration comedy was a sense that folly, evil, and limitations to happiness were all related, that there is a right way and a wrong way." He then proceeds to delineate the plays on this basis of a right way/wrong way dichotomy. In so doing, he

38 Ibid., p. 4.
39 The First Modern Comedies (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1959), p. 4.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., p. 70.
oversimplifies, ignoring the complexities, subtleties, contradictions, and exceptions which exist within the plays. They do not fit neatly into separate compartments of right and wrong, good and bad, although ultimately an ideal or standard does emerge.

This thesis will not attempt to show that Wycherley reflects the customs of his time, or to fit him into a philosophical context, or to link him historically or theoretically with comic or satiric drama, or to find his own character reflected in the plays. Nevertheless, this study will, of course, overlap with previous ones to a degree, and will inevitably reach similar conclusions on certain points. Zimbardo, for example, engages in a similar close study of the plays, but she does so in order to relate them to satiric drama. Holland's study is also somewhat similar, but not as extended. Moreover, most critics touch on Wycherley's sordid depiction of human nature, but none has attempted to examine fully the implications of such a portrayal.

The present writer attempts to do this through a structural examination of the plays. To clarify the structure of the plays, the writer will concentrate on tracing and analyzing certain themes which appear in all of Wycherley's plays. The primary theme is, of course, the distinction between appearance and reality. The writer will explore the implications of this theme as it operates through Wycherley's examination of certain subsidiary concerns: love, marriage, friendship, jealousy, and honour. By studying what Wycherley says about these topics, we come to see certain similar structural elements in all of his plays: for example, the revelation scenes in which characters strip off their masks; the presence of certain virtuous characters in the plays; and the use of imagery to point up certain significant distinctions about human nature.
Through an examination of these themes and devices, we come to realize that Wycherley concerns himself primarily with the many facets and forms which human depravity can and does take, and with the many ways by which man tries to hide this depravity.

By focusing upon the basic depravity of human nature, Wycherley demonstrates that he is a serious artist, concerned about the nature of man and of the world in which he lives. In the process, he explores man's goals, motivations, and values. His final assessment of human nature is a gloomy one in which he sees depravity and corruption as existing on every level of society, perverting every activity and relationship.

Man's basic corruption is most apparent in his attitude toward marriage. In seeking a marriage partner, almost all the characters disclose that an overpowering lust motivates them. This lust is of both a sexual and non-sexual nature; it is a fundamental, selfish cupidity which dominates all thinking, feeling, and action. This lust includes inordinate longings for sexual satisfaction, wealth, revenge, and social advancement. In striving to fulfill their lust, the corrupt characters ignore the traditional Christian concept of marriage. They wish to marry because matrimony is the easiest, most convenient, and socially acceptable method of fulfilling their desires.

Their basic depravity also becomes apparent in their attitudes toward honour, friendship, reputation, and plain-dealing, subjects which the plays also consider. Here again the corrupt characters reject traditional values. To them, honour does not imply inner integrity, but the maintenance of an appearance of respectability, however false. Similarly friendship is a relationship to be sought and used to achieve selfish ends. Reputation is a
social necessity, useful only to deceive others. Plain-dealing is a practice to which the corrupt characters give lip service, while betraying one another. In other words, the corrupt characters of Wycherley's plays distort, lie, pervert, and manipulate whenever it is to their advantage to do so.

In each play there is a situation in which the corrupt characters discard their veneer of civilized behaviour. In *Love in a Wood*, under cover of darkness and within the confines of the park, the corrupt characters cast aside their inhibitions to reveal fully their depravity. In *The Country-Wife*, this depravity discloses itself in the image of the country and the country-dweller. In *The Plain-Dealer*, the Halls of Justice swarm with a mass of grasping humanity, concerned only with satisfying their greed and lusts. Only *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* has no such place where humanity appears at its very worst, but this omission, as we shall see, is significant.

In the last two plays, Wycherley emphasizes man's basic depravity by associating man with animals. Like a beast, selfish physical appetites goad and drive man, so that he will stoop to any means, however despicable, to attain fulfillment. Because the corrupt characters seek fulfillment without consideration of the feelings of others, they fail in their quest, but remain unrepentant and unchanged.

They remain so, in spite of the one individual or couple within each play who offers an example of virtue and integrity. These individuals are incorruptible in spite of the many dangers and temptations which threaten to engulf them, surrounded as they are by so much vice and hypocrisy. These individuals, unlike the others, do not substitute lust for love, outward reputation for inner virtue, keeping for marriage, expediency for honour, patronage for friendship, and jealousy for trust. Instead, they adhere to
traditional values and principles, believing that marriage should be based on love and trust, reputation and honour upon inner integrity, and friendship upon mutual esteem. They do not confuse or substitute appearance for reality unlike the corrupt characters. They have no need to conceal their inner natures and motivations which are virtuous and admirable.

The corrupt characters, however, either ignore their example, or attempt to take advantage of their goodness. The virtuous characters thus find themselves in difficulties in which they must resort to the practices of the corrupt characters. They engage, therefore, in hypocrisy and intrigue in order to prove their fidelity and integrity.

However, since man is a social being and needs the stimulation and companionship of others, the virtuous characters remain within the world of the play, presenting an ideal which is weak and ineffectual in comparison to the evil and corruption on every side. Moreover, their example serves to accentuate the depravity which, Wycherley concludes, dominates and motivates the vast majority of mankind.

Previous writers, by focusing upon the coarseness and sensuality in Wycherley's plays, have underestimated his ability as a writer, and failed to appreciate the significance of his work. This thesis attempts to show that Wycherley is a serious artist and an astute observer of human nature, genuinely concerned with man's basic needs and values. He studies these needs and values in greater depth and with greater complexity than other critics have recognized.

In addition, we will see Wycherley developing in his ability as an artist. Each successive play demonstrates a growing complexity and intensity. Issues and attitudes become less clearcut; characterization becomes less stereotyped;
and imagery becomes more profuse. Because of these factors, Wycherley's last two plays are more subtle and richer in content than his first two. Nevertheless, his basic view of human nature remains unchanged.

In each of his plays, Wycherley shows that man has degraded himself. He has misused his potentialities, abused his body, and neglected the spiritual side of life. By so doing, man has reduced himself to existing on a bestial level, concerned only with satisfying his lust. Reduced to such a level, man is discontented, unhappy, and unfulfilled. The presence of certain virtuous characters, however, demonstrates that all men are not corrupt, that isolated examples of goodness do exist. By raising and exploring such considerations and reaching such conclusions, Wycherley deserves greater study and better evaluation than he has received. This thesis endeavours to contribute to such a study and evaluation.
Chapter One: Love in a Wood

In his first play, Love in a Wood, Wycherley clearly demonstrates his belief that human nature is basically corrupt, selfish, and therefore, asocial. The social unit of the city formally refuses membership to all those who perform acts motivated solely by corrupt human nature desires for personal gratification. Yet paradoxically, Wycherley sees that the corrupt, selfish, and asocial man can only satisfy his cupidinous desires within the social unit of the city. For this reason, the depraved man must conceal his depravity if he wishes to hold membership in the city. He must appear to be what in fact he is not. He must construct and maintain a façade to conceal his real identity.

In Love in a Wood, we see innately vicious men and women maintain a façade of gaiety, courtesy, and sophistication in order to appear to conform to the dictates of a society which devotes itself to the pursuit of innocent social pleasures. In reality, the vicious city-dwellers use their façade and pursuits to satisfy the demands of their corrupt natures which seek only selfish pleasure.

In order to conceal their depravity, they resort to deceit and hypocrisy in their dealings with one another. Nowhere is this practice more apparent than in their relationship with the person they hope to entice into marriage. Each character sees marriage as enabling him to fulfill his basic cravings for selfish pleasure, both sexual and non-sexual. In Love in a Wood, only one couple adheres to the traditional concept of marriage as a relationship based on affection, respect, and trust. But in a society riddled with corruption and deceit, even this relationship is endangered by jealousy and intrigue, caused by innocent involvement of this couple with the corrupt
characters. In order to be reconciled to each other, this innocent couple must, like the other characters, resort to darkness and the confines of St. James Park. In the Park, the corrupt characters, their appearances hidden, discard any pretence of civilized behaviour. Freed from their socially imposed inhibitions, they fully expose their sordidness and corruption, and that of the society in which they live.

Thus, although one couple presents an ideal of traditional Christian values and behaviour, their example is more than offset by the others. As a result, the conclusion of the play leaves no sense of the regeneration of society which we associate with traditional comedy. Instead, the final impression is one of an ugly corrupt world, inhabited by people who are fundamentally vile and depraved.

Initially, the main interests and occupations of the characters seems to consist of innocent drinking, gambling, dining, visiting, intriguing, and play-going. But as the scene progresses, we see more and more indications of depravity concealed behind a respectable façade. For example, part of the first scene takes place in a French House where Ranger and Vincent, gentlemen of the town, are drinking prior to an evening visit to St. James Park. They are also plying Dapperwit, "a brisk conceited, half-witted Fellow of the Town"42 (p. 72), with wine because "... there is no other ways to silence him" (I, i, 80), and keep him from uttering his "chaw'd Jests ... mouldy Lampoones, and last years Sonnets ..." (I, i, 80). Dapperwit, meanwhile, is taunting Vincent that he only drinks to acquire wit and courage. Into this

42 William Wycherley, The Complete Works, ed. Montague Summers, Soho, 1924. Citations from Wycherley in my text are to The Complete Works, Volumes I and II.
scene of drinking and raillery, Sir Simon Addleplot, "a Coxcomb" (p. 72) leads Lady Flippant, "an affected Widow" (p. 72), and Mrs. Joyner, "a Matchmaker, or precise City-Bawd" (p. 72). Sir Simon has arranged for a private room where not even the waiters may enter so that Lady Flippant can conceal her identity and preserve her reputation. Lady Flippant, affecting a false modesty, protests her aversion to marriage, while flirting with Ranger in a scene filled with sexual innuendo and double-entendre. For example, Lady Flippant complains that she does not know a man "that will not thrust a Woman up into a corner, and then talk an hour to her impertinently of marriage" (I, i, 85). Ranger replies that "you wou'd find me another man in a corner, I assure you, Madam, for you shou'd not have a word of marriage from me, whatsoever you might find in my actions of it; I hate talking as much as you" (I, i, 85). The conversation continues in this vein, concluding with a bawdy song sung by Lady Flippant.

Such a scene illustrates the dichotomy which exists between the superficial appearance of respectability and the inner corruption of the characters. They go through all the motions which custom and courtesy demand, mouthing appropriate sentiments, but as the conversation between Ranger and Lady Flippant illustrates, their speech is loaded with double-entendre and innuendo which clearly indicates their true thoughts and feelings. Their efforts to pretend to be virtuous are sporadic and generally unsuccessful since they constantly betray their hypocrisy by what they do and say. Lady Flippant tries to be coy and aloof as the demands of society upon widows and her own pride require, but her gross sensuality is obvious in her remarks and her behaviour. Ranger quickly recognizes her true nature, and proceeds to take advantage of his knowledge, in turn revealing his own depravity.
References to play-going also reveal the corruption which lies concealed within an ostensibly respectable activity. Both Ranger and Dapperwit discuss this practice and refer to the preoccupation of the audience at a play with fashion and intrigue. Lucy, a whore, welcomes an invitation to go to the theatre for the same reasons. To her play-going provides an opportunity "... where I might have had as good luck as others: I might have had good Cloaths, Plate, Jewels ..." (III, i, 105). As Lucy's remark shows, the characters in attending plays again use a conventional social pleasure to further their own selfish desires, and, as Love in a Wood progresses, the precise nature of these selfish desires becomes increasingly apparent.

These desires are a reflection of the inner natures of the characters, and reveal that basically their sole concern is the gratification of their lust for both sexual and non-sexual pleasures. Their non-sexual desires include a longing for wealth, for social advancement, and for revenge against those who have offended them. Such longings become reprehensible, because they are an obsession, an all-consuming passion, pursued without consideration for others and without regard for moral standards or principles.

The manner in which the corrupt characters go about trying to achieve the fulfillment of their longings clearly reveals their essentially bestial natures. As has already been stated, inasmuch as society demands that men at all times must conceal their true motives and natures, men must resort to hypocrisy, deceit, and evasion in their relationships with one another. Nowhere is this hypocrisy more apparent than in the relationship between Ranger and Lydia, his mistress. Initially, they deceive each other in going to the Park. Ranger has told Lydia that he will visit her later in the evening, in order to keep her at home and prevent her spoiling his sport. Lydia,
however, is suspicious and goes to the Park "to make a discovery ..." (II, i, 89). When Ranger catches sight of her in the Park and chases her, Lydia flees to Christina's house. She persuades Christina to tell Ranger that he was pursuing her and not Lydia. Later, Lydia and Ranger deny to each other that they have been in the Park. Ranger claims that business prevented him from keeping his appointment with Lydia. He conceals from Lydia the fact that he has fallen in love with Christina, not realizing that Lydia was concealed in Christina's house watching them. Lydia, in turn, deceives Ranger by sending him a letter signed in Christina's name, arranging a meeting and demanding "the giving of satisfaction to the injur'd Christina" (IV, i, 125).

This complicated relationship, based on mutual deception, is typical of the way in which the other characters betray and mislead each other. Dapperwit hoodwinks Sir Simon into bringing messages to him from Martha. At the same time, Dapperwit is fending off Lady Flippant and having an affair with Lucy. Lady Flippant pretends an aversion to marriage while chasing every man in sight. Martha deceives her father into thinking that she is not interested in Dapperwit, while pretending to be interested in Sir Simon. Alderman Gripe pretends to be a model of virtue, while arranging through Mrs. Joyner to meet Lucy. Lucy adores Dapperwit for the clothes he has given her and the places he has taken her. Yet she readily rejects him when her mother blackmails Gripe into proposing marriage between himself and Lucy. Gripe suggests the marriage in order to not have to pay the blackmail money, and in order to obtain a housekeeper at the least expense to replace Martha. In this web of hypocrisy and intrigue, only Christina remains virtuous. But even she must resort to disguise and seek out Ranger in the Park in order to clear her
reputation and satisfy the jealous suspicions of her fiancé, Valentine.

As we have seen, all the characters except Christina and Valentine deceive one another, in order to pursue their selfish aims which they must hide but which they must satisfy. Each individual sees marriage as the means of fulfilling his basic desires, whether these desires be for sexual satisfaction, wealth, revenge, or social advancement. Therefore, the individual's motivation in seeking marriage emerges as the central concern of the play. We will see that in revealing their motivation, the corrupt characters again, and more clearly and explicitly, reveal their inner corruption.

Each character may have more than one reason for seeking marriage, but all the reasons are basically the same - an overwhelming desire to fulfill his or her own selfish appetites and drives. Each character concerns himself solely with trying to achieve selfish pleasure, either of a sexual or non-sexual nature. The person with whom each of the corrupt characters seeks marriage is considered to be merely an object, a means to an end, as an examination of their motivation will demonstrate.

A desire for revenge motivates Alderman Gripe. He is self-righteously outraged with Martha, his daughter, for marrying without his knowledge. He is also outraged at the thought of paying blackmail to Mrs. Crossbite. Toward the conclusion of the play, he reveals his values and his motivation very clearly:

My Daughter, my Reputation, and my Money gone - but the last is dearest to me; yet at once I may retrieve that, and be reveng'd for the loss of the other; and all that by marrying Lucy here: I shall get my five hundred pound again, and get Heirs to exclude my Daughter, and frustrate Dapperwit; besides, 'tis agreed on all hands, 'tis cheaper keeping a Wife then a Wench. (V, i, 148)

A desire for revenge, also motivates Lady Flippant. She describes herself as the "revenger" (III, i, 117) of the female sex, and declares that the
chief pleasure which she receives from amorous intrigues is to "... wheedle, jilt, trace, discover, countermine, undermine, and blow up the stinking fellows ..." (II, i, 96). She also confesses that she admits a man to her conversation solely "for his punishment" (II, i, 96). Nevertheless, she decides to marry Sir Simon because of her need for money, and also, as she states, "lest I should be disappointed of my revenge ..." (II, i, 91). Lady Flippant directs her revenge against Sir Simon who has called her ugly and "as arrant a Jilt as ever pull'd pillow from under husband's head ..." (II, i, 91).

Even Vincent looks on marriage as a means of revenge. He warns Ranger that Lydia will "be even with you when you are married, I warrant you ..." (I, i, 81).

A desire for social advancement and respectability motivates both Martha and Lady Flippant. Martha's aim in marrying is to avoid the disgrace and social censure of having an illegitimate child. Lady Flippant also looks upon marriage as a means of avoiding the censure and raillery to which a widow is subjected. Marriage will provide a respectable cover under which Lady Flippant can continue to pursue her amorous inclinations with greater freedom.

More important, however, is the desire for greater financial security which impels Lady Flippant. She pretends to have money, the Widow's "chiefest Bait" (I, i, 74), when in reality, she is almost destitute and must rely upon her brother, Alderman Gripe, for food and shelter. She intensely dislikes her position of dependence in Gripe's household and complains that she has "... my Patches assaulted every day; at Dinner my Freedom sensured, and my Visitants shut out of Doors ..." (I, i, 75). In addition, Lady Flippant confesses to Mrs. Joyner: "... I have but three Months to reckon, e're I lye down with my Port and Equipage; and must be delivered of a Woman, a Footman and a Coach-man. For my Coach must down, unless I can get Sir Simon to
Sir Simon, like Lady Flippant, wants money above all other considerations. Ranger describes him early in the play as "that Spark who has his fruitless designs upon the bed-ridden rich Widow, down to the sucking Heiresses in her pissing cloute ..." (I, i, 82). Sir Simon himself equates the role of a husband with that of "a Culley" (I, i, 78), but is willing to accept such a degrading function as long as his wife has money. After he has lost Martha and her thirty thousand pounds, he pleads with Mrs. Joyner: "Do not let me lose the Widow too; for if you do, (betwixt friends) I and my small annuity are both blown up; it will follow my Estate" (V, i, 147). Sir Simon and Lady Flippant demonstrate that they richly deserve each other.

A desire for money also obsesses Dapperwit. When he tells his friends that he has married, they assume that Lucy must be his bride, since he has been bragging about her. Dapperwit, however, scoffs at such an idea: "What, do you think that I wou'd marry a Wench? I have marry'd an Heiress worth thirty thousand pound, let me perish" (V, i, 146). When he finds out that Martha is six months pregnant, he consoles himself with the thought that "... thirty thousand pound will make me amends; I have known my betters wink, and fall on for five or six" (V, i, 147). When Gripe outwits him by marrying Lucy, Dapperwit is forced to admit that his greed has lead to his ruin:

"I am undone then, ruin'd let me perish" (V, i, 149).

A desire for wealth, plus the prospect of social advancement motivates Lucy. Earlier in the play, Lucy gloats over the things that Dapperwit has given her. She delights in the thought that her "... Neighbours, the little Gentlemens Wives, of fifteen hundred, or Two thousand pound a year, should have retir'd into the Country, sick with envy, of my prosperity and greatness"
Lucy readily switches her affection to Gripe once Mrs. Joyner and her mother have persuaded her that Gripe will provide her with even greater luxuries and treats with which to dazzle her acquaintances.

Marriage is a highly lucrative business enterprise to Mrs. Joyner. In the world of the play, the arrangement of marriage requires the services of a professional go-between. Such a necessity is brought about by the fact that marriage is a very hypocritical, but nevertheless convenient relationship, based primarily upon financial considerations. Since affection plays an insignificant role in the choice of a marriage partner, there is a need for a person who has extensive contacts and can arrange the most financially advantageous match. Mrs. Joyner is aware of this need and fills the role of matchmaker, motivated by her own desire for wealth. Gripe, Sir Simon, and Lady Flippant are her clients. Although Lady Flippant accuses Mrs. Joyner of being a cheat in the opening scene, Lady Flippant must nevertheless rely upon Mrs. Joyner's help and connections. Gripe must also rely upon Mrs. Joyner to arrange a meeting with Lucy. At the meeting, she wheedles money out of him for treats, then leaves Gripe alone with Lucy to be exposed to blackmail. Mrs. Joyner is also involved with Sir Simon. She has accepted twenty guineas from him as payment for obtaining employment for him, disguised as a clerk, in Gripe's house. Sir Simon promises her another one hundred guineas if she gains him admission to Martha's quarters. If this plan doesn't succeed, Sir Simon is prepared to pay her fifty guineas if she can obtain access to Lady Flippant's rooms for him.

As can be seen, money is Mrs. Joyner's sole concern. She never considers whether a prospective match will likely be a successful one, but only whether she will profit from arranging it. Her clients are aware of her motivation.
They dislike and distrust her, but they must use her to further their own hypocritical schemes. At the end of the play, Mrs. Joyner concludes that, "... like the Lawyers, while my Clients endeavour to cheat one another; I in justice cheat 'em both" (V, i, 147). Mrs. Joyner is a parasite who preys on the other parasites and considers herself justified in so doing. Such a woman is necessary in the world of the play where the characters must resort to subterfuge and deception to achieve their selfish goals. Mrs. Joyner touches on the lives of most of the characters in the play, taking advantage of their greed and weaknesses in order to satisfy her own avaricious desire for money.

Marriage, besides being a means of revenge, is also a form of legalized prostitution to Alderman Gripe. Most of his remarks in relation to Lucy contain references to food. Upon arriving at the Crossbites, he declares: "Peace, Plenty and Pastime be within these Walls" (III, i, 111). He goes on to assure Mrs. Joyner that he is not "dainty" (III, i, 111) about his surroundings as long as they are private. When Mrs. Joyner tries to persuade him to buy treats and entertainments for Lucy, he maintains that "there can be no entertainment to me, more Luscious and Savoury, than the communion with that little Gentlewoman ... I fast till I see her" (III, i, 111, 112). He also talks of Mrs. Joyner starving his eyes in not producing Lucy. His main concern is satisfying his lust at the least cost to himself and without ruining his reputation. In the end, he marries in order to revenge himself on Dapperwit and Martha, replace Martha with Lucy as his housekeeper, and avoid blackmail. By so doing, Alderman Gripe reveals himself as one of the greatest hypocrites in the play. He goes about uttering religious sentiments, criticizing Lady Flippant's behaviour, restricting Martha's activities, and cheating those who
borrow from him. While he is self-righteously condemning the actions of the other characters, however, he is proving to be even more despicable than they.

An all-consuming sexual desire also motivates Ranger. To him, love is a sport, a game, or a chase. He enthusiastically welcomes "this new fashion'd catterwouling, this midnight coursing in the Park" (II, i, 87). He confesses to Vincent that "intending a Ramble to St. James's Park to night, upon some probable hopes of some fresh Game I have in Chase, I appointed her [Lydia] to stay at home ... that she might not foil the scent and prevent my sport" (I, i, 81). Women to him are "poor credulous Creatures, easily deceived" (I, i, 81). Ranger freely admits that he makes "... honourable Love, meerly out of necessity; as your Rooks play on the square, rather then not play at all" (IV, i, 124). In the end, after Christina rejects him, he returns to Lydia, excusing his conduct as being due to his "natural inconstancy" (V, i, 145). He confesses that his only reason for marrying is because his intrigues have been unsuccessful and, therefore, "... why shou'd we be so fond of the by-paths of Love?where we are still way-lay'd, with Surprizes, Trapans, Dangers, and Murdering dis-appointments ..." (IV, i, 134). Like the others, self-interest motivates Ranger, only his is sexual rather than mercenary.

At the end of the play, Ranger utters a paradoxical concluding couplet: "The end of Marriage, now is liberty, / And two are bound -- to set each other free" (V, i, 149). Does Ranger see marriage as freeing himself from the necessity to engage in affairs and intrigue, or does he see it as a convenient means of satisfying his sexual appetites, while at the same time providing him with a respectable cloak under which he can continue to engage in his favourite sport? In view of the fact that he is a liar and a braggart, and in
view of the fact that he regards sex as a game or sport, it seems unlikely that he will look upon his marriage as a permanent union based on fidelity, affection and respect. Rather, we are led to imagine that he will use marriage as a convenience and will quickly revert to his rambling in the Park "upon some probable hopes of some fresh Game..." (I, i, 81).

An insatiable sexual appetite and a need to acquire the social respectability of marriage motivate Lydia. One sees in her a younger version of Lady Flippant with whom she frequents the Park. Although she realizes that Ranger is "false", she is nevertheless willing to be his second choice for a wife. Her closing speech is a revealing one. In it she asks Ranger: "But if I cou'd be desperate now, and give you up my liberty, cou'd you find in your heart to quit all other engagements, and voluntarily turn your self over to one woman, and she a Wife too? cou'd you away with [endure] the insupportable bondage of Matrimony?" (V, i, 149). In reply, Ranger chides her with talking of matrimony "as irreverently, as my Lady Flippant..." (V, i, 149). From these quotations we can see that Lydia looks upon marriage as a form of servitude, involving loss of freedom, but necessary for social and sexual reasons.

A voracious sexual appetite also possesses Lady Flippant. She openly flirts with Ranger in Sir Simon's presence. Later, she shamelessly throws herself at Jonas, her brother's clerk, not realizing that he is Sir Simon in disguise. She deplores the use of drink because it decreases sexual desire: "... Oh drink, abominable drink! Instead of inflaming Love, it quenches it, and for one Lover it incourages, it makes a thousand impotent" (II, i, 90). In the Park, she separates from Lydia, pretending to be frightened
of the men who appear. In reality, she wants to be alone because "... for all their brags, men have hardly courage to set upon us, when our number is equal; now they shall see I defie 'em: for we women have always most courage when we are alone; but a Pox - the lazie Rogues come not, or they are Drunk and cannot run..." (II, i, 89, 90). The following night, Lady Flippant again bemoans the lack of pursuers: "Unfortunate Lady, that I am! I have left the Herd on purpose to be chas'd, and have wandred this hour here; but the Park affords not so much as a Satyr for me, (and that's strange) no Burgundy Man, or drunken Scourer will reel my way; the Rag-Women, and Synder-Women, have better luck then I..." (V, i, 138). No passage more clearly reveals Lady Flippant's true nature. She needs the respectability and financial security of marriage, but above all, she needs to satisfy her overwhelming sexual drive.

All the characters then, with the exception of Valentine and Christina, are not what they appear to be. They wish to appear as wealthy, attractive, generous, respectable, modest, sincere, pious, or witty individuals, motivated by the best intentions, when in reality, they are greedy, 'self-seeking, hypocritical, and lascivious. The appetites, desires, and motives which drive them allow for no consideration of anyone other than themselves. To achieve their ends, they exploit one another, without compunction, resorting to cheating, lieing, and blackmail. In addition, they exhibit little or no real affection for the individual whom they do hope to marry. In so doing, they completely reject the traditional Christian view of marriage as a union based on spiritual as well as material considerations.

Only Valentine and Christina adhere to the traditional Christian view of
marriage as a union based on mutual love, respect, and trust. Yet even they cannot escape the web of hypocrisy and deceit created by the other characters. Christina, in her innocence, agrees to help Lydia and thereby finds herself forced to prove her fidelity to Valentine. She must resort to the methods of the other characters to vindicate her love. Specifically, like them, she must resort to St. James Park under cover of darkness. The subtitle of the play, St. James's Park, emphasizes the dominant position which the Park occupies in the play. Pepys in his Diary describes the Park as "... a very silly place... and but little company, and those a rascally, whoring, roguing sort of people, only a wilderness here, that is somewhat pretty, but rude." Rochester is even more condemning. In his poem, "A Ramble in St. James's Park", he provides a vivid picture of the function of the Park and of its nocturnal visitors:

Unto this all-sin-sheltring Grove,
Whores of the Bulk, and the Alcove.
Great Ladies Chamber-Maids, Drudges;
The Ragpicker, and Heiresse trudges:
Carr-Men, Divines, great Lords, and Taylors,
Prentices, Pimps, Poets and Gaolers;
Foot-men, fine Fops, do here arrive,
And here promiscuously they wive.

In the world of the play, the Park at night affords the corrupt characters a means of escape from the demands and inhibitions of society and the necessity of maintaining their reputation and appearance. As Christina observes the night "blots out all distinctions ..." (II, i, 97). To the corrupt characters, the blotting out of all distinctions in the Park is a welcome occurrence. As Lady Flippant is aware, "Joan's as good as my Lady

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43 The Diary of Samuel Pepys, ed. Henry B. Wheatley (London: George Bell and Sons, 1905), VIII, 22.

in the dark ..." (II, i, 90). She can compete, therefore, on equal terms
with "Rag-Women, and Synder-Women" (V, i, 138). When someone appears with a
lantern which threatens to expose her, she angrily demands: "What unmannerly
Rascals are those that bring light into the Park? 'twill not be taken well
from 'em by the women certainly ..." (II, i, 91). Moreover, Mrs. Joyner can
assure Alderman Gripe that "... there are as grave men, as your Worship; nay,
men in office too, that adjourn their cares, and businesses, to come and un­
bend themselves at night here, with a little Vizard mask" (V, i, 137). Night
and the protection of the park provide "the time and place for freedom ..."
(II, i, 90). They erase distinctions of class, age, appearance, and status.
In the Park, therefore, masks of hypocrisy disappear to fully uncover the
ugliness of human nature.

Each of the characters sees night and the Park as providing an opportu­
ity for the fulfillment of his needs and desires. Vincent delights in the
thought that he can appear at night in the Park "with his three Bottles in
his head, [and] reel himself sober, without reproof from his Mother, Aunt, or
grave relation" (II, i, 87). He even confesses that " ... I think I dare
speak to a woman in the Dark ..." (II, i, 89). Ranger too welcomes "this
new fashion'd catterwouling, this midnight coursing in the Park" (II, i, 87).
He regards the night as a "blessed season" (II, i, 88) for lovers, because
"... now no woman's modest, or proud, for her blushes are hid ..." (II, i, 88).
As a result, a man "may bring his bashful Wench, and not have her put out of
Countenance by the impudent honest women of the Town" (II, i, 87). Also in
the Park, he and his companions may "do the duty of this [St. James' Park]
and such other places, walk, censure, and speak ill of all we meet ..."
(II, i, 88).
The Park and the night also aid Lydia and Lady Flippant in their amorous pursuits. They can abandon any pretense of modesty and decorum, and openly search for a lover. Lydia is aware that in the Park, "there does not pass a night ... but many a match is made" (II, i, 89). But she also comes to realize that the darkness and the Park provide an opportunity for deception and misunderstanding. Lady Flippant is even more eager than Lydia to explore the possibilities of intrigue within the confines of the Park. The night hides her age and ugliness. In addition, she need no longer pretend an aversion to men and marriage. Nor does she have to worry about the status or condition of the men who frequent the park. She would willingly settle for a "Burgundy Man, or drunken Scourer" (V, i, 138), if no better prospect appears.

Alderman Gripe also loses his inhibitions under cover of darkness. He willingly accompanies Lucy to the park, reassuring himself that he "can conform to this mode of publick walking by Moon-light, because one is not known" (V, i, 136). In addition, as he informs Lucy, "... in the dark ... there is no envy, no scandal; I would neither lose you, nor my reputation" (V, i, 136). Darkness and the park serve as a means of release from the false image which Alderman Gripe has created of himself in the community, and which now threatens to hinder his lecherous designs.

Dapperwit, too, finds the darkness in the Park to his advantage, for now "... a man of wit may have the better of the dumb shew, of well trim'd Vest, or fair Peruque; no man's now is whitest" (II, i, 88). He further maintains that "... now the brisk reparty ruins the complaisant Cringe, or wise Grimace; something 'twas, we Men of virtue always lov'd the night" (II, i, 88). He also sees the night as a beneficial time "for the Muses" (II, i, 88). To
Dapperwit who prides himself on his wit, rather than on his appearance, the night presents an opportunity to cut a better figure than he normally does.

Such an advantage also occurs to Vincent. He is relieved that, under cover of darkness and in the park, "... no observing spruce Fop will ... count the pimples on ones face" (II, i, 88). He also observes that one cannot distinguish "a Friend from a Fop" (II, i, 88).

Such an inability to distinguish identities, allows the characters to display their true natures and motives. They drop their hypocritical posturings and reveal what concerns them most. Each dwells in some form of darkness, in that he or she is driven by some uncontrollable destructive passion or motive which the night and the park serve to uncover or accentuate.

"Natural inconstancy" (V, i, 145) controls Ranger, jealousy obsesses Valentine, lechery and miserliness dominate Alderman Gripe, a rapacious sexual appetite controls Lady Flippant, shyness inhibits Vincent, vanity impels Dapperwit, and distrust of Ranger preoccupies Lydia.

For Christina, the Park has a different function. She enters the Park to resolve Valentine's doubts and jealousy. The darkness and the Park do not serve to uncover any depravity within her. Even when she hides her identity and is free from the possibility of censure for her actions, Christina remains constant. She concerns herself solely with trying to dispel Valentine's jealousy, so that they may be reconciled. Just as the Park fully reveals the corruption of the other characters, it also confirms our impression of Christina's virtue and integrity.

Night and the Park thus serve the dual function of providing for the complications and reconciliations of the plot. But the final reconciliation is temporary and superficial for the corrupt characters. One sees them
quickly reverting to their midnight ramblings in search of new amorous adventures. As Ranger tells Lydia: "... let us e'en marry to morrow, that I may have my turn of watching, doging, standing under the window at the dore, behind the hanging ..." (V, i, 149). Suspicion, distrust, and deceit are necessary and inevitable in a world where hypocrisy dominates the relationships between individuals. These individuals will never satisfy their aspirations or longings because they are based on selfishness and greed. Because the corruption and hypocrisy of the other characters force Christina into a situation in which she must prove her fidelity to Valentine, night and the Park provide her with such an opportunity. In proving her fidelity, Christina demonstrates that only she is as virtuous as she appears. Darkness and the Park do not uncover any hidden depravity within her. Instead, she emerges as an example of the best in human nature, an example however, which the corrupt characters either ignore or exploit.

At the end of the play, love remains "in a wood", a colloquial expression meaning perplexed or confused. Only Christina and Valentine understand the true nature of love and marriage. Because of their awareness, their relationship emerges as the ideal one in the play. Marriage, which the other characters see as a solution to their ambitions and appetites, will only constitute for them another necessity for being hypocritical. The world of Love in a Wood emerges as one in which ugliness and corruption thrive beneath a gay, urbane exterior. This gay exterior explains why the play was such an immediate success. On the surface, the play contains all the elements necessary to attract a Restoration audience: love, intrigue, disguise, mistaken identity, witty exchanges, and comical characters and situations. Beneath this surface, the play presents an image of evil as the characters, under
cover of darkness, drop their masks of respectability to clearly reveal the ugliness of their natures. In the end, there exists only the example of Christina and Valentine to show what man can and should be. Wycherley sets this admirable example in a world where appearance belies reality, a world peopled by monsters of depravity.
In *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*, Wycherley again concerns himself with the examination of appearance and reality in human nature. Like *Love in a Wood*, the world of *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* is outwardly gay and materialistic, devoted to the pursuit of pleasure. But, whereas in *Love in a Wood*, the interests and activities of the characters conceal their selfish aims and inner depravity, in *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*, the characters reveal that they are essentially empty, hollow creatures, devoid of sincerity and sense, or else are obsessed by a depraved sexuality. To hide their vacuous, licentious natures, the characters in the play resort to foolish affectations and vanities. As a result, they emerge as foolish, stupid, inane beings, rather than as evil, vicious, and depraved. As in *Love in a Wood*, one couple emerge as an ideal of virtue and sincerity, but the corrupt characters threaten their relationship and force them to use deception in their efforts to court and marry. As in *Love in a Wood*, the corrupt characters try to conceal their real natures, but they do so by resorting to affectation rather than to lying, cheating, and duplicity. Their affectations and vanities in turn affect their ability to understand to communicate with one another. Nowhere is this more apparent than in their attitudes toward marriage. As in *Love in a Wood*, in revealing their attitudes toward marriage, the characters most fully reveal their true natures. Because the characters are not as depraved as those in *Love in a Wood*, the play does not contain a Park where the characters completely expose their true natures and motivations. In other words, *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* emerges as a fairly typical comedy in which love eventually overcomes all obstacles. As such, it lacks the complexity and intensity of *Love in a Wood*, and lacking these, the play also
lacks the impact and depth of Wycherley's first effort.

The opening scene demonstrates that the citizens of the world of The Gentleman Dancing-Master have interests and values similar to those in Love in a Wood. When the curtain rises, Hippolita, the heroine, and Prue, her maid, are discussing the pleasures which the town affords. These pleasures include attending plays, puppet shows, and spectacles; rambling in the Park and Mulberry Garden; visiting "Tatnam-Court and Islington," ["long two very favourite places of resort," p.: 257] ; eating "Sillybub in new Spring-garden" (I, i, 157); hearing "a Fiddle in good Company ..." (I, i, 157); listening to "Organs and Tongs at the Gun [a well-known tavern] in Moorfields ..." (I, i, 157); or attending church to see and be seen by all the gentlemen of the town. But Hippolita is unable to explore or enjoy the pleasures of the town until she has freed herself from the restrictive domination of her father, Don Diego; her fiancé, Monsieur de Parris; and her aunt, Mrs. Caution. All three of these individuals possess some affectation which prevents them from understanding Hippolita, or sympathizing with her desire for freedom and the opportunity to marry a man of her own choice.

Don Diego's affectation is an obsession with the manners and customs of Spain. Aspiring to be "a Spaniard in every thing" (II, i, 173), he apes Spanish customs, dress, and speech. He swears by his "Whiskers and Snuff-box" (III, i, 191), an oath a Spaniard never breaks; he praises punctuality because it is a Spanish habit; he refuses to let Hippolita learn to write, because of his "Spanish prudence" (I, i, 159); he refuses to believe that anyone could cheat him because of his "Spanish Care, Circumspection, and Prudence ..." (III, i, 198); he will not lose his temper because patience is a "Spanish Vertue" (III, i, 198); and above all, he insists on keeping Hippolita locked
up to preserve her chastity, because he regards such confinement as a Spanish custom.

But Don Diego becomes "more than a Spaniard" (III, i, 188), as Hippolita observes. His behaviour runs to such extremes that Hippolita is afraid that he might kill her "as the shame and stain of his Honour and Family ..." (III, i, 187), if he finds out that Gerard is a suitor, not a dancing master. Don Diego's obsession with Spanish habits is all powerful. In one of the most farcical scenes in the play, Don Diego tells Parris that he must discard his "French Fopperies" (III, i, 191) and wear Spanish clothes, or he will not permit the marriage to take place. On another occasion, he assures Mrs. Caution that "... in Spain, he is wise enough that is grave; politick enough, that says little; and honourable enough that is jealous; and though I say it, that shou'd not say it, I am as grave, grum and jealous, as any Spaniard breathing" (II, i, 173).

Affecting the manners and customs of another country is a harmless pastime, if such an affectation is not carried to extreme lengths. As we have seen, however, Don Diego does go to excessive lengths. His affectation comes to dominate and distort his thinking and judgment. In addition, he tries to force his misguided ideas upon his daughter. By so doing, he alienates her, forcing her to resort to trickery and deceit to free herself from his unreasonable restraints and demands.

As we have seen also, Don Diego, by allowing his affectation to become an obsession, reveals his true nature. He emerges a silly, hollow, vain, pathetic creature, whose pompous exterior fails to conceal the essential emptiness and absurdity of his nature.

Monsieur de Parris is equally ridiculous in his affectation of French
dress, language, manners, and customs. Like Don Diego, he adopts only the superficial characteristics without displaying any true understanding of the country whose inhabitants he tries to imitate. Like Don Diego he goes to extremes. Don Diego when he first sees Parris bemoans: "Well! He is a lost young Man, I see, and desperately far gone in the Epidemick Malady of our Nation, the affectation of the worst of French Vanities ..." (III, i, 190), not realizing that he is guilty of the same excess in relation to Spanish customs. Gerard also jibes at Parris: "... but Monsieur, now give me leave to admire thee, that in three months at Paris you could renounce your Language, Drinking, and your Country ... and come home so perfect a French-man, that the Drey-men of your Fathers own Brew-house wou'd be ready to knock thee in the head" (I, i, 166). Gerard also advises Parris that in order to be a perfect Frenchman."... you must never be silent, never sit still and never be clean" (I, i, 167). Parris eagerly agrees to fulfill all these qualifications.

Early in the play, therefore, Parris exposes himself as a perfect fool, rather than a perfect Frenchman. Hippolita dupes him into having Gerard come and see her, then further dupes him into keeping her father and Mrs. Caution out of the room while Gerard is with her. Parris also is enticed by Mrs. Flounce and Mrs. Flirt, two whores, into treating them to dinner. He agrees to spend the night with Mrs. Flirt when she confesses that she feels for him "an extreme passion, dear Sir, you are so French, so mightily French, so agreeable French ..." (I, i, 172). At the end of the play Mrs. Flirt threatens to expose Parris unless he promises to keep her upon certain specified conditions as to maintenance, equipage, accommodation, servants, and visitors. Parris agrees to the arrangement upon reflecting that while marriage is cheaper, keeping is a more honourable institution. Parris cannot open his mouth with-
out deepening the impression that he is a supercilious, vapid, affected fop whose thinking and feeling is guided by a superficial set of values, and who, like Don Diego, is basically an empty, shallow creature.

Mrs. Caution is also guilty of affectation. She affects a prudishness which masks a lewd and suspicious nature. In her pretended prudishness, Mrs. Caution affects an excessive concern for Hippolita's virtue. She prides herself on being the guardian of Hippolita's reputation, although Hippolita points out that, since being confined, she has had more wicked thoughts than ever in her life. Mrs. Caution assures her however, that "... that's no hurt; to think is no hurt ..." (I, i, 162). Outward purity and respectability are all that concern Mrs. Caution. She goes on to bemoan "the fatal Liberty of this masquerading Age ..." (I, i, 163), and talks of how much more modest young women were when she was young, without realizing that she herself is masquerading as a prude.

Mrs. Caution's excessive concern with her niece's morals and behaviour only serves to emphasize her own prurient nature. Beneath the exterior prudishness, an insatiable sexual appetite obsesses Mrs. Caution, to the point that she confesses having erotic dreams, "waggishly call'd the Widows Comfort" (I, i, 165).

Her own nature in turn makes her suspicious of others. For example, Mrs. Caution immediately suspects that Gerard is not a dancing master. She and Don Diego quarrel over who is to ask Gerard questions, each answering those put by the other. Mrs. Caution finally orders her brother to "... let an old Woman make discoveries, the young Fellows cannot cheat us in any thing ... because you know the Mother found her Daughter in the Oven ..." (II, i, 180). While Hippolita and Gerard are dancing, Mrs. Caution is watching avidly,
bewailing the fact that Gerard is touching Hippolita. She refuses to leave the room till forced out, insisting that "I will not go out, I will not go out, my Conscience will not suffer me, for I know by experience what will follow" (III, i, 195). Don Diego becomes so incensed with her carping that he berates her: "Come leave your sensorious prating, thou has been a false right Woman [whore] thy self in thy Youth, I warrant you" (III, i, 197). Mrs. Caution hotly denies the accusation, but continues to attach the worst possible meaning to every remark and every action. She interprets everything in sexual terms. She is driven to a frenzy by the sight of Hippolita and Gerard holding hands and smiling and whispering to each other. She is, of course, correct in her suspicion that Gerard is not a dancing master, and that he is interested in Hippolita, but it never occurs to her that his intentions may be honourable. Nor does it occur to her that she is, by keeping Hippolita locked up, at least partly responsible for the situation. Throughout the play, Mrs. Caution proves to be a cantankerous, evil-minded, lecherous widow whose affectation of prudery fools no one but herself. In reality, like Don Diego and Parris, she emerges as a pathetic, absurd creature whose affectation of prudishness fails to conceal an unfulfilled sensual nature.

Because of the affectations which obsess them, Don Diego, Parris, and Mrs. Caution are incapable of understanding Hippolita, or sympathizing with her longings for freedom and for love.

Hippolita returned from school over a year ago and has since that time been confined to her home under the care of Mrs. Caution. She has not been permitted even to attend church for fear of seeing a man. Only Monsieur de Parris is permitted to visit her, since her father has decided that he will make a suitable husband. This excessive strictness has caused Hippolita to
become rebellious. Her opening remark is directed against her guardians' unreasonable treatment: "To confine a Woman just in her rambling Age! take away her liberty at the very time she shou'd use it! 0 barbarous Aunt! 0 unnatural Father; to shut up a poor Girl at fourteen, and hinder her budding; all things are ripen'd by the Sun; to shut up a poor Girl at fourteen!—" (I, i, 157). Her mood is heightened by the fact that she considers Parris "an ill contriv'd ugly Frekeish-fool" (I, i, 158). In addition, he is her father's choice, and therefore to be disliked, "for Fathers seldom chuse well ..." (I, i, 158). Don Diego, who is influenced by Spanish custom, and Mrs. Caution, who affects prudishness to hide a lascivious nature, have one main concern—to preserve Hippolita's chastity. They are not interested in her feelings toward Parris, nor his toward her.

As a result, throughout the play, Hippolita is forced to use trickery to escape from the proposed marriage to Parris. In order to do so, she feigns an innocence which she doesn't possess, then proceeds to manipulate the others, using a great deal of skill and ingenuity in her fight for her freedom and the right to marry the man she loves. Initially, Hippolita evolves the scheme by which Gerard first visits her. During this first visit, she skillfully gives Gerard the idea of eloping with her. She then tells him that she is independently wealthy, then accuses him of wanting to marry her for her money. She also tells Gerard that a fortune teller has told her that she will be carried off by a man who resembles Gerard. Hippolita describes herself as a "home-bred-simple Girl" (II, i, 174). She finds that she likes Gerard to the extent that ". . . 'tis harder playing the Hypocrite with him, I see, than with my Aunt or Father; and if dissimulation were not very natural to a Woman, I'm sure I cou'd not use it at this time; but the mask of simplicity
and innocency is as useful to an intriguing Woman, as the mask of Religion to a Statesman, they say" (II, i, 174). Gerard, however, does not see through her artifice, but is overwhelmed by her bashfulness, innocence, and modesty. He announces to her: "My Soul, my Life, 'tis you have Charms powerful as numberless, especially those of your innocency irresistible, and do surprise the wary'st Heart ..." (II, i, 177), to which passionate outburst, Hippolita replies: "Well, well, get you gone ..." (II, i, 177).

When Don Diego and Mrs. Caution burst in upon them, Hippolita calmly ignores her father's rage, and announces that Gerard is a dancing master sent by Parris. Gerard is astonished at Hippolita's aplomb in carrying off the dancing lesson, especially in view of the fact that he can't dance. He is convinced that "so much Wit and Innocency were never together before" (II, i, 178). When Hippolita persuades Don Diego to leave the room so that the lesson can continue, Gerard renews his pleas that Hippolita leave with him. She demurs, however, making up several weak excuses to justify her sudden reluctance: her father will overtake them; Gerard will carry her off to the country "which is as bad as to Barbadoes" (II, i, 183); she hasn't had enough time to get to know Gerard.

Upon their second meeting, Hippolita again feigns modesty. She tells Gerard that if she is "such a confident Piece, I am sure you made me so ..." (III, i, 195). Gerard reassures her that what would appear confidence or impudence in an older woman, is a sign of innocence in one of her age. He goes on to tell her that he has made arrangements for a coach and six to take them away. Hippolita is overwhelmed with delight and readily agrees to go: "What young Woman of the Town cou'd ever say no to a Coach and Six, unless it were going into the Country: a Coach and Six, 'tis not in the power of
fourteen years old to resist it" (III, i, 196).

At their third meeting, however, Hippolita shows every sign of resisting the Coach and Six. She has decided that it goes against her conscience to run away. Besides, "'tis too late to take the Air, and I am not ready" (IV, i, 210). She goes on to tell Gerard that she wasn't being serious when she had agreed to go with him previously. She is no longer "in the humour" (IV, i, 210) to run away. She also tells Gerard that she was only pretending to be innocent: "... you saw I cou'd dissemble with my Father, why shou'd you think I cou'd not with you? (IV, i, 211). She also tells Gerard that she was lying to him about being an heiress. Gerard decides to carry her away regardless, but is interrupted by Don Diego and Mrs. Caution. Hippolita persuades Gerard to carry on the deception, although he feels that she is making a fool of him. He agrees to return the next day for another lesson, although he has concluded that "next to the Devil's the Invention of Woman, they'll no more want an excuse to cheat a Father with, than an opportunity to abuse a Husband" (IV, i, 214).

The following day Hippolita reverses her decision. She informs Gerard that because he is "quarrelsom and melancholy, and wou'd have taken me away without a Portion, three infallible signs of a true Lover, faith here's my hand now in earnest, to lead me a Dance as long as I live" (V, i, 220). In reply to Gerard's question of whether she will change her mind, Hippolita replies that "the time last night was not proper for us as now, for reasons I will give you; but besides that, I confess, I had a mind to try whether ... the twelve hundred pounds a year I told you of, had not made a greater impression in your heart than Hippolita ..." (V, i, 221).

As we have seen, Hippolita deceives Gerard, as well as her father, aunt,
and fiancé. Her confinement forces her to do so. Since she cannot meet men other than Parris, she knows of Gerard only through his reputation as a "fine Gentleman" (I, i, 159). She must, therefore, make sure of her own feelings for him, and of his for her, before she can discard her affectation of innocence and deceit, and reveal her true feelings and nature.

Whereas Hippolita consciously assumes her affectation and can discard it when she has achieved her goal, the affectations of Don Diego, Mrs. Caution, and M. de Parris have come to completely dominate their attitudes and behaviour. Nowhere is this more apparent than in their attitudes toward marriage. In revealing these attitudes, they further reveal the pettiness and shallowness of their real natures.

To Don Diego, arranging the marriage of his daughter marks the end of his duty as a father, since he sees his main paternal duty as being the preservation of Hippolita's chastity. Even when Mrs. Caution tells him that Hippolita hates Parris, Don Diego replies: "I tell you, if she does hate him, 'tis a sign she will have him for her Husband; for 'tis not one in a thousand that marries the man she loves, look you. Besides, 'tis all one whether she loves him now or not; for as soon as she's marry'd, she'd be sure to hate him; that's the reason we wise Spaniards are jealous and only expecte, nay will be sure our Wives shall fear us, look you" (IV, i, 201).

Mrs. Caution, like Lady Flippant, sees marriage solely as a means to satisfy sexual appetite. She tells Hippolita and Gerard at the end of the play: "Nay Young-man, you have dance'd a fair Dance for your self royally, and now you may go jig it together till you are both weary; and though you were so eager to have him, Mrs. Minx, you'll soon have your belly-full of him, let me tell you, Mistress" (V, i, 231). As part of her affected prudishness,
she also rails against "... the fatal liberty of this masquerading Age" (I, i, 163) which she feels leads to a high rate of illegitimacy, without realizing that her own nature causes her to see proper events in the worst possible light.

Parris too has a debased view of marriage. When Hippolita rejects him, he decides to enter into a keeping arrangement with Mrs. Flirt. He is relieved that he has escaped marriage with Hippolita, and the necessity of wearing Spanish clothes. He consoles himself with the thought: "I'm sure my French Policy wou'd not have govern'd her; so, since I have scap'd her, I am glad I have scap'd her, Jernie" (I, i, 230). Parris has come to see that love degrades a man: "It do metamorphose de brave Man into de Beast, de Sotte, de Animal" (IV, i, 199). Moreover, "Love, dam Love, it make the man more ridicule, than Poverty, Poetry, or a new Title of Honeur, Jernie" (IV, i, 199). Parris concludes that "women are made on purpose to fool men ..." (IV, i, 217), and that "... Love is a disease makes people as malicious as the Plague does" (IV, i, 218). Because of his affected nature, Parris is incapable of true love, and therefore rejects it as degrading.

Contrasted to the attitudes of Don Diego, Mrs. Caution, and Parris are those of Gerard and Hippolita. Gerard looks upon marriage as a union based on love. He is, in effect, a romantic hero who falls in love at first sight. He exhibits all the characteristics of a typical lover, determined to marry his beloved in spite of all obstacles. He tells Hippolita: "With you I can want nothing, nor can be made by any thing more rich or happy" (V, i, 221).

To Hippolita, marriage initially is a means of escape from confinement and the oppression of her father and the attentions of Parris. She reflects
that

Our Parents who restrain our liberty,
But take the course to make us sooner free,
Though all we gain be but new slavery;
We leave our Fathers, and to Husbands fly. (II, i, 185)

As far as she is concerned any man other than Parris would be welcome, "though he were but a little handsomer than the Devil, so that he were a Gentleman" (I, i, 158). Later, she teases Gerard, telling him that "... you men are like our little Shock-dogs, if we don't keep you off from us, but use you a little kindly, you grow so sidling, and so troublesom, there is no enduring you" (II, i, 176). After taunting Gerard, Hippolita decides that "... all this fooling but loses time, I must make better use of it" (II, i, 176). She then proceeds to put the idea of running away into Gerard's head. But, in addition to seeing marriage as an escape, Hippolita also sees marriage as a union based on love. Just prior to their marriage, she urges Gerard to come to an understanding with regard to jealousy "that we may long be Friends ..." (V, i, 220). And in the final couplet she concludes: "When Children Marry, Parents shou'd obey, / Since Love claims more Obedience far than they" (V, i, 231). Having achieved her goal, Hippolita can discard her affectation, display her true feelings, and enter into a happy stable marriage.

As the above paragraph demonstrates, the relationship of Hippolita and Gerard is not a static one, like that of Christina and Valentine. Hippolita and Gerard meet for the first time only after the play begins. As the play progresses, so does their feeling for one another, particularly Hippolita's feeling for Gerard. She initially sees Gerard, as she tells herself, as "the only opportunity thou canst have to enfranchise thy self" (II, i, 175). She comes to realize, however, that marriage to the wrong person would not improve
her situation. Instead, such a marriage would be "but new slavery" (II, i, 185). She, therefore, hesitates, testing and teasing Gerard in order to be sure of his love and fidelity.

At the same time, she is testing her own feelings toward Gerard and her attitude toward marriage. Because of the development in her character and in her concept of marriage, Hippolita emerges as a more complex figure than Christina or Fidelia. She is not, however, as astute or sensible as Eliza or Alithea. At one moment she is a child, thrilled at the prospect of a Coach and Six; at the next, a coquette, flirting with Gerard; and then a tease, making fun of Parris. She is immature, impetuous, hesitant, and coy in one situation, then bold, decisive, and calculating in another. Ultimately, when sure of her own and Gerard's love, she can repudiate the scheming and manipulating which are not an integral part of her nature, but are necessitated by her position. Like Christina, Hippolita must resort to underhand practices to achieve her goal. When she has succeeded, she reverts to her true nature, which is essentially virtuous.

Because of the nature of the world in which they dwell, the virtuous characters find themselves in the position of having to stoop to methods which are foreign to their natures. Their world is one in which corruption and depravity abound, but Wycherley does not advocate that they withdraw from society. Instead, he presents certain characters who can enjoy the stimulation and pleasure which society affords, while avoiding its sordid aspects. These characters are basically incorruptible because of their inner integrity. Just as the corrupt characters reveal their concealed natures as the play develops, so do the virtuous ones. They emerge as an ideal within the fallen world of the play, but an ideal which is weak and ineffectual in the face of
an overwhelming preponderance of evil. In *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*, as we have shown, the evil is of a less serious nature than in the other plays. In addition, the developing relationship between Gerard and Hippolita constitutes the central action of the play, unlike that of Christina and Valentine which is peripheral. Moreover, in the end, there is a token reconciliation between the newly married couple and Don Diego, Mrs. Caution, and Parris. Don Diego reconciles himself, however, only in order to not appear a fool and a dupe. Mrs. Caution obviously sees the union as one based solely on lust. Parris decides that keeping is "more Honourable" (V, i, 228) than marriage, and enters into an arrangement with a prostitute. The ideal, therefore, which Hippolita and Gerard represent, fails to influence or improve any of the other characters who are incapable, because of their own weaknesses, of benefiting from the example of Hippolita and Gerard. These other characters disclose that their pompous, supercilious, affected appearances conceal inner natures which are vacuous, self-centred, petty, and foolish. But even in these characters, outward appearance and inner nature are not as disparate as in *Love in a Wood*. Because the disparity is not as great, the characters do not need to resort to darkness and a Park to fully reveal their true natures. In this play, therefore, Wycherley is examining a less serious side of human nature, one which shows man to be a silly, deluded, vain creature, rather than a thoroughly corrupt, depraved monster.
In *The Country-Wife*, Wycherley uses the image of the country dweller—the man who lives close to nature and thus lacks the veneer of civilization, to represent what man is in essence. Wycherley does not regard the country as a pastoral world of innocent and pleasurable retreat. Rather, he sees it as a dreary, barren, uncivilized landscape, peopled by coarse, appetite-driven men who completely lack decorum, refinement, and intellect. Naturally, the urban dwellers shun the country, despise its inhabitants, and condemn its way of life. For example, Alithea, a witty, educated woman of the town, regards being sent to the country as "the last ill usage of a Husband to a Wife ..." (IV, i, 52), and Lucy, her maid, comments that "... the Country is as terrible I find to our English Ladies, as a Monastery to those abroad ..." (IV, i, 52).

Horner, a gentleman of the town, observes that "... a little time in the Country makes a Man turn wild and unsociable, and only fit to converse with his Horses, Dogs, and his Herds" (III, i, 45).

The play provides a great deal of evidence which supports this view, particularly in the figure of Pinchwife, an aging libertine who, with his wife, represents the country dweller in the play. Pinchwife was originally a city dweller and he prides himself on his knowledge of the town and its hypocritical practices. But in the country, he has discarded all pretense to manners and appearance and has become the image of the barbaric country dweller. The country has degraded Pinchwife, revealing his worst characteristics of slovenliness, lechery, jealousy, envy, and suspicion. One of his first remarks in the play is an apology for his appearance: "My long stay in the Country will excuse my dress ..." (I, i, 18). When the gentlemen of the town question him about his marriage, Pinchwife proudly declares that he has
been clever enough to marry "no London Wife" (I, i, 19). He boasts that, in
the country, ",... we are a little surer of the breed ... know what her keeping
has been, whether soyl'd or unsound" (I, i, 19). By such remarks, Pinchwife
reveals himself to be sadistic, savage, brutish, and depraved. He may be a
former city dweller, but his sojourn in the country has stripped away the
façade of elegance, wit, and polish with which man cloaks himself in the city.
Pinchwife is natural man, an animal of selfish appetites and drives, concerned
primarily with satisfying his lust for sex, food, and drink. Through Pinch-
wife, Wycherley reveals that man without his outward appearance of respecta-
ibility is, in reality, depraved and corrupt.

Margery, his wife, at first appears to offset the impression which Pinch-
wife gives of the country dweller and hence of essential human nature. She
is sweet, charming, unaffected, naive, and anxious to please her husband.
As such, she represents human nature, uncorrupted by the temptations and
vices of the town. But she nevertheless possesses the same appetites as her
husband, as she quickly demonstrates. For example, at the beginning of the
play, she is unimpressed with London. She assures Pinchwife that "... I
hate London; our Place-house in the Country is worth a thousand of't, wou'd I
were there again" (II, i, 23). But Pinchwife foolishly tells her that she
has an admirer. He also exposes her to glimpses of London life and tells
her about its pleasures. He admonishes her that she must "not be like the
naughty Town Women, who only hate their Husbands, and love every Man else,
love Plays, Visits, fine Coaches, fine Cloaths, Fiddles, Balls, Treats, and
so lead a wicked Town-life"(II, i, 23). Pinchwife's admonition serves only
to arouse Margery's interest. She replies: "Nay, if to enjoy all these
things be a Town life, London is not so bad a place, Dear" (II, i, 23).
Pinchwife, having whetted Margery's appetite for these amusements, then decides that he must keep her under even closer guard than before, further arousing her curiosity and sense of frustration at being denied the pleasures of the town.

Margery soon learns, however, to outwit her husband. She proves most adept at adopting all the corrupt practices of the urban dweller, including disguise, deception, intrigue, and infidelity. In other words, Margery quickly demonstrates that she is virtuous only through lack of opportunity to be otherwise. She is innocent, not in the sense of being pure, simple, harmless, and innocuous, but in the sense of being foolish, naive, sensual, impetuous, and ignorant. When exposed to the influences of the town, her true nature becomes obvious. Margery, therefore, like Pinchwife, is in essence depraved.

The city dwellers, in rejecting, condemning, and ridiculing the country dweller, presume that city dwellers and country dwellers are two entirely different kinds of men. In reality, of course, we see that there is no essential difference between them. The country dweller, lacking the sophistication, polish, and elegance of the town dweller, more readily reveals his rude, coarse, bestial nature.

Wycherley employs other methods to show man stripped of the trappings and veneer of civilization. Principal among these is the use of animal imagery which represents man as being a breeding, lusting, smarling, stinking, fawning, revolting creature.

All the corrupt characters refer to their fellow human beings as animals. To city and country folk alike, animals are dirty, brutish creatures, which man must control and endure. Pinchwife speaks of wives as a "breed" (I, i, 19),
and of women as "dow-bak'd, sensless, indocile animals" (IV, i, 69). Horner describes women as "more impertinent, more cunning, and more mischievous than their Monkeys, and to me almost as ugly ..." (IV, i, 62). He also compares a woman to "that soft, gentle, tame, and more noble Creature a Spaniel ... she can fawn, lye down, suffer beating, and fawn the more; barks at your Friends, ... gives you Fleas, and the Mange sometimes: and all the difference is, the Spaniel's the more faithful Animal, and fawns but upon one Master" (II, i, 32).

Harcourt accuses Horner of being like a drone: "Now your Sting is gone, you look'd in the Box amongst all those Women, like a drone in the hive, all upon you; shov'd and ill us'd by 'em all, and thrust from one side to t'other" (III, i, 37). Dorilant, another friend, adds: "Yet he must be buzzing amongst 'em still, like other old beetle-headed, lycorish drones ..." (III, i, 37). To the ladies, Horner is a "filthy French Beast" (I, i, 13), an "insolent brute" (II, i, 32), a "stinking, mortify'd rotten French Weather [a castrated ram]" (II, i, 32), a "filthy Toad" (IV, i, 64), and an "odious Beast" (IV, i, 62). The ladies, however, after they have been drinking, reassure Horner that they think "wildness in a man, as desirable a quality, as in a Duck, or Rabbet ..." (V, i, 80).

Several other characters also describe themselves and others in terms of animals. Sir Jasper, for example, feels that "... a Lady shou'd have a supernumerary Gentleman Usher, as a supernumerary Coach-horse ..." (II, i, 32). Dorilant describes the elderly men who wait on the ladies as "... your old Boyes, old Beaux Garcons, who like superannuated Stallions are suffer'd to run, feed, and whinney with the Mares as long as they live, though they can do nothing else" (I, i, 15). Margery Pinchwife compares herself to "a poor
lonely, sullen Bird in a Cage ..." (III, i, 35). When Margery expresses a desire to go for a walk, Alithea, her sister-in-law, comments that a country woman "requires as much airing as her Husbands Horses" (II, i, 22).

Wycherley, by linking human nature with animals again demonstrates the bestial nature of man. But there is another implication, in that animals are by nature anti-social and do not construct societies. Man, however, is social by nature, so must either control his animal instincts or disguise them. Those individuals who are not corrupt have learned to control their instincts. Those who are corrupt need to disguise their corruption. They must do so because they can satisfy the corrupt desires and lusts which obsess them only within society. Society, however, considers any attempt to satisfy them as just cause for condemnation and expulsion. Because of this circumstance, the corrupt characters must maintain a public pretence of those attributes which allow them to live in society.

Horner clearly demonstrates the need for pretence. He possesses a rapacious sexual drive, which it is socially unacceptable to reveal, but which he must satisfy. He, therefore, poses as a eunuch, thereby guaranteeing himself free access to the ladies, who he realizes have equally lecherous natures. Horner knows also that the ladies would welcome his attentions if they could avoid social censure. Horner, by his pose as a eunuch, preserves the reputation of the ladies and is, at the same time, able to satisfy his lust.

Society provides various social activities through which the corrupt characters can satisfy their illicit desires. Sir Jasper Fidget gives a clear indication of the favourite pastimes, at least of the ladies, when he urges Horner: "Come, come, Man you must e'en fall to visiting our Wives,
eating at our Tables, drinking Tea with our virtuous Relations after dinner, dealing Cards to 'em, reading Plays, and Gazets to 'em, picking Fleas out of their Shocks for 'em, collecting Receipts, New Songs, Women, Pages, and Footmen for 'em" (II, i, 32).

In a world where appearance is so important, it is not surprising that society places great emphasis on ceremony, etiquette, breeding, and civility. As Horner notes in the opening scene, "... Women of Quality are so civil, you can hardly distinguish love from good breeding, and a Man is often mistaken ..." (I, i, 14). The women are confused equally, judging by Sparkish's complaint that "... a Man can't speak civilly to a Woman now, but presently she says, he makes love to her ..." (III, i, 43). The emphasis on outward forms of manners and ceremony diverts attention, initially at least, from the underlying corruption of society.

As we have seen, the corrupt characters place a great deal of emphasis on manners and reputation, because they constitute the façade which masks their true natures. They also place a great deal of emphasis on honour. Because of their inner corruption, it is not surprising that they equate honour with reputation, ignoring the fact that honour usually refers to inner character, virtue, and integrity. To the corrupt characters, appearance is all important. They seek only to appear honourable in order to more easily and freely pursue their selfish goals.

Lady Fidget and her companions pride themselves on being women of honour, i.e., of unspotted reputations. Horner immediately recognizes that honour to them is an outward affection: "... your Women of Honour, as you call 'em, are only chary of their reputations, not their Persons, and 'tis scandal they would avoid, not Men ..." (I, i, 14). Lady Fidget confirms the truth
of this statement when she candidly admits to Horner that "... we women make use of our Reputation, as you men of yours, only to deceive the world with less suspicion; our Virtue is like the State-man's Religion, the Quaker's Word, the Gamester's Oath, and the Great Man's Honour, but to cheat those that trust us" (V, 1, 80). These then are the "ladies of quality" who must don masks for modesty's sake when a man enters the room, and who blush with embarrassment when someone uses the word "naked" in an innocuous way. To them, honour is "the Jewel of most value and use, which shines yet to the world unsuspected, though it be counterfeit" (V, 1, 81). As long as the ladies maintain an outward appearance of respectability and virtue and avoid censure or scandal, they feel that they have satisfied the demands of honour.

Horner is aware of the "mighty pretence to Honour ..." (V, 1, 80) which the ladies adopt. He knows that "... your Bigots in Honour, are just like those in Religion; they fear the eye of the world, more than the eye of Heaven, and think there is no virtue, but railing at vice; and no sin, but giving scandal ..." (IV, 1, 59). To enable the ladies to avoid scandal in his company, he poses as a eunuch. He thereby satisfies the requirements of their "honour"; and achieves the success which he anticipates. To Horner also, honour is synonymous with reputation.

Sparkish, Pinchwife, and Sir Jasper also equate honour with reputation. Sparkish is exceedingly vain, priding himself on his lack of jealousy. For example, he asks Alithea if it were for his honour "to marry a Woman, whose virtue I suspected ..." (III, 1, 42). He is equally vain about his reputation as a Wit. When Alithea tries to tell Sparkish that Harcourt has been criticizing him, he laughs off her remarks, until she tells him that Harcourt has called him a "sensless driveling Idiot" (II, 1, 28), Sparkish replies: "How,
did he disparage my parts? Nay, then my honour's concern'd ..." (II, i, 28). In other words, Sparkish's concept of honour is an extension of his inflated opinion of himself. Anyone who pricks his vanity or threatens his reputation offends his shallow sense of honour.

Sir Jasper, too, links honour with reputation. He seeks to avoid the reputation of a cuckold and, therefore, provides his wife with a safe companion and with seemingly innocent amusements.

Pinchwife too is anxious to preserve his honour and avoid the reputation of a cuckold. He, therefore, locks up his wife and warns Horner that he may "... play with any man's honour ..." (IV, i, 67), except his. Pinchwife further equates honour in a woman with chastity. When Alithea, his sister, appears compromised by Horner, Pinchwife insists that they must marry since "$... a Woman's injur'd Honour, no more than a man's, can be repair'd, or satisfied by any, but him that first wronged it ..." (V, i, 84). Having ruined Alithea's reputation by depriving her of her chastity, Horner must redeem it through marriage. Pinchwife does not concern himself about Alithea's feelings for Horner, or her protestations of innocence. He wants only to repair her damaged reputation, which is a reflection upon Pinchwife as her brother, and a threat to his reputation and sense of honour.

All the depraved characters are desperately anxious to appear as persons of honour. Horner, for example, knows that he is depraved. He admits to being a "Machiavel in love" (IV, i, 60). He also perceives corruption in others. He believes the ladies to be as corrupt as himself. He thinks that the other characters are equally so. For example, he refers to Pinchwife as a "Whoremaster" (I, i, 19), recognizing that Pinchwife only married in order, as Horner tells him, "to keep a Whore to your self ..." (I, i, 20).
Pinchwife does not deny Horner's accusation. He is well aware of his own depravity, and afraid of that which he believes exists in others. For this reason, he feels that he cannot trust Margery. He reasons: "... if we do not cheat women, they'll cheat us; and fraud may be justly used with secret enemies, of which a Wife is the most dangerous ..." (IV, i, 59). Aware of his own and Horner's lechery, Pinchwife knows that Horner will overlook no opportunity to seduce his wife.

Sir Jasper suspects that his wife is corrupt and untrustworthy. For this reason, he believes in providing "innocent diversion for a Wife, [so] as to hinder her unlawful pleasures; and he had better employ her, than let her employ her self" (I, i, 13). He, therefore, forces his wife on Horner, believing that Horner is impotent and harmless.

Sir Jasper's estimation of his wife's true nature is a very accurate one. Lady Fidget and her friends, Mrs. Dainty and Mrs. Squeamish, have no illusions about their own depravity. They think of themselves as "... Women of Quality, [which] like the richest Stuff's lye untumbled, and unask'd for" (V, i, 79). And yet they must resort to the bottle to reassure themselves of their charms. As Lady Fidget advises her friends in a song which she sings while drinking: "If for Beauties you'd pass, / Take a lick of the Glass" (V, i, 79). Under the influence of alcohol, the ladies lose their inhibitions and their fear of the "wicked, censorious world" (IV, i, 60). They remove their masks in Horner's presence, although, as Mrs. Dainty assures Horner, "... women are least mask'd, when they have the Velvet Vizard on" (V, i, 80). They further admit to Horner that they use their reputations "only to deceive the world with less suspicion ..." (V, i, 80). Ultimately, having discarded all pretence to modesty, decorum, and restraint, Lady Fidget,
in a drunken frenzy, cannot resist revealing the "dear secret" (IV, i, 60). Although they discover that Horner has seduced all of them, they decide to continue to share him. Their only concern is to escape the censure of society for their actions.

The ladies who recognize their own basic depravity have an equally low opinion of others. They describe the gallants who neglect them as "Dogs and Horses" (II, i, 30), "damn'd Rascals" (II, i, 30), and "filthy Toads" (V, i, 79). Their husbands are "damn'd Tyrants" (V, i, 78), and the men whom they keep are "little inconsiderable Fellows" (II, i, 30).

The prevalence of corruption and hypocrisy leads Horner to conclude at the end of the play that "... all the difference I find betwixt we men, and you women, we forswear our selves at the beginning of an Amour, you, as long as it lasts" (V, i, 82). In the world of The Country-Wife, all perjure themselves to satisfy the selfish demands of their inner natures.

One exception exists to Horner's wholesale condemnation of human nature. Alithea is the only character who does not see herself or others as basically corrupt. Alithea's suitor, Harcourt, recognizes her virtue when he refers to her as a "Divine, Heavenly Creature" (IV, i, 53), a "Seraphick Lady" (IV, i, 53), and a "Munificent Patroness" (IV, i, 53). Alithea, however, is not without flaws. Engaged to Sparkish, an affected, supercilious fop, she rejects Harcourt, whom she prefers, because of her rigid, destructive, distorted concept of honour. Like the other ladies of the town, Alithea sees honour as involving her reputation in the world. She considers that if she does not keep her word, her "reputation wou'd suffer in the World ..." (II, i, 27). Since Alithea links her reputation with her concept of honour, she cannot sacrifice the one without severely damaging the other. For
Alithea, however, the concept of honour has a deeper meaning as well. She equates honour with inner worth and integrity. For this reason, as she tells Lucy, "... my justice will not suffer me to deceive, or injure [Sparkish]" (IV, i, 51), since "... I have given him already my word ..." (IV, i, 51). Lucy tries desperately to make Alithea realize that she is committing a greater injury by marrying Sparkish without loving him. She asks Alithea: "Can there be a greater cheat, or wrong done to a Man, than to give him your person, without your heart ..." (IV, i, 51). But Alithea will not listen. She is intent upon adhering to an inflexible and false concept of honour. Harcourt also tries to make her see that she has gone to extremes, allowing her concept of honour to become "a vice" (III, i, 48) instead of a virtue. By the end of the play, Alithea realizes that she is guilty of excess. She, therefore, modifies her attitude toward honour, thereby removing this flaw from her character. This flaw, however, does not stem from any basic depravity, but is a result of Alithea's concern for her virtue and integrity.

The corrupt characters, however, do not worry about their integrity. They concern themselves only with their reputations. As long as these are unblemished, they are free to pursue their selfish desires, undetected and uncriticized.

The movement of the play represents a gradual stripping away of the masks of hypocrisy. We have seen how this corruption distorts the concept of honour. We will now see how it distorts attitudes toward love and marriage, and makes the characters a prey to jealousy. Only one couple, Alithea and Harcourt, because of their lack of depravity, are capable ultimately of forming a permanent union, based on love, both physical and spiritual.
The corrupt characters think of love solely in physical terms. They mistake lust for love and treat sex as a basic animal need and function. They, therefore, compare love to eating, drinking, and disease. For example, Pinchwife maintains that "... a Woman mask'd, like a cover'd Dish, gives a Man curiosity, and appetite, when, it may be, uncover'd, 'twou'd turn his stomach ..." (III, i, 37). Harcourt talks of those in the country being "Foul Feeders" (I, i, 19), and Dorilant refers to country dwellers as having "course, constant, swinging stomachs" (I, i, 19). Lady Fidget wonders at the "depraved appetites of witty men" (V, i, 79) who would "rather choose to club with a multitude in a common house ... than to be the only guest at a good Table" (V, i, 80). Horner replies that "... people always eat with the best stomach at an ordinary, when every man is snatching for the best bit" (V, i, 80). He goes on to assure Lady Fidget that "... ceremony in love and eating, is as ridiculous as in fighting, falling on briskly is all should be done in those occasions" (V, i, 80). Horner also informs Pinchwife that, in the city, "... we have such variety of dainties that we are seldom hungry" (I, i, 19). He talks too of going to a "private feast" (V, i, 75) with Margery. Sparkish too thinks of sex in turns of food. With regard to Alithea, he convinced himself that, "... though my hunger is now my sawce, and I can fall on heartily without, but the time will come, when a Rival will be as good sawce for a married Man to a Wife, as an Orange to Veale" (IV, i, 68).

Several characters think of love in terms of drinking. For example, Horner maintains that love provides slavery, grief, tortures, and sleeplessness, while wine gives liberty, joy, wit and contentment (I, i, 15, 16). He talks of the pleasure of "laying 'em [the ladies] flat with a Bottle ..."
(III, i, 38). Dorilant objects to this statement. He maintains that "... drinking with Women, is as unnatural, as scolding with 'em; but 'tis a pleasure of decay'd Fornicators, and the basest way of quenching love" (III, i, 38). In the final act, the ladies drink with Horner. As they become progressively drunk, their tongues are loosened and they drop their pretence to modesty. Lady Fidget urges them on, telling them to suppose that they had each had two bottles to drink and could, therefore, "speak the truth of our hearts" (V, i, 78). She pledges herself by her "brimmer, for truth is no where else to be found ..." (V, i, 78). She then proceeds to sing a song in which she complains that husbands are diverted by "our warm Rival the bottle" (V, i, 78), and in which she advises the ladies: "If for Beauties you'd pass, / Take a lick of the Glass" (V, i, 79). The ladies go on to praise wine for making their husbands "short-sighted" (V, i, 79), their gallants bold, and "the Butler lovely in our eyes ..." (V, i, 79).

Thus drink provides courage to make love, an escape or diversion from the demands of love, a blotting out of reality, a general cure-all for worries and responsibilities, and a release from false reputations and appearances. Under the influence of drink, people appear as they truly are.

Love is also seen as a disease, a plague, or a torment. Horner, in the opening scene, refers to it as "... that damn'd Malady, and that worse Distemper ..." (I, i, 11). Margery, toward the end of the play, sadly concludes: "... I have got the London Disease, they call Love, I am sick of my Husband, and for my Gallant; ... when I think of my Husband, I tremble, and am in a cold sweat, and have inclinations to vomit, but when I think of my Gallant, dear Mr. Horner, my hot fit comes, and I am all in a Feaver ..." (IV, i, 68).
The corrupt characters also discuss love in terms of money or gambling. In the opening scene, Horner compares himself to a "cunning Gamster" (I, i, 12) concealing his play. He talks of a marriage being "like a penitent Gamester's Oath" (I, I, 20). Sir Jasper refers to Horner as being "an ill Gamester, and consequently loves play . . ." (II, i, 32). Sir Jasper urges Horner to consort with the ladies, telling him that "... Gamesters may be rude with Ladies, you know" (II, i, 33). Lady Fidget agrees: "Yes, losing Gamesters have a privilege with Women" (II, i, 33). Lady Fidget compares her virtue and that of her friends to "the Gamester's Oath" used "... but to cheat those that trust us" (V, i, 80). Harcourt compares old whoremasters and old gamesters: "... I have known 'em, when they are broke and can loose nor more, keep a fumbling with the Box in their hands to fool with only, and hinder other Gamesters" (I, i, 20). Lucy warns Alithea that "... marrying to encrease love, is like gaming to become rich; alas, you only loose what little stock you had before" (IV, i, 51). And Alithea advises Pinchwife to "... have a care of too strong an imagination, lest like an over-concern'd timorous Gamester, by fancying an unlucky cast, it should come, Women and Fortune are truest still to those that trust 'em" (V, i, 87).

Through linking love with eating, drinking, disease, and gambling, the corrupt characters clearly reveal that love, to them, is merely a transitory, physical relationship, entered into only to fulfill physical need. They have no thought to giving pleasure, nor any affection for the other individual involved. They must satisfy their sexual drive just as they must eat and drink to satisfy their hunger and thirst. Love, to them, is also a game in which they gamble, cheat, and lie to gain their own ends. But such a love becomes ultimately a plague and a torment which they must suffer but cannot
Because of their awareness of their own and others' depravity, the corrupt characters realize that they cannot trust one another. They are suspicious of one another, and their suspicion gives rise to the pangs of jealousy. Jealousy, like honour, means different things to different individuals. At opposite extremes are Pinchwife who is insanely jealous, and Sparkish who prides himself on being completely devoid of jealousy. The degree to which the other characters are jealous lies between these two extremes. In revealing their attitudes toward jealousy, the characters again reveal their true natures.

Pinchwife illustrates one extreme of jealousy. His insane fear of being made a cuckold leads him to suspect every glance, every remark, and every gesture which is made in the presence of his wife. As Horner observes: "Why, 'tis as hard to find an old Whoremaster without Jealousie and the Gout, as a young one without Fear or the Pox" (I, i, 21). Horner goes on to describe jealousy as "the worst Disease that Love and Wenching breeds" (I, i, 21). Horner and his friends take great delight in baiting Pinchwife, who goes to ridiculous extremes to keep them from seeing his wife. Pinchwife warns Margery that she will make him sick "of that which is worse than the Plague, Jealousy" (III, i, 36). Margery replies: "Pish, you jear, I'm sure there's no such disease in our Receipt-book at home" (III, i, 36). Jealousy puts Pinchwife "upon a wrack ..." (III, i, 46). He becomes, as Horner says, "mad with jealousie" (IV, i, 66). At the end of the play, Pinchwife admits that a Cuckold, which he believes himself to be, is "a kind of a wild Beast" (V, i, 85). Jealousy has destroyed all traces of restraint, reason, and common sense in him. By restricting Margery he creates in her a craving for
all that which he wishes her to avoid. As Lucy observes, "... any wild
thing grows but the more fierce and hungry for being kept up, and more danger­
ous to the Keeper" (V, i, 87). In the end, Pinchwife is forced to remain
married to his wife against his will, and to accept the assurance of the other
characters that she has retained her innocence. But one feels that he is far
from cured of his "plague", that it will continue to gnaw at him, and that
Margery, because of his harsh treatment, will continue to give him grounds
for suspicion.

Sparkish regards jealousy as the trait of "a Country Bumpkin" (II, i, 27).
Since he prides himself upon being a witty, urbane gentleman of the town, he
will not disdain to exhibit any traces of such an uncivilized emotion. To
flatter Alithea, he tells her that his lack of jealousy "is a sign you are
virtuous ..." (III, i, 42). To prove his trust in her, he places her in
compromising situations with Harcourt. When Alithea protests that "he
[Harcourt] spóke so scurrilously of you, I had no patience to hear him; be­
sides he has been making love to me" (II, i, 27), Sparkish dismisses her
protest with the remark that "... we Wits rail and make love often, but to
shew our parts; as we have no affections, so we have no malice ..." (II, i,
27). This remark contains the key to Sparkish's true nature, and to his
attitude toward jealousy. As the play progresses, he discloses that his
pretended lack of jealousy is a socially convenient façade, a pose adopted
to impress everyone, not just Alithea. As he himself states, he has, in
reality, "no affections" (II, i, 27). He is completely lacking in feeling
for anyone other than himself. He is so vain, for example, that he cannot
believe any woman would dream of rejecting him. When he receives a letter of
assignation, supposedly written by Alithea to Horner, he is stunned: "But
who would have thought a Woman could have been false to me, by the world, I
could not have thought it" (V, i, 75). Once convinced, his vanity wounded,
he becomes extremely violent and vituperative toward Alithea. In so becom­
ing, he clearly shows that he is, in essence, a monster of vanity.

Alithea finds Sparkish's seeming lack of jealousy his most attractive
asset. She admits to Lucy that Sparkish lacks the wit of Harcourt, "which I
will dispense withal, for another want he has, which is want of jealousie,
which men of wit seldom want" (IV, i, 51). Alithea goes on to declare:
"Jealousie in a Husband, Heaven defend me from it, it begets a thousand
plagues to a poor Woman, the loss of her honour, her quiet ..." (IV, i, 51).
At the conclusion of the play, although realizing that Sparkish lacked, not
jealousy, but affection for her, Alithea nevertheless maintains that "Women
and Fortune are truest still to those that trust 'em" (V, i, 87). She adds
that her statement should be "... Doctrine for all Husbands Mr. Harcourt"
(V, i, 87).

Harcourt, however, maintains that jealousy is a necessary aspect of
love, at least in love's initial stages. He tells Alithea, when she is
talking about Sparkish's love: "You never had it; he wants you see jealousie,
the only infallible sign of it" (II, i, 26). In other words, to Harcourt,
jealousy implies a concern for someone. Lack of jealousy, he believes, is
often a sign of indifference. Harcourt also observes that "... Poetry in
love is no more to be avoided, than jealousy" (III, i, 39). Here again, he
is stressing the fact that jealousy is a necessary concomitant of love, like
poetry, at least during courtship when two people are just beginning to know
one another and when passions run high.

When Alithea is accused of having an affair with Horner, Harcourt assures
her: "... you shall now see 'tis possible for me to love too, without being jealous, I will not only believe your innocence my self, but make all the World believe it----" (V, i, 83). In other words, jealousy is necessary, even desirable during courtship as an expression of concern and passion. Jealousy, however, is ultimately unnecessary in a relationship such as that of Alithea and Harcourt, founded as it is on mutual love and esteem.

To those who are corrupt, who base their relationships upon hypocrisy and deceit, who mistake lust for love, jealousy must remain as a torment, a negative, destructive obsession.

Having now examined the nature of the world of The Country-Wife and its inhabitants, we can understand Alithea's problem. She alone is not corrupt. As she remarks to Pinchwife: "... who boasts of any intrigue with me? what Lampoon has made my name notorious? what ill Women frequent my Lodgings?" (II, i, 23). But the fact that Alithea is not corrupt makes her vulnerable in the evil world of the play. Because of her own inner virtue, she lacks the ability to discern the true nature of others. Alithea assumes that others are as virtuous as she. Therefore, she has developed no protective façade. She does not suspect that anyone would practise deception on her or involve her in a sordid intrigue. But Alithea finds herself accused of intimacy with Horner, when Margery disguises herself in her clothing and goes to Horner's lodgings.

Alithea is defenceless in the face of such deceit. If she is to survive within the world of the play, she must find someone who appreciates her inner worth. She must find a partner who recognizes her inate virtue, and will cherish and protect it, someone whose love will proceed from "esteem" (II, i, 26). Harcourt, as we have seen, fulfills these requirements. He declares
that he loves Alithea with all his soul, and "with the best, and truest love, in the World" (III, i, 44). He maintains that only he can match Alithea's "Faith, and Constancy in love" (III, i, 44), only he knows "how to value so much beauty and virtue" (III, i, 44), and only his "... love can no more be equall'd in the world ..." (III, i, 44) than Alithea's "Heavenly form" (III, i, 44). With Harcourt to protect her, Alithea can remain within the world of the play. She and Harcourt form a permanent and satisfying relationship which will enable them to survive in a degenerate society.

Contrasted with and overshadowing the example set by Alithea and Harcourt is that of the corrupt characters. They enter into no satisfying relationships. Those who are married remain trapped in a loveless union, forced to seek satisfaction and pleasure elsewhere. Those who are unmarried are either unable or unwilling to seek a marriage partner. In either state, married or single, they present a serious indictment of human nature, one which labels man as essentially evil.

The world of The Country-Wife emerges as an ugly, evil, intemperate place, inhabited by people who have lost all sense of spiritual values, moderation, and benevolence. Within this world, Wycherley portrays man as primarily a sensual animal, a creature of selfish appetites and drives, who seeks, beneath an elaborate but superficial façade of manners, to satisfy his lust.

The dance of Cuckolds is a fitting end to this satiric comedy in that it symbolizes lust and infidelity. The characters of The Country-Wife are unfaithful to each other and to themselves. They abuse their talents, their minds, and their bodies in hedonistic pursuits which give them no real satisfaction or pleasure. As in Love in a Wood, only one couple, Alithea and Harcourt, show any signs of escaping from the vicious society of unhappy
marriages, false friendships, and sordid affairs. Only in them do outer appearance and inner nature coincide. Only they have no need of artifice or pretence. But they are not at the centre of the play. The other characters remain unaware of or uninterested in following their example. Instead, the corrupt characters remain trapped by their selfish, evil natures. They must go on deceiving and being deceived, exploiting and being exploited, while the discrepancy between their appearance as civilized human beings, and their reality as selfish animals continues to exist. Once again, Wycherley presents a world in which evil predominates and prevails.
In his last play, *The Plain-Dealer*, Wycherley once again stresses his belief that man's outward appearance conceals his inner depravity. In this play, however, Wycherley expands and elaborates upon his belief with greater subtlety and complexity than before. His characters still devote themselves to the pursuit of pleasure, but now they pursue matters of business and litigation also. Once again, in trying to hide their true characters they only reveal them.

Unlike the previous plays, however, there is one character, Manly, who from the beginning sets himself up as an ideal of virtue and integrity. He regards himself as completely honest, sincere, virtuous, and incorruptible. Moreover, Manly prides himself on his ability to distinguish appearance from reality in his fellow man. Wycherley compares and contrasts Manly's views with those of the other characters, all of whom, with the exception of Vernish and Olivia, Manly criticizes and condemns. Ironically, these two betray Manly. In the end, Manly realizes that he is no better than any other man. Instead of Manly, another ideal of virtue emerges in the figure of Eliza, an astute, worldly, sensible individual who has no illusions about herself or others. She, however, finds no one worthy to be her partner in marriage in the corrupt world of the play.

The amusements indulged in by society are essentially the same as those in the previous plays. Olivia, Manly's fiancée, and Eliza, her cousin, discuss these pleasures at the beginning of the second act. Eliza refers to the interest, at least of the ladies, in beautiful clothes, visiting, balls, plays, masquerades, love affairs, marriage, and the activities of the Court. Inevitably, these pastimes and diversions further selfish interests and desires.
In addition to a gay whirl of social activities, the world of the play also focuses upon business and legal affairs. The entire third act, which takes place in Westminster Hall, illustrates this preoccupation. Westminster Hall serves a dual function. Three of the principal courts of England are in session there, while along its walls are stalls for the selling of merchandise. The Hall should be sacred to justice, truth, and honesty; but in actuality, it is a centre of crass trade in material goods.

Manly, at the beginning of the act, declares: "I Hate this place ..." (III, i, 140). The reason for his hatred rapidly becomes apparent. He knows that in the "Palace or Residence of Justice" (III, i, 140), justice is "rarely seen; and beseig'd rather than defended, by her numerous black Guard [lawyers] ..." (III, i, 140). As the act progresses, one realizes that the transactions carried on in the Hall, both in relation to law and to business are totally corrupt.

Just as the Park in Love in a Wood and the country in The Country-Wife serve to reveal man at his most depraved, in The Plain-Dealer, ironically, the Courts of Justice fulfill this function. Here men cast aside pretence, civility, and decorum in their haste to satisfy their lust for wealth and social status. Each man concerns himself, not with seeking justice or a fair deal, but with lying, cheating, stealing, blackmailing, and flattering for his own profit. In the Hall, the ugliness of human nature fully discloses itself.

As in the previous plays, Wycherley stresses this ugliness by linking man with animals, describing him in terms of their characteristics and functions. For example, in the opening lines of the play, Manly refers to Lord Plausible and others like him, as "the Spaniels of the World" (I, i, 105).
Shortly afterwards, he calls one of the Sailors who have served him faithfully, a "fawning Water-dog" (I, i, 108), and another an "impertinent Dog" (I, i, 108). When Novel and Major Oldfox appear, Manly asks himself: "But how come those puppies coupled always together?" (I, i, 113). In addition, he finds comfort in the fact that Olivia "has often shut out of her conversation for mine, the gaudy fluttering Parrots of the Town, Apes, and Ecchoes of men only ..." (I, i, 117). To escape from such creatures, Manly tells Freeman that "therefore I rather choose to go where honest, down-right Barbarity is profest, where men devour one another like generous hungry Lyons and Tygers, not like Crocodiles ..." (I, i, 118). When Novel and Lord Plausible reappear, Manly orders them: "No chattering, Baboons, instantly begone." (II, i, 133). In the final act when Lord Plausible and Novel together with Major Oldfox and Jerry force themselves upon Manly, he is furious: "Dam 'em! a man can't open a Bottle in these Eating-houses, but presently you have these impudent, intruding, buzzing Flies and Insects in your Glass ..." (V, i, 184).

In trying to persuade Fidelia to pimp for him, he tells her: "... thou art a handsome Spaniel, and canst faun naturally ..." (III, i, 141). When Olivia confides to Fidelia that she thinks Manly a "surly, untractable, snarling Brute ... a Masty Dog were as fit to make a Gallant of" (IV, i, 171), Manly, who overhears the remark, adds: "Ay, a Goat, or Monkey were fitter for thee" (IV, i, 171).

To conceal the truth about themselves and their motives, the corrupt characters resort to raillery. As Eliza observes, "... railing now is so common, that 'tis no more Malice, but the fashion ..." (II, i, 120). By elevating raillery to a "fashion", the society of the play pretends to vitiate the destructive nature of raillery. They pretend to look upon it as
an inessential, trivial, harmless fad. As the remarks of the characters will show, however, raillery has not been robbed of its sting and destructiveness. In fact, its very popularity serves to increase its menace. Under the guise of an innocent diversion, the society practises savage mutiliation of one another. In so doing, they further reveal their basic viciousness and depravity.

The most obvious example of such a use of raillery occurs in the second act. In it, Novel, "a pert, railing Coxcomb" (p. 104), and Lord Plausible, "a Ceremonious, Supple, Commending Coxcomb" (p. 104), visit Olivia. The three of them proceed to engage in what amounts to a contest to see who is best at slandering their acquaintances. Each strives to outdo the other in the viciousness and malice of his attack. Before Novel appears, Olivia describes him as a coxcomb "who, rather than not rail, will rail at the dead ..." (II, i, 121). When Novel arrives and begins his castigations, Olivia keeps interrupting him in her eagerness to outrail him. Novel accuses her of thinking "a little harmless railing too great a pleasure for any but your self ..." (II, i, 123). When he is unable to silence her, he threatens to leave, insisting that he can't remain in any place where he is not permitted "a little Christian liberty of railing" (II, i, 124). Such a remark clearly illustrates the way in which the characters attempt to rationalize and mitigate the viciousness of their gossip. In this instance, Novel justifies his remarks by giving it religious sanction.

Olivia, however, makes no effort to justify her slander. She, protesting all the while that she hates detraction, proves to be the most malignant in her raillery. For example, she criticizes one acquaintance for being "as censorious and detracting a Jade, as a superannuated Sinner" (II, i, 127).
Just as she criticizes Novel before he arrives, she and Novel tear Lord Plausible to shreds before his appearance. Then when he arrives, they fall over one another to welcome and flatter him. Lord Plausible joins in their backbiting, although Olivia maintains that "... he has neither courage nor sense to rail ..." (II, i, 125). However, as Eliza observes, Lord Plausible "is a Coxcomb, that speaks ill of all people a different way, and libels everybody with dull praise, and commonly in the wrong place ..." (II, i, 125).

Together, these three, Olivia, Novel, and Lord Plausible, by their cruel, despicable remarks, display their true natures. In condemning others so thoroughly, they, in reality, condemn themselves. By resorting to railery, the corrupt characters, instead of concealing their inner depravity, more fully reveal it. While attempting to create a good impression of themselves at the expense of others, they manage instead to show that they are disagreeable, malevolent, hypocritical creatures.

The world of the play, as we have seen, is one in which corruption pervades every level and activity of society. It is an ugly, vicious, complex world, where once again appearance belies reality, where the truth that man is depraved lies concealed beneath various forms of hypocrisy and deceit. It is indeed, as Manly observes, a "... lying, masking, daubing World ..." (I, i, 117).

As we have seen also, Manly is most vociferous in linking man with animals, and in reviling human nature. Because he believes that he is incorruptible, that he alone can judge his fellow man accurately, what Manly really is and what he stands for becomes of great significance in any attempt to understand the play. His character, therefore, will be examined in some detail.
As the play opens, Manly is berating Lord Plausible for his "Decorums, supercilious Forms, and slavish Ceremonies; your little Tricks, which you Spaniels of the World do daily over and over, for, and to one another; not out of love or duty, but your servile fear" (I, i, 105). Lord Plausible protests that "... they are the Arts and Rules, the prudent of the World walk by" (I, i, 105). Manly replies: "Let 'em. But I'll have no Leading-strings, I can walk alone; I hate a Harness, and will not tug on in a Faction, kissing my Leader behind, that another Slave may do the like to me" (I, i, 105). Such a passage discloses a great deal about Manly, and about his views. He reveals himself as a blunt, proud, coarse, rude, solitary individual who regards his fellow men as animals or slaves, and who scorns observance of the rules of civilized conduct. Politeness and manners, to him, are irrelevant, servile niceties based on flattery and fear. As the play progresses, Manly confirms this initial impression. He also reveals that he is guilty of monstrous pride and vanity, which blind him to reality. He self-righteously berates all mankind, with the exception of himself, Olivia, and Vernish, his only friends. To him, all other men are hypocritical and not trustworthy.

During the course of the play, however, Manly's character rapidly deteriorates. From representing, as he thinks, the epitome of virtue, he becomes a monster of depravity, whose only interest is satisfying his lust for Olivia, even after she has rejected and cursed him. At the end of the play, although professing to be reconciled with the world, Manly finishes with a warning:

Yet, for my sake, let no one e're confide
In Tears, or Oaths, in Love, or Friend untry'd.

(V, i, 196)
In other words, although somewhat chastened, Manly still distrusts human nature and motivation. His distrust has broadened to include even himself. He has come to realize that his own nature is as depraved as that of others. Fundamentally, Manly has not altered his view of the "lying, masking, daubing World" (I, i, 117). He has merely substituted Fidelia and Freeman for Olivia and Vernish as recipients of his friendship and love. As he tells Fidelia, "... for your sake only, I wou'd quit the unknown pleasure of a retirement; and rather stay in this ill World of ours still, tho' odious to me ..." (V, i, 196). Manly reconciles himself to the world only because of Fidelia's virtue, and not because he has changed his belief in man's depravity.

Because the play concerns man in society, it is not surprising that the characters should discuss the nature of friendship, plain-dealing, and love and marriage at great length.

Friendship, to Manly, is a very limited relationship. Since Manly considers himself so honest and others so depraved, his views on friendship are very definite and very negative. For example, when Freeman asks Manly to be his friend, Manly declares that he can have but one friend, "... for a true heart admits but of one friendship, as of one love ..." (I, i, 109). Manly accuses Freeman, on the other hand, of being like Lord Plausible, "the Pink of Courtesie, therefore [thou] has no Friendship; for Ceremony and great Professing, renders Friendship as much suspected, as it does Religion" (I, i, 109). Manly ignores Freeman's rejoinder that "... no Professing, no Ceremony at all in Friendship, were as unnatural and as undecent as in Religion ..." (I, i, 109). Besides, he cannot be a friend to Freeman, because it will mean being a friend to his friends, "to Pimps, Flatterers,
Detractors, and Cowards, stiff nodding Knaves, and supple Pliant kissing Fools ..." (I, i, 110). When Freeman protests that he would fight for Manly, lend money to him, speak well of him to his enemies, and would not hear him ill-spoken of behind his back, Manly maintains that Freeman would do so only out of self-interest. He is certain that "... it were unreasonable to expect it [friendship] from thee, as the World goes now: when new Friends, like new Mistresses, are got by disparaging old ones" (I, i, 112).

In Westminster Hall, after encountering the corruption and greed there, Manly remarks to Freeman: "You see now what the might friendship of the World is; what all Ceremony, Embraces, and plentiful Professions come to: you are no more to believe a professing Friend, than a threatening Enemy; ... no Man, you see, is your Servant, who says he is so" (III, i, 156). And when Fidelia complains that she is "helpless and friendless" (I, i, 113), Manly offers her gold with the comment that "... there are half a score Friends for thee then ..." (I, i, 113).

Manly believes that only he is capable of true friendship and that with just one man and one woman, even though, as he admits, "not but I know, that generally, no man can be a great Enemy, but under the name of Friend; and if you are a Cuckold, it is your Friend only that makes you so ... if you are cheated in your Fortune, 'tis your Friend that does it ... If your Honour, or Good name be injur'd, 'tis your Friend that does it still ..." (I, i, 118).

Friendship, in the world of the play, as Manly points out, is a relationship based on deceit and hypocrisy. We have seen the way in which Novel, Lord Plausible, and Olivia treat one another. They profess the greatest admiration and affection for each other when they are together, then slander
each other when they are apart.

There are other examples in the play of the way in which so-called friends use one another. For example, Freeman flatters and bribes Jerry Blackacre in order to gain his confidence and friendship. He only does so in order to blackmail Jerry's mother, the Widow Blackacre, into marriage. The most obvious example of false friendship is, of course, that between Manly, Olivia, and Vernish. Olivia and Vernish profess the utmost devotion for Manly in order to rob him of his savings. Olivia and Vernish are so corrupt that they not only deceive Manly, but take great delight in doing so.

As each of these examples of false friendship illustrates, the corrupt characters base their friendship on expediency and self-interest. They, in reality, despise and distrust one another. They profess friendship for another person in order to manipulate and cheat that person so that they can satisfy their selfish desires. In degrading the concept of friendship, they again reveal their depravity.

In view of their attitudes toward friendship, it is not surprising that the corrupt characters similarly degrade the concept of plain-dealing, the act of speaking or behaving in an honest and sincere manner. As Freeman observes: "... telling truth is a quality as prejudicial to a man that wou'd thrive in the World, as square Play to a Cheat, or true Love to a Whore!"... (I, i, 110). Freeman asks Manly if he would have "a man speak truth to his ruine?" (I, i, 110). When Manly answers in the affirmative, Freeman concludes: "You are for Plain-dealing, I find; but against your particular Notions, I have the practice of the whole World" (I, i, 111). The society of the play is so corrupt that an individual cannot hope to prosper unless
he stoops to hypocrisy and deception in his dealings with others. There is no place for truth and sincerity in a world where the preponderance of mankind is so dishonest and insincere.

This lack of honesty and sincerity is particularly evident in the corrupt characters when they seek marriage. During the course of the play, Manly proves to be the worst offender in this respect. At the beginning of the play, he states his belief that "... Womens wants are generally their most importunate Solicitors to Love or Marriage" (I, i, 117, 118). To avoid the possibility of Olivia marrying him for his money, he gives her five thousand pounds. When Olivia betrays him, he consoles himself with the thought that "... by losing one's Money with one's Mistress, a man is out of danger of getting another ..." (II, i, 135). Manly vows that henceforth he will "avoid the whole damn'd Sex for ever, and Woman as a sinking Ship" (II, i, 136). However, Olivia's wish that "... the Curse of loving me still, fall upon your proud hard heart ..." (II, i, 135) is fulfilled. Manly rapidly forgets his vow to avoid women. Olivia's rejection of him causes him to desire her even more. He orders Fidelia: "Go flatter, lie, kneel, promise, any thing to get her for me: I cannot live unless I have her" (III, i, 142).

Manly becomes increasingly obsessed with his longing to possess Olivia, a longing which he tries to mask as a desire for revenge against her. His language and his actions become increasingly unbalanced, violent, and savage. For example, he muses:

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Her Love! -- a Whores, a Witches Love! -- But, what, did she not kiss well, Sir? I'm sure I thought her Lips -- but must not think of 'em more -- but yet they are such I cou'd still kiss -- grow to -- and then tear off with my teeth, grind 'em into mammocks, andspit 'em
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Manly has completely lost his self control. In so doing, he reveals that he has become a raging maniac whose basic motivation is lust, not love.

From Manly who seeks to remove money as a motive for marriage, we turn to Freeman who readily admits that his sole purpose in seeking marriage is for the financial security which marriage to a wealthy, if shrewish, widow offers. Freeman, "a Gentleman ... of a broken Fortune" (p. 104), makes no secret of the fact that marriage, to him, is a mercenary proposition. He maintains that "... money summons Lovers, more than Beauty ..." (I, i, 118), proving the truth of his remark by wooing the wealthy Widow Blackacre. Freeman has no qualms about trying to divest her of her wealth. When the Widow rejects his efforts, Freeman unabashedly goes about blackmailing her, thereby gaining an advantageous financial settlement from her.

Freeman is also aware that lust for money motivates others as well as himself. He tries to caution Manly against trusting Olivia with the observation that "... Mistresses, like Friends, are lost by letting 'em handle your Money; and most Women are such kind of Witches, who can have no power over a Man, unless you give 'em Money: but when once they have got any from you, they never leave you till they have all ..." (II, i, 135).

Freeman proves to be an astute observer of human nature, his own as well as that of others. He is a realist, accepting himself for what he is - "a Complier with the Age" (p. 104). He also accepts others for what they are - basically somewhat dishonest and selfish, but not always completely evil or depraved.

As a realist, Freeman is aware that he cannot "walk alone", that he needs companionship and therefore must function within society. He does not, like Manly, try to leave the world of the play, because it is sordid and
corrupt. Instead he is willing to adapt himself to the dictates and practices of society, even if, by so doing, a certain amount of compromise is necessary. Lacking illusions and pretensions, Freeman is tolerant of his own frailty and that of others. As he shrewdly observes at the conclusion of the play: "... I think most of our quarrels to the World, are just such as we have to a handsome Women: only because we cannot enjoy her, as we wou'd do" (II, i, 196).

Freeman emerges as a likeable, if not entirely virtuous or admirable, individual. He reveals that, in seeking marriage, desire for financial security is his sole concern. Personal feelings do not enter into his choice of a marriage partner. For this reason, he too degrades marriage and displays a basically selfish nature.

Olivia, as we have seen, pretends to love Manly in order to acquire his wealth. She readily admits that she used flattery and dissembling to entice Manly for "that which makes all the World flatter and dissemble, 'twas his Money; I had a real passion for that" (IV, i, 172). As far as Olivia is concerned, she and the rest of her sex are "like the rest of the Cheats of the World ... in Love, as at Cards, we were forc'd to play foul, only to give over the game; and use our Lovers like the Cards, when we can get no more by 'em, throw 'em up in a pet, upon the first dispute" (II, i, 131).

Money, as we will see, is not Olivia's sole concern. During Manly's absence, Olivia has secretly married Vernish. Her treatment of him is no better than that which she accords Manly. She betrays him without compunction when Fidelia, disguised as a man, attracts her. In throwing herself at Fidelia, Olivia demonstrates that she possesses a sexual appetite as violent as Manly's. She arranges for Fidelia to come to her in the dark which she
has "purposely design'd, as a remedy against my blushing Gallant's modesty; for young Lovers, like game Cocks, are made bolder, by being kept without light" (IV, i, 169). When Fidelia appears, Olivia eagerly welcomes her: "... where are thy lips? here, take the dumb, and best Welcomes, Kisses, Embraces; "tis not a time for idle words. In a Duel; of Love, as in others, Parling shews basely" (IV, i, 171).

Olivia, while waiting for Fidelia, is able to reflect: "So, I have at once now brought about these two grateful businesses, which all prudent Women do together, secured money and pleasure ..." (IV, i, 170). By such a statement Olivia shows here herself bosessed by two overwhelming desires: a desire for money, and a desire for sexual gratification. She sacrifices all scruples to fulfill these desires, thereby revealing herself as the most hypocritical, depraved character in the play.

Like Olivia, Vernish is completely unscrupulous and motivated by lust for money and for sexual satisfaction. He clearly demonstrates his motivation in a scene in which he comes upon Fidelia in the dark and tries to rape her. Without having every seen her before, he is quite prepared to rape her in the same house where his wife is. Moreover, he assumes that Fidelia will not seriously resist his advances. When they are interrupted, he locks Fidelia in a room, and consoles himself with the thought that "I'll fetch the Gold, and that she can't resist; / For with a full hand 'tis we Ravish best" (IV, i, 176).

Contrasted with these views is the view of Fidelia. She presents a strange figure in the play - somewhat removed from the actions and motivations of the other characters. In her utter devotion to Manly, she accepts all kinds of abuse, insults, and scorn. Ultimately, she even agrees to act as
his pimp. In spite of Manly's harsh treatment, she continues to regard him as a man whose "... Merit is unspeakable" (I, i, 112), and who is "the bravest, worthiest of Mankind" (I, i, 112). Later in the play, she assures him that "there is nothing certain in the World, Sir, but my Truth and your Courage" (IV, i, 161). Fidelia emerges as a romantic heroine who seeks, through love, to "find a Heaven her ..." (IV, i, 173), who would follow Manly "all the World over" (V, i, 194), and who regards his heart as "... a Present of that value, I can never make any return to 't ..." (V, i, 195). She confesses to Manly that she left "multitudes of Pretenders" (V, i, 195) to follow him, "having in several publick places seen you, and observ'd your actions thoroughly, with admiration ..." (V, i, 195). Fidelia, like Gerard, is undaunted by all obstacles. Once established in her love for Manly, she becomes blinded or at least impervious to all his imperfections. Fidelia represents an impossible ideal, one which is unreal, untenable, and lacking in moderation. Her family name of Grey is a good indication of her character and her position in the play. She is a shadowy, colourless, insubstantial figure. Although, at the conclusion of the play, she thinks in Manly that she has acquired her "heaven" on earth, such a view is unconvincing to anyone who has closely observed the behaviour of the Plain-dealer throughout the play.

Between the excessively romantic views of Fidelia, and the excessively lustful views of the other characters, there emerges the astute, realistic, commonsense approach to love and marriage of Eliza. She, too, is a curious figure in the world of the play. She appears only in relation to Olivia, and is not involved in any love relationship or intrigue herself. She, like Alithea, enjoys the pleasures and stimulation of society and yet remains un-
corrupted. To Eliza "... the World is but a constant Keeping Gallant, whom we fail not to quarrel with, when any thing crosses us, yet cannot part with' t for our hearts" (II, i, 119). Further, Eliza believes that the world has a "variety of Charms" (II, i, 119), among which she includes "a rich young Husband ..." (II, i, 120). This latter remark is the only statement which Eliza makes in direct reference to matrimony. If there were no other evidence, this quotation would place Eliza with those who seek marriage solely as a means of acquiring wealth. However, by inference from her other remarks, particularly those directed at Olivia, Eliza's attitude toward marriage, and consequently her true nature become obvious.

Throughout the play, Eliza acts as a foil to Olivia, undercutting and deflating her exaggerated and false remarks, and exposing her feigned modesty. For example, Eliza warns Olivia that "... all those grimaces of honour, and artificial modesty, disparage a Woman's real Virtue, as much as the use of white and red does the natural complexion; and you must use very, very little, if you wou'd have it thought your own" (II, i, 127). When Olivia is railing against the world, Eliza observes that "I must confess I think we Women as often discover where we love by railing; as men when they lye, by their swearing ..." (II, i, 119).

The contrast between the two women most clearly reveals itself in the scene in which they discuss The Country-Wife. To Olivia, it is a "filthy Play" (II, i, 128), filled with "clandestine obscenity" (II, i, 28) in the use of the name Horner, in the image of the eunuch, and in the use of the word China. Olivia is so horrified by the latter that she has removed all the china from her house. Eliza maintains that she cannot think any worse of her china, because of the use of the word in the play. She also protests
that she "can think of a Goat, a Bull, or Satyr, without any hurt" (II, i, 128). In the final act of the play, Eliza again warns Olivia: "Yet take this advice with you, in this Plain-Dealing Age, to leave off forsaking your self; for when People hardly think the better of a Woman for her real modesty, why shou'd you put that great constraint upon your self to feign it?" (V, i, 180).

From these remarks, we can infer that Eliza is a sensible, moderate, realistic woman who would ignore neither financial nor passionate considerations in relation to marriage. She emerges as a worldly, knowledgeable individual who enjoys life, including the pleasures which society affords, even while abhorring the seemingly inevitable backbiting, social climbing, and intrigue which are so much a part of society. Eliza does not want to forsake the world as Manly does. Nor does she proclaim her virtue as he does. She remains a quiet, constant figure who is all but lost sight of, surrounded by those who, because of their own corruption, cannot appreciate her example. Eliza, not Manly, emerges as an ideal of virtue in the play. Nevertheless, Eliza remains unpaired at the end of the play. She can find no suitable mate, no one of sufficient integrity to value her virtue and worth.

Freeman would appear to be the obvious choice, but, as we have seen, he concerns himself solely with acquiring financial security. He is too corruptible, too willing to compromise his ideals and integrity to satisfy his selfish needs. Such an individual, however charming, is not worthy of Eliza. In the world of the play, there is no one else who does not equate love with lust, who does not regard marriage as anything other than a convenient or necessary means of fulfilling selfish corrupt desires.

For this reason, the ending of the play is curious and ambiguous. There
is no dance or wedding feast to celebrate Manly's betrothal of his reconciliation with the world. In addition, his final comment is a warning: "... let no one e're confide / In Tears, or Oaths, in Love, or Friend untry'd" (V, i, 196). He sounds a note, not of hope or happiness, but one of distrust and cynicism. Manly has good cause to despair. During the course of the play, his firm belief in his own integrity collapses completely. He finds that he is subject to all the temptations and failings of his fellow man. He finds that he has blinded himself to his own inner corruption, and that of Olivia and Vernish. His overwhelming belief in his own virtue and infallibility only enable Olivia and Vernish to cheat Manly more easily. As Olivia points out: "... he that distrusts most the World, trusts most to himself, and is but the more easily deceiv'd, because he thinks he can't be deceiv'd ..." (IV, i, 171).

Manly's gradual disillusionment with himself and his friends is not completely offset by the artificially happy ending. Indeed, in view of his concluding statement, Manly seems even more suspicious of human nature at the end of the play than at the beginning. The treachery of Olivia and Vernish serve to confirm his belief that man is basically an animal, beneath a false exterior of courtesy, sincerity, and honesty.

In this play, therefore, as in the previous ones, appearance continues to belie reality. In The Plain-Dealer, however, these two aspects of human nature are not as separate and distinct as in the previous plays. Wycherley has come to the realization that human nature is more complex and ambiguous than he had originally thought. Evil exists in man, but it is difficult to define. It changes, grows, shifts, and subsides. We see within the play, characters who represent varying degrees of both depravity and virtue, ranging
from Olivia and Vernish who are utterly evil, to Freeman who is willing to compromise his integrity, to Eliza who can enjoy the world and remain uncorrupted, to Fidelia who presents an impossible, unworldly ideal of virtue, to Manly whose rigid virtue rapidly deteriorates under stress.

Further, as Manly demonstrates, a man cannot even be sure of his own essential being. He is a creature of drives, appetites, motives, and conflicts of which he may not be aware.

But that man is basically corrupt beneath an exterior appearance of civility, elegance, sophistication, Wycherley emphasizes over and over. Man is an ignoble, selfish, vicious creature at worst, and a petty, self-centred, lecherous creature at best.

Further, Wycherley implies that man must learn to function within society in spite of its corruption, in order to satisfy his needs for human warmth and companionship. Through the example of Eliza, Wycherley shows that it is possible to enjoy the advantages of society without succumbing to its pitfalls. But such an example of virtue and integrity fails to impress others. Eliza remains isolated from the main action of the play, in danger of being overwhelmed by the virulent evil which surrounds her.

In each of Wycherley's plays, as we have seen, a similar pattern emerges. The initial impression is of a gay, witty, urbane world in which life is a pleasant round of wining, dining, cards, plays, balls, masquerades, and visits. The inhabitants of this world observe an elevated code of courtesy and decorum as they pursue their various interests and activities. However, the characters quickly dispel this initial impression. They reveal that they use these activities and their relationships with others only to satisfy the selfish lusts which motivate them. As a result, we become aware of a
corruption and hypocrisy which permeates every function and level of society. Because of their fundamental corruption, these individuals have degraded traditional concepts of honour, courtship and marriage, and friendship. Those few individuals who remain uncorrupted are caught up in the manipulations, hypocrisy, and intrigues of the depraved characters. Within each play, this depravity reveals itself most fully through some individual or place. In the later plays, the use of imagery further emphasizes man's essential bestiality.

Each play brings a steadily deepening sense of an all-pervasive corruption in a world which has lost any sense of traditional religious or moral values.

With each play, the issues and characterization become less clearcut as Wycherley penetrates more deeply into the nature of man and explores the implications of this corruption which he sees as constituting the essence of man's being. Wycherley shows a growing awareness of the intricacy of human nature and existence of the temptations, needs, issues, and appetites which influence man, and make it difficult for him to retain his integrity and still function within society.

Wycherley, however, leaves no doubt that man can and should strive to remain virtuous. In each play he presents an ideal in the person of a virtuous character. These examples often serve only to accentuate the depravity of the majority, who have fallen so low that they no longer have any sense of their sin, any hope of redemption, or any interest in changing. Wycherley's world view is, therefore, essentially a pessimistic one in which man is more animal than angel, a creature without values, obsessed by lust and greed.
Works Consulted and Cited


