Love for Love Study Guide

Love for Love by William Congreve

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Introduction

Love for Love, by the well-known Restoration dramatist William Congreve, is a racy, broad, farcical comedy, which relies on mistaken impressions, disguises, and deception for much of its humor. Yet it is not the kind of silly drawing-room drama of wit many people imagine Restoration comedies to be. Underlying its complicated plot and clever dialogue is a serious exploration of such themes as good government, sexual ethics, gender roles, the complications of sophisticated society, and the difference between being and seeming.

Love for Love is one of Congreve's two bestknown plays, the other being *The Way of the World* (1700). In each play, Congreve uses sexual gamesmanship to explore and satirize the complexities and duplicities of his society. The play is also "metatheatre," or theatre that is a comment on theatre itself. Many of the characters are playacting parts to each other, and the dialogue negotiates the arena of sexual conquest, gender relations, and the exchanges inherent when marriage is part of a play. Moreover, Congreve's play enters into a conversation with the theatre of its time; Love for Love is a response to an earlier popular play, *Love for Money.* Arriving as a writer late in the Restoration period, Congreve uses the stage to comment upon an increasingly complex society and class structure that often seemed frivolous.

Author Biography

William Congreve was born on January 24, 1670, in the town of Bardsey in Yorkshire, England. By 1672, the family had moved to London; in 1674, the family relocated to the Irish port town of Youghal, where Congreve's father served as a lieutenant in the British army. Growing up in Ireland, Congreve attended Kilkenny College, where Jonathan Swift was a few years ahead of him. In 1686, Congreve matriculated at Trinity College in Dublin, where he developed an interest in the sensual pleasures of life. Perhaps more importantly, it was while at Trinity that Congreve became a devotee of the theatre. He likely attended the Smock Alley Theatre, which ran plays that recently had success in London.

In 1689, Congreve left Trinity and Dublin for London. He entered the Middle Temple, an institution that allowed men to study the law and, significantly, to enter into London society. At the time, coffeehouses were the rage in London. Fashionable men congregated there to read pamphlets, broadsides, and other publications about news and politics; they also came there to socialize and to form salons and circles. Congreve quickly became a member of one of the literary circles that met at Will's Coffeehouse, in the Covent Garden district (famous to this day for its theatres). In this group, Congreve met the eminent poet, critic, and playwright John Dryden.

Having decided to pursue writing, Congreve quickly finished his first play, *The Old Bachelor,* and it was first produced at the Drury Lane Theatre in 1693 before being produced by the Theatre Royal. Two other similarly successful plays followed: *The Double Dealer*(1693), and Love for Love (1695). His later plays, including *The Mourning Bride*(1697) and his masterpiece *The Way of the World*(1700), met with less success; critics have suggested that the satire of these plays was too sharp and made audiences uncomfortable. After 1701, he wrote no more plays (except for an adaptation of a Molière play he undertook with John Vanbrugh and William Walsh in 1704).

For his remaining years he lived, in the words of Voltaire (who met him and wrote about him in his *Letters Concerning the English Nation*), "upon no other foot than that of a gentleman, who led a life of plainness and simplicity." He invested in two theatre companies, neither of which brought him much money, and he had a small income from government sinecures (posts that require little work but secure a salary). Finally, in 1714, George I named him Secretary to the Island of Jamaica, a post that paid over 700 pounds a year. In his final years he remained an active member of his literary circle, the Kit-Cat Club, but wrote no more. He died in January, 1729, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Plot Summary

Act 1

The play opens in the chamber of Valentine, a young libertine who is lounging and attempting to avoid his creditors who besiege him with requests for the money he owes them. Valentine and Jeremy, Valentine's servant, banter briefly about the value of reading philosophy, introducing by the vocabulary they use the theme of economics and exchange that will recur throughout the play. Jeremy complains that the life of the wit and idler has ruined Valentine, but Valentine suggests that he might use his verbal talents in order to write. Scandal, Valentine's best friend, enters and tells him ironically that using his talents and wit would have him end up more penniless than he is already.

As the scene in Valentine's chambers continues, Jeremy is called to the door by a series of knocks. When he returns, he informs Valentine that he has turned away creditors, including the nurse of one of Valentine's illegitimate children. One of the creditors, however, enters. Trapland is a scrivener (a professional writer or scribe) to whom Valentine owes 1,500 pounds, and he is quite eager to be paid. Valentine attempts to distract him by drinking with him. When he insists on pursuing the debt, Scandal threatens him for insulting Valentine's hospitality. When Trapland leaves, Valentine informs Scandal that he has a solution for his debts: his father has promised him money immediately if he will sign over all of his future inheritance to his brother, Benjamin, a sailor.

Valentine's acquaintance Tattle arrives, and Scandal and Valentine make fun of his luck with women, eventually lying to him that they know he has had some experience with Mrs. Frail, who is about to arrive. Tattle, to their surprise, admits this, then insists on being sneaked out of the chamber before Mrs. Frail arrives. Scandal agrees, but only on the condition that Tattle tell him the names of six other women with whom he has been involved. When Mrs. Frail arrives, she informs the men that Valentine's brother Benjamin has arrived and that Miss Prue, her niece and Foresight's daughter, is coming up from the country, for she has been promised to Ben. The act ends with Scandal escorting Mrs. Frail while shopping. He promises to tell Angelica, Valentine's love interest, that Valentine is considering giving up his inheritance for her sake.

Act 2

The second act opens in Foresight's house, where Foresight (Angelica's uncle) asks his servant where the women of the house might be. Angelica arrives in the room, asking to borrow Foresight's coach, and Foresight tells his servant to inform Sir Sampson (Valentine's father) that he will soon call on him. Irritated at Angelica's desire to ride around town in the carriage, he tells her that her habit of "gadding about" will result in a bad reputation. She responds by intimating that he is practicing witchcraft with the nurse. Angered, he tells her that, although he cannot take her money away, he will

ensure that Valentine, her beloved, will be made a pauper. She continues to make fun of him and he responds with his astrological predictions, eventually talking himself into a corner before Angelica leaves.

Sir Sampson enters holding the "deed of conveyance" (the papers that would take away Valentine's inheritance) in his hand. Sir Sampson and Foresight argue briefly, Foresight maintaining the validity of astronomy and Sir Sampson boasting about his travels around the world. Jeremy enters the room, followed by Valentine. Valentine informs Sir Sampson that he has received the 4,000 pounds but that it is barely enough to pay his debts and asks for more. This infuriates Sir Sampson, who roars that he hopes to see his son hanged. Valentine argues that it was his upbringing that caused him to be prodigal, and for that reason Sir Sampson should support him.

All four men exit just as Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail enter. The two discuss how promiscuous Mrs. Frail appears to society. Mrs. Frail allows that she would like to break up the impending marriage between Benjamin and Miss Prue in order to marry Benjamin herself (she has heard of his imminent fortune). When Tattle and Miss Prue enter, the sisters attempt to get the two to flirt, which they proceed to do. Tattle is chasing Miss Prue to her bedchamber when the act ends.

Act 3

When the third act opens, a nurse is banging on Miss Prue's door, trying to get her to come out. Miss Prue is on the other side of the door with Tattle, who is disgusted that he might have to lie about something he never did. He quickly leaves just as Valentine, Angelica, and Scandal come on stage. Angelica is acting indifferently to Valentine. Tattle enters, and Angelica begins teasing him about his success with women. Sir Sampson, Mrs. Frail, Miss Prue, and a servant enter, announcing that Ben has arrived; in an aside, Miss Prue tells Mrs. Frail that she is not interested in him. Hearing that Benjamin is about to arrive, Valentine leaves with Scandal, who has a plan for him.

Ben enters with a servant and greets his father and all present. Sir Sampson tells Ben that he will be getting married, but he shows little enthusiasm for anything but sea life. All exit except Ben and Miss Prue; he tries to be polite to her, accepting their arranged marriage, but she is not interested in him. When she continues to be rude to him, he curses her. Mrs. Frail and Mrs. Foresight enter to take advantage of the quarrel. Mrs. Foresight escorts a weeping Miss Prue to the parlor and Mrs. Frail takes Ben to her bedchamber, ostensibly so that Sir Sampson and Foresight will not know that the betrothed do not get along.

The two men enter, wondering about the absence of Miss Prue and Ben, when Scandal enters to tell them that Valentine appears to have gone mad. Scandal makes fun of Foresight for his belief in astrology until Mrs. Foresight enters, urging Foresight to come to bed. Scandal whispers to Mrs. Foresight that he has great passion for her; she acts offended but immediately starts telling Foresight that he looks terrible and should take to bed. As he leaves, Mrs. Foresight and Scandal discuss whether a woman can be

virtuous. Scandal says that, while it is possible, it is not particularly worth the trouble. As they talk, Mrs. Frail and Ben enter. He sings her a song before they all go off to bed.

Act 4

Scandal and Jeremy are in Valentine's chambers, making sure he is ready to appear mad before his father. Angelica and her servant enter, and Jeremy tells them that Valentine has gone mad, but Angelica senses that this is a trick. She pretends to be extremely concerned before exiting. Sir Sampson enters with Buckram, a lawyer, preparing to have Valentine acknowledge the deed of conveyance he has signed. As Jeremy tells Sir Sampson that Valentine is out of his wits, Buckram informs him that this unfortunate circumstance invalidates the deed. They enter Valentine's room and Valentine pretends to be insane until Buckram leaves. Valentine teases his distraught father, then leaves with Jeremy.

Foresight, Mrs. Foresight, and Mrs. Frail enter, and Scandal and Sir Sampson inform them that Valentine is out of his wits and, consequently, that the deed of conveyance is no longer in effect. Scandal banters with Mrs. Foresight about their encounter of the previous night before he and the Foresights leave. Ben enters, and in his conversation with Mrs. Frail she concludes that he is a fool, utterly devoid of sophistication. As Ben leaves, Mrs. Foresight enters, saying that Foresight has now rejected her and she is setting her sights on Sir Sampson. For her part, she tells Mrs. Frail that she has made a deal with Jeremy: they will bring Mrs. Frail to Valentine in disguise and tell him that Mrs. Frail is Angelica, ensuring a marriage between the two.

Valentine, Scandal, Foresight, and Jeremy enter, Valentine raving insanely. Mrs. Frail pretends to be Angelica. Then Angelica herself enters, followed by Tattle. Jeremy continues pretending to advance the plan of marrying Mrs. Frail to Valentine, but Valentine asks him to encourage everyone to leave so that he can tell Angelica of the plan. The room now empty, Valentine tells Angelica of his design; but Angelica pretends to think he is still mad.

Act 5

Act 5 opens at Foresight's house. Angelica is talking to her maid when Sir Sampson enters. The two flirt, and Angelica makes him believe that she is interested in marrying him. Tattle and Jeremy enter; Jeremy suggests that he would like to go to work for Tattle now that Valentine is insane. Miss Prue comes in and attaches herself to Tattle, who attempts to get rid of her. Foresight enters and attempts to interest Tattle in marrying Miss Prue, but Tattle resists. When Tattle leaves, Miss Prue resolves to marry Robin, the butler; Foresight has her locked in her room. Ben enters and informs the company that Angelica and Sir Sampson are to be married. Sir Sampson and Angelica enter with their lawyer, Buckram. When Ben is not sufficiently supportive of his marriage, Sir Sampson curses him.

Tattle and Mrs. Frail enter suddenly, bemoaning that Jeremy has tricked them and that they have unwittingly married each other. Valentine enters, learns of his father's impending marriage to Angelica, and comes clean, telling Sir Sampson that his insanity was nothing but a sham. Sir Sampson still wants his son to sign the deed of conveyance. Valentine refuses to do it until Angelica certifies that she does, indeed, want to marry Sir Sampson; when she does, he agrees to sign his inheritance over for the sake of her greater happiness. When he does so, she immediately tells him that she was pretending, and that now that he has proven his true love for her she wants to marry him. She upbraids Sir Sampson for being a terrible father and ends the play by speaking to men's unfair criticisms of women as inconstant and unreliable.

Act 1

Act 1 Summary

As the first act opens, a young man named Valentine is lazily conversing with a servant, Jeremy, about the nature of Valentine's woeful financial situation. Valentine is the privileged son of a wealthy man, but has squandered all his money on women and entertainment. At present, Valentine is in self-imposed seclusion so as to avoid all the debt collectors to whom he owes large sums of money.

Valentine has taken to reading books, a habit which Jeremy notes will bring in no money, so can have no worthwhile purpose. Valentine, however, considers the possibility of earning an income by writing poetry. The two men are joined by Valentine's best friend, Scandal, who agrees with Jeremy that Valentine does not have much future in writing for income.

Jeremy is repeatedly called away from the conversation to answer knocks at the door. Each time Jeremy returns to re-join Valentine and Scandal, another knock comes, signaling another creditor demanding money. Valentine is unfazed by the activities, even though the possibility of going to debtor's prison is an imminent possibility.

One of the people at the door is a woman who is a nurse to one of Valentine's illegitimate children. Valentine wishes that the child had been smothered at birth, but Scandal gives the woman a little bit of money for the child's care. Another creditor named Trapland is adamant about being paid, and Valentine engages the man in several rounds of drink so as to distract him from the original purpose of the visit. Scandal thwarts any more of Trapland's attempts to collect by telling the man that Valentine's hospitality has been insulted.

Finally, Trapland leaves. Valentine shares with Scandal that Valentine's father has offered him four thousand pounds if Valentine will only sign over his inheritance to Benjamin, Valentine's brother, who is at sea. Valentine's father extended the offer once before, but Valentine declined. Valentine's current financial situation is dire, however, and he may have to accept the offer this time.

Another friend of Valentine's named Tattle arrives, and both Valentine and Scandal poke fun at Tattle's inexperience with women. The two friends even accuse Tattle of having had intimate relations with Mrs. Frail, another friend, who is expected to arrive at any moment. The joke is on Valentine and Scandal, however, as Tattle admits that the encounters with Mrs. Frail are indeed true and manages to escape before the woman arrives.

Mrs. Frail has come with news that Valentine's brother, Benjamin, has returned from sea, and that Miss Prue, Mrs. Frail's niece, will be arriving in the city very soon because the young lady is engaged to Benjamin. It is clear that Valentine and Scandal enjoy

teasing Mrs. Frail, and engage her in bawdy conversation until, finally, Scandal agrees to accompany the woman on a shopping excursion. Valentine is aware that Scandal may come in contact with Angelica, the woman whom Valentine loves, and asks Scandal to tell Angelica that he has plans of relinquishing his inheritance in order to win her.

Act 1 Analysis

Valentine is a bit of a scoundrel whose name is most fitting due to his dalliances with women all over London. His irresponsible behavior has alienated him from his father's affections, however, and the older man is willing to sell Valentine his inheritance so that back debts may be paid and the honor restored. Valentine is unmoved by any pleas from creditors or family members, and has only one goal; to marry Angelica, a woman from a fine family with her own fortune.

Scandal, Valentine's best friend, does not have the characteristics that his name implies; rather he is good-hearted and even gives a bit of money to the nurse of one of Valentine's illegitimate children. Scandal seems to have a calming affect on Valentine and serves as the voice of reason in all the chaos surrounding Valentine's most recent predicaments.

Tattle's name, however, does seem to fit the man who talks incessantly about anything and everything. Mrs. Frail is probably an ironic name though, as she seems to be a woman about town with some bawdy stories and inappropriate encounters attributed to her. The author seems to be having fun with the names as descriptors for the characters, and letting the audience determine on their own which names are appropriate or not.

Act 2

Act 2 Summary

As the second act begins, Angelica's uncle, Foresight, enters his home with a servant. Foresight is perplexed because none of the women of the house appear to be at home. Foresight orders the servant to find Sir Sampson, Valentine's father, to inform Sampson that Foresight will soon call on him for business. Suddenly, Angelica enters the room and asks to use her uncle's carriage because hers is broken down. Foresight does not approve of women riding around in carriages by themselves. He chastises Angelica, who seems to be catching her uncle's wrath in lieu of all the other women who are not at home at the moment.

Angelica is not bothered by her uncle's accusations that riding alone through town will result in a bad reputation, and retorts that Foresight himself has been seen engaging in inappropriate behavior with the nurse of the house. Foresight is impotent to punish Angelica because her fortune is hers alone, but the old man swears that he will make sure that Valentine remains poor. Angelica tires of her uncle and leaves to carry out her plans for the afternoon.

Sir Sampson arrives with the deed of conveyance which gives Valentine his inheritance now, and relinquishes Sampson from any more liability to his wayward son. Sampson is in a hurry to get the papers legalized because his other son, Benjamin, will be home tonight, and Sampson wants to settle the matter of the inheritance. Foresight, who imagines he is an astrological expert, quarrels with Sampson over the luck and timing of the drawing up of the papers.

Fortunately, Jeremy enters and announces the arrival of Valentine. Sampson is not particularly pleased to see his son. Valentine acknowledges receipt of the four thousand pounds earlier today, even though the amount will barely cover his debts. Valentine has the temerity to ask for even more money and Sir Sampson is outraged and swears that he hopes to see Valentine hanged. To Sampson, Valentine does not seem like a son at all, but Valentine blames his father for bringing him into the world and then encumbering him with things like reason, passion, and appetites. Sir Sampson bemoans Valentine's attitudes but can do nothing more about his son, and Foresight and Sampson leave the room. Valentine orders Jeremy to stay and see Mrs. Frail and Mrs. Foresight in order to get any information he can about Angelica.

Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail are sisters and Mrs. Foresight is chastising Mrs. Frail for her indiscriminate behavior in public. Mrs. Frail contends that male company is her right because she is not married and needs to find gentlemen friends and support. Mrs. Frail would like to be married and enjoy the security that her sister enjoys as a married woman. In fact, Mrs. Frail would like nothing more than to marry Benjamin Sampson because word of his inheritance is spreading. Benjamin is promised to Miss Prue, Mrs. Foresight's stepdaughter, who has come to London from the country. The two older

women would like to encourage the budding relationship with Miss Prue and Mr. Tattle so that Benjamin will be free.

Miss Prue approaches with Tattle, to whom she is attracted, and after some brief pleasantries, Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail leave the room. Emboldened by the attentions of Miss Prue, Tattle takes advantage of the situation in which they find themselves and ultimately seduces Miss Prue.

Act 2 Analysis

The author's use of irony in the character's names continues in this act with the introduction of new characters. Foresight, who imagines himself to be a man of impeccable instinct and an astrology expert, is actually a bumbling fool who cannot even attend to the matters of his own household properly. Mrs. Foresight suffers much the same fate, as she seems out of touch with reality when chastising her sister, Mrs. Frail, for making inappropriate social gestures when it is critical that Mrs. Frail find a husband for support. The irony of Mrs. Frail's name is that she is nothing like her name, being very calculating, and even bawdy in her attempts to achieve her goals.

The contrast of city life to country life is shown in the metaphor of Miss Prue and Mr. Tattle. Miss Prue's biological urges are too forthright for Mr. Tattle, who is accustomed to cunning games of seduction and behind-the-scenes activity. The plotting of Mrs. Frail will no doubt undermine the unsuspecting country bumpkin, Miss Prue.

Act 3

Act 3 Summary

A nurse is banging on Miss Prue's bedroom door as the girl hides inside with Tattle. Unfortunately for Tattle, the nurse has interrupted his seduction of Miss Prue and he leaves the bed chamber just as Angelica, Valentine, and Scandal enter the stage. Apparently there has been conversation between these three in regard to the nature of Valentine's love for Angelica. Angelica swears that Valentine's intentions were never made clear and that any romantic feelings are not returned. Scandal attempts to help Valentine out of this romantic debacle but to no avail.

The group is interrupted by the arrival of Miss Prue, Mrs. Frail, and a servant who announces that Valentine's brother, Ben, has just arrived. In a stage whisper, Miss Prue confides in Mrs. Frail that she herself has no interest in Ben, which pleases Mrs. Frail. Valentine wants to leave before Ben enters the room because of Valentine's status as the disowned son, and he doesn't want any confrontations tonight. Scandal has a plan for his friend, Valentine, and the two friends leave.

Ben enters the room to the delight of Sir Sampson, who has not seen his son for a few years. Ben is entrenched in the sailor's life, and is not pleased to hear that his father has promised him to Miss Prue for marriage. In an effort to let Ben and Miss Prue get acquainted, the others leave, but Miss Prue rejects all overtures from Ben because she is in love with Tattle. Her rejections fuel Ben's anger and the two engage in a heated argument, upon which Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail enter. Mrs. Frail takes Ben to her own bedroom, while Mrs. Foresight takes Miss Prue to a parlor so that Sir Sampson will see that the young people are at odds with each other.

Sir Sampson and Mr. Foresight return and wonder to where Ben and Miss Prue have disappeared, but Scandal interrupts them to say that Valentine has lost his senses. While the two older men debate the merits of Scandal's claims, Mrs. Foresight enters the room and Scandal takes the opportunity to tell her of his own infatuation with her. Mrs. Foresight is not entirely unpleased to hear this, and tries to convince her husband that he looks unwell in an attempt to get him to go to his own bed. After Foresight leaves, Scandal is continuing his seduction of Mrs. Foresight when Ben and Mrs. Frail return, obviously infatuated with each other. The couples part for the evening and Ben and Scandal go their separate ways.

Act 3 Analysis

The father and son relationships become apparent in this scene. Sir Sampson is repelled by Valentine, whom he is trying to disinherit, yet comes to life at the arrival of his other son, Ben. There is some reason to the father's thinking though, in that Valentine is a drain on Sampson's reserves, financially and emotionally, without any

reciprocation. Ben, on the other hand, is a sailor who never wants or asks for anything from his father. If Valentine would only make an attempt to take a mature role in their relationship, the dynamic would be completely changed. Sampson has made it clear to Foresight that one receives in exchange something of equal value to that given. In this case, the father would like to provide love for love, but there is never any returned, in spite of years of effort on his part.

This scene also reveals many secret intimate encounters, and the physical comedy of lovers narrowly escaping discovery, as well as stage whispers designed to show the intent of one character toward another. The aspect of blatant sexuality is accepted too, as evidenced by the disastrous immediate pairing of Miss Prue and Benjamin, and the opportunistic Mrs. Frail rescuing Benjamin by taking him to her bedroom. There is not much innuendo and the characters talk openly about their conquests, past and hopeful.

Act 4

Act 4 Summary

This act begins in Valentine's home, where Scandal and Jeremy are testing Valentine to prepare him to act mad when his father arrives for the signing of the legal papers. When Angelica arrives, Jeremy informs her that Valentine has taken leave of his senses, but Angelica catches on to the trick very quickly and fakes tremendous concern for Valentine.

Sir Sampson arrives with a lawyer, Buckram, so that the legal papers can be signed and Valentine lose all rights to any inheritance. Sir Sampson is irate to hear that Valentine has gone mad, especially when Buckram informs him that Valentine's state of mind would invalidate anything he may sign. Valentine is quite aware of this and plays the part of a madman for full effect until Buckram is convinced to leave. Sampson seems concerned for Valentine, who continues the charade until finally the older man leaves in despair.

Mr. and Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail arrive and Scandal and Sir Sampson tell all of them the news that Valentine has lost his mind and that the deed is invalid. Scandal tries to engage Mrs. Foresight in flirting about their intimate encounter from the night before, but the lady has conveniently forgotten it. Benjamin arrives next, and in a conversation with Mrs. Frail, it becomes clear that she is no longer interested in him and wishes he would set out to sea as soon as possible.

Ben gives up on the possibility of wooing Mrs. Frail and leaves. Mrs. Foresight declares her intentions for Sir Sampson, as Mr. Foresight has lost all interest in her as a woman. Mrs. Foresight then informs Mrs. Frail of a trick she conceived with Jeremy to disguise Mrs. Frail as Angelica and send her to Valentine so that they may be married.

Valentine continues to rant and rave as Scandal, Foresight, and Jeremy return to witness Mrs. Frail pretending to be the beloved Angelica. Angelica enters the room with Tattle, and Jeremy continues the charade of pairing off Valentine and Mrs. Frail, but Valentine quickly urges Jeremy to rid the room of everyone but the true Angelica so that the plan can be revealed to her. Valentine does reveal the trick to Angelica, but she plays her own game and pretends to act like Valentine is still mad.

Act 4 Analysis

There is much activity among all the characters in this act, which adds to the physical comedy of the piece. Stage whispers and gestures add to the charade being played out by Valentine in order to avoid signing the legal papers. The romantic episodes are also very important in that they are subdued by the light of day. The women refuse to acknowledge that anything occurred the previous night. There is much confusion, which adds to the convoluted story line about deceptions and false intentions. Things are not

really what they seem and it seems that only the best at playing games will succeed at winning and at love.

Act 5

Act 5 Summary

At Foresight's home, Angelica is speaking to her maid, Jenny, when Sir Sampson enters. Unbeknownst to Sampson, Angelica begins a web of deceit and flirts outrageously with him, leading Sampson to believe that she has romantic intentions toward him and would like to marry him. Sampson is extremely pleased that a younger woman would consider him to be eligible husband material.

Tattle and Jeremy arrive, and Jeremy requests to work for Tattle now that Valentine, his current employer, has gone mad. Tattle is considering the request when Miss Prue enters the room and inquires about his recent activities. Miss Prue has tried in vain to locate Tattle, who has been making himself scarce so as to avoid the clinging girl. Tattle informs Miss Prue that she has misconstrued any romantic intentions on his part and that there will be no wedding between the two of them. Even Foresight himself cannot convince Tattle to change his mind and Tattle leaves. Distraught now, Miss Prue tells her father that her only course of action is to marry Robin, the butler, who has voiced affection for her.

Ben comes into the room to announce that his father, Sir Sampson, and Angelica are to be married. Sampson and Angelica follow close behind with Buckram in tow. Ben cannot believe that Angelica has agreed to marry the old man and voices his opinion, which initiates an argument between Ben and his father.

The fracas is interrupted when Mrs. Frail and Tattle enter, cursing Jeremy for having tricked them, for Mrs. Frail and Tattle are now married as a result of his deceit. Valentine enters, now swearing his sanity is intact, and apologizes to his father for his behavior. Sir Sampson is moved slightly but still wants Valentine to sign the deed of conveyance, giving up his inheritance.

Valentine refuses to sign until he has a chance to ask Angelica about her affections. Angelica tells him that she does indeed want to marry Sampson, to which Valentine has no response other than to sign the legal papers. When Angelica realizes that Valentine has signed for her ultimate good, she immediately reveals that her love is for Valentine, not Sir Sampson, and that she has been playing a game herself to see the true intentions of both men. Angelica agrees to marry Valentine and berates Sir Sampson for being a despicable father. It is Angelica who has the last word when she says that it is men who are hypocrites and infidels unworthy of the true love and fidelity of women. Angelica considers herself to be fortunate in that she has found a faithful man worthy of her love.

Act 5 Analysis

Three important themes culminate in this final act. The practice of role playing, whether a theatrical trick, or the parlor game of Restoration England, leads to nothing but disappointment for most of the characters, who are not astute enough to manage their roles successfully. Secondly, the father and son relationship theme is exposed for its vulnerabilities and weaknesses, as evidenced most clearly by Sir Sampson and Valentine's contentious relationship. And last, the severe distinction of gender roles, showing women as servants or chattel to be bargained for and the legal positions and rights of men in society, contrast starkly with the actual behavior exhibited by the respective genders. The author makes one last attempt to show that insincerity has no place in families, love relationships, or business arrangements. It is always best to show true intentions and you will receive in kind whatever is invested; deceit for deceit or, hopefully, love for love.

Characters

Angelica

Angelica is Valentine's beloved, a saucy, independent young woman possessed of "a considerable fortune." We first see Angelica in her uncle's house, asking her uncle for the loan of his carriage so that she can "gad about" town. During the play, we see her in no affectionate or loving exchanges with Valentine; rather, their scenes together reveal her wit and self-assuredness. She tests Valentine's love by pretending to desire his father, Sir Sampson, who assures her of his youthful vigor. Like a perfect coquette, she commits to no man, feigning indifference to all.

At the same time that she demonstrates her own wit, Angelica is suspicious of the motivations of witty men, telling Valentine that "She that marries a very Witty Man submits both to the Severity and insolent Conduct of her Husband. I should like a Man of Wit for a Lover, because I would have such a one in my Power; but I would no more be his Wife than his Enemy." Her role in the play is to "unmask" or reveal the characters' true natures that lie beneath the pretenses they put on. Through her, we learn that Sir Sampson cares for neither son; because of her, Valentine's genuinely loving side comes out; her conversation shows Foresight's astrological ideas to be idiotic. She is by no means "angelic," but in many ways she is the moral center of the play, for her actions reveal the dishonesties of the other characters.

Jeremy Fetch

Jeremy is Valentine's servant, who jokes about wishing to be released from his contract. Jeremy feels himself to be above servant status and mentions twice that he has been "at Cambridge" (albeit as a servant) and has picked up some education from his master there. Valentine confides in him and uses him to advance his plans. In the first act, he is quite impudent to Valentine, making fun of him and even criticizing his master's refusal to pay his debts. In act 4, though, it is Jeremy who is the intermediary between Valentine and the people to whom Valentine wishes to appear insane. Jeremy's purported intelligence and education are generally undercut by the other characters, who scoff at his pretense. In a scene not depicted on stage, we learn that Jeremy is quite clever, indeed: he tricks Tattle and Mrs. Frail into marrying each other, when they both were attempting to trick others into marrying them (Tattle sought Angelica's hand, while Mrs. Frail pursued Ben).

Mr. Foresight

Foresight is Angelica's uncle. He is a blowhard obsessed with astrological omens and other such pseudoscience. From the second act on, he interprets everyone's comments as veiled knowledge about Mrs. Foresight's infidelities. His name is clearly ironic: all of

his astrological readings and divinations are aimed at providing him with foresight, or a knowledge of the future, but he is probably the least perceptive character in the play.

Mrs. Foresight

Mrs. Foresight is Angelica's aunt. She and Mrs. Frail, who are sisters, attempt to break up the impending marriage between Ben and Miss Prue in order to marry Mrs. Frail to Ben. Like her husband's name, hers is meant to be ironic, for her plot to marry Mrs. Frai to Ben falls apart because she lacks a sufficient understanding of human nature.

Mrs. Frail

Mrs. Frail is Mrs. Foresight's sister. She is unmarried and in the market for a husband, and, before the play opens, she has already had an affair with Tattle. However, Mrs. Foresight feels that she behaves much too promiscuously to land a worthy husband. As a result, the two of them hatch a plan to land Ben as a husband for Mrs. Frail. Their plan fails, however, and Mrs. Frail ends up married to Tattle. She is hardly "frail"; she is a calculating and headstrong woman who is not timid about going after what she wants: Ben's fortune.

Benjamin Legend

Benjamin Legend Benjamin is Valentine's brother, a sailor just returned from a three-year voyage. Benjamin is primarily a plot device and an object of fun. His role is that of the "good brother" whom Sir Sampson contrasts with "bad brother" Valentine, who is asked to sign over his future inheritance to Ben. Ben has been directed to marry Miss Prue but has little affection for her. Instead, Mrs. Frail develops a liking for him when she discovers his future fortune. Ben's primary personal characteristic is his simplicity: he cannot fathom the duplicity, game playing, and plots that underlie all personal relationships among these urban sophisticates. His other important characteristic is his "sea-dog" language, which is a constant source of humor for the audience.

Valentine Legend

Valentine is a young "rake," or idle upperclass gentleman. His name alludes to his attraction to the ladies and their attraction to him. He owes a great deal of money to various creditors and has exhausted his father's patience with his spending. In addition, the play makes it clear that Valentine has done his share of corrupting young women. His most immediate motivations are to avoid paying his debts and to marry the young lady Angelica.

As the play opens and closes with Valentine as the central focus, he is the character most likely to be considered *Love for Love's* "protagonist." He is also the character who comes closest to changing or developing. However, he is absent for much of the play.

We see him in his chamber at the beginning, avoiding "duns" (debt collectors)—one of which is a young nurse who attempts to obtain money from him to support one of his illegitimate children—and bantering with his manservant and hatching plans with his friend Scandal. During the course of the play he tries to avoid seeing his father (who wants him to sign his inheritance over to his brother Benjamin) and eventually feigns madness in order to avoid his responsibilities. But at the opening of the play, he is not the typical "rake" character, for he wishes to drop out of society and live as a writer and thinker. His servant Jeremy and his friend Scandal persuade him that this route would be fruitless, however.

By the end, he seems to change. Only at the last minute, when he learns of Angelica's intent to marry his father, does Valentine abandon his scheme to get as much money as possible from his father, telling Angelica that he is willing to let her go and sign over his inheritance in order to secure her happiness. While his earlier credo may have been "Love for Money" (to quote the title of a contemporary play), when *Love for Love* ends, Valentine demonstrates that he is indeed willing to pursue love as an end in itself.

Miss Prue

Miss Prue is Foresight's daughter by a previous marriage. She is young, naïve, "a silly, awkward, country girl." Not being sophisticated enough to understand the complicated plots and schemes of the people around her, she falls in love with Tattle, whom she wishes to make her husband. Her father refuses to arrange this, and when she then demands to be married to Robin, the butler, her father locks her in her room. Despite her name, she is neither prudent nor prudish. At the end of the second act, she allows herself to be seduced by Tattle, and, in terms of prudence, she has none, making snap decisions without any concern for their long-term consequences.

Sir Sampson

Sir Sampson is Benjamin and Valentine's father. He has a considerable amount of money and resents the fact that Valentine has been running through his estate with his fast living. In response, he offers Valentine a deal: sign over his future inheritance to his brother and Sir Sampson will give him four thousand pounds on the spot. Valentine takes the four thousand pounds in advance but feigns insanity to avoid signing the papers, which infuriates Sir Sampson.

Although at first Sir Sampson seems to feel affection for his son Ben, we learn as the play goes on that he really loves neither son. When Angelica begins to show interest in Sir Sampson, he is ready to write off both sons and spend their money himself. He is a selfish and arrogant man. Sir Sampson's name puns on the Biblical Samson, who destroyed a house by knocking down its pillars; Sir Sampson is willing to destroy his own house by his utter lack of care and affection for his sons.

Scandal

Scandal is Valentine's closest friend. He is a rake like Valentine but less coldhearted than Valentine at first is. When Valentine expresses disgust that the mother of one of his children did not smother the child, Scandal merely expresses his best wishes for his "Godchild" and sends money. Scandal helps Valentine appear insane for the purpose of winning Angelica. His function is to provide a mellowing influence on Valentine, who, without the presence of Scandal, would be a truly reprehensible character until the final scene of the play. Like most of the other names in the play, his is ironic; of the two friends, Scandal and Valentine, Scandal is by far the less scandalous.

Tattle

Tattle is largely an object of fun in the play. He brags constantly about his success with the ladies; however, his rhetoric is always undercut by reality. He develops an affection for Miss Prue and, by the end of the second act, attempts to seduce her. At the end of the play, he accidentally marries Mrs. Frail, whom he has already debauched.

Trapland

Trapland is a scrivener, or a professional scribe, to whom Valentine owes money. He shows up in Valentine's chamber in the first act when Valentine and Jeremy attempt to distract him from his mission.

Themes

Gender Roles and Sexual Behavior

Throughout Love for Love, Congreve plays with the limited roles assigned to the genders in upper-class society. Men can be cuckolds, cruel masters, rakes, or provincials, while women can be scheming meddlers, whores, or (rarely) good wives. The crucial characteristic for women is how permissive they are in terms of bestowing their sexual favors; men, however, are judged less by their sexual behavior and more by their "mastery" of the world: their children, finances, servants, and love affairs.

For the contemporary reader approaching Restoration drama for the first time, what is most striking is the "double standard" applied to sexual behavior. Men were encouraged to seduce virgins or other men's wives, while women who were too promiscuous sexually were considered disreputable. Valentine, for instance, is visited by the nurse of one of his illegitimate children and curses the mother for not killing the child and sparing him the expense of supporting it; Tattle and Scandal both boast of their success with women. The women of the play, however, know to keep their experiences quiet. Ironically, in the comedies of this period, women's promiscuity is less serious and damaging than it would be in later decades. After the two decades of strict Puritan rule (which strictly enforced conservative sexual behavior), the Restoration witnessed a return to relaxed attitudes about sexual behavior. The underlying joke of most comedy in this period is that men may not be having sex but are always talking about it, while women do the exact opposite.

Dissembling / Role Playing

The Puritans, who took over England in the 1640s, sought to establish God's rule on earth. Part of the Puritan ethic was a deep mistrust of costumes, disguises, and appearances; for this and other reasons, the theatres were all closed during Puritan rule. But the Puritans were also deeply suspicious of the intrigues, game playing, and stratagems that dominated court and upper-class life in the monarchical system. They wished things to be open to their scrutiny.

The Restoration of 1660 changed all of this. Attempting to make up for twenty years of lost fun and intrigue, courtiers immediately reestablished the complicated and sophisticated society they had enjoyed before. Playwrights, in turn, depicted their intrigues with irony and hyperbole. In *Love for Love,* only the provincial characters of Miss Prue and Ben are what they seem. All of the urbanites pretend to be what they are not in order to benefit themselves. Valentine's sham madness is only the most obvious example of this, and his own "dissembling," or seeming to be what he is not, is met by Angelica's. Other characters who dissemble are Jeremy (who fools any number of characters with phony plans), Sir Sampson (who pretends to be a loving father to Ben but really is antipathetic to his parental duties), Mrs. Foresight (who cheats on her

husband), Tattle (who pretends to be interested in Miss Prue), and Mrs. Frail (who plays games in order to marry into Sir Sampson's estate). In act 2, Mrs. Frail and Mrs. Foresight encourage Miss Prue to act in a manner that is contrary to how she actually feels. Things are never what they seem in this society, Congreve tells the audience that only the best gameplayers will succeed in obtaining their desires.

Father/Son Relationships and Good Governance

Many critics have pointed out the potential political ramifications of Congreve's play. The model of governance he presents is that of Sir Sampson, Ben and Valentine's father. Such critics have argued that Congreve is making a claim against government based solely on blood or lineage and that he stands for government based on the welfare of the governed. Sir Sampson pretends to have the welfare of his subjects in mind, but in reality he could care less about them; once Angelica shows interest in him he is more than happy to cut both sons off. Congreve must portray this idea with subtlety, for to argue against hereditary monarchy in seventeenth century England could have resulted in imprisonment.

Urban Sophistication

One of the most common and widespread themes in English-language literature has historically been the difference between sophisticated urbanites and country bumpkins. This theme is rarely a serious one; it is generally used for humorous purposes. An early example of this theme can be found in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* where the pilgrim with the notably provincial accent tells a crude and naïve tale. To this day, humorous encounters between urbanites and provincials are a mainstay of many movie comedies.

In the Restoration period, the intrigues of London's high society were the primary concern of popular drama (partly because the inhabitants of London's high society were the primary audience for such theatre). *Love for Love* uses the contrast between two provincial characters—Ben and Miss Prue—and the complicated urbanites of the rest of the play to underscore the differences between the social classes. Ben cannot understand, or "fathom," the dissembling and intrigues going on around him. His language refers always to maritime life, and he knows nothing of society or city life. Miss Prue, a country girl, cannot comprehend that people marry for reasons other than immediate attraction. She is betrothed to Ben (who, for reasons of their structural similarity, would probably be her ideal match) but rejects him immediately for the charms of the libertine Tattle. When Tattle shows no interest in actually marrying her, she decides that she wants Robin, the butler.

Although this theme is played for laughs, there is often a serious, satirical undertone. Urban life, as depicted by such writers as Congreve, is a complicated, subtle minefield of game playing and deception. Often these comedies criticize the Baroque constructions of the schemes hatched by the characters. Why, the playwrights seem to ask, can people not be honest? Why must sophistication equate with dishonesty? Why

can't urbanites adopt the simple, unbeguiling ways of country people? But these questions are rarely serious, posed as they are by people who could not imagine living anywhere but in urban society.

Style

Irony

Wit, the skill most valued by the Restoration, depends upon a masterful use of irony if it is to convey an author's message. Many of the characters engage in wordplay and double entendre as they converse with each other. Though Congreve uses verbal irony to great effect in this play, his use of structural or dramatic irony is even more evident. Characters scheme to get things only to have their plans backfire in particularly ironic ways. Tattle's plan to marry Angelica while they are in disguise, for instance, ends with him being married to Mrs. Frail, who is pursuing a similar plot. But the characters' fates are themselves ironic. When Valentine .rst appears, he wishes to be a poor philosopher/poet with no worldly connections. By the end of the play, he is again willing to give up his fortune, only this time for love. Tattle's prowess with women, his ability to see three steps ahead in the game of seduction, leads him to "blindly" marry Mrs. Frail. Even the names of the characters are ironic: Angelica is hardly angelic, and Foresight utterly lacks the quality designated by his name.

Pace

The humor of *Love for Love* depends largely on the pacing of the work. Farcical comedies are light, frothy, and often silly works, and as such the director must pace the action quickly in order to sustain the comedy and prevent the audience from dwelling too much on the improbability of the plot. That sense of immediacy is lost, however, reading the play. As you read the play, try to imagine how it would be staged. The characters must enter and exit quickly; plots are hatched, secrets are revealed and betrayed, and characters are lied to and misdirected. The humor derives in part from the complexity of the plot. Even the audience becomes confused as to which characters know what and who is the target of seduction.

Historical Context

The Restoration

England is one of the world's most politically stable countries. It has been ruled in substantially the same way (by a monarchy and a Parliament) for almost a thousand years. The country's most traumatic political event, though, occurred in 1640, when Puritan forces overthrew King Charles I, executed him, and ruled under Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell for almost twenty years. In 1660, however, the monarchy was restored, King Charles II assumed the throne, and the complicated system of obtaining power by cultivating royal favor was reinstituted.

The Puritans attempted to radically change English society. They closed the theatres, feeling that they were immoral and promoted promiscuity, blasphemy, and prostitution; they destroyed such religious art as statues and stained glass because they felt they promoted idolatry; they discouraged the freewheeling, daring, sexually playful literature and social organization of the upper classes. Since Puritan theology was centered on man's sinfulness and on the doctrine of predestination, Puritan society was grim and focused entirely on religion and the world to come. For Puritans, enjoyment and sensual pleasures were not only suspect; they were sinful.

Consequently, when the monarchy was restored the hedonistic energies that had been suppressed over the previous decades surged forth powerfully. Early Restoration society was exuberant and risqué, and, as the theatres reopened, playwrights produced works centered on sexual intrigue, social game playing, and duplicity—all themes anathema to the Puritans. The upper classes, whose actions were depicted by these plays, enjoyed seeing their lives dramatized and appreciated verbal wit, and the lower classes, who also attended the theatre, loved the sexual innuendo and occasional slapstick humor. By Congreve's time, the excitement had diminished, and playwrights were beginning to satirize the complicated and often cruel games of London society.

This is not to say that England was without turmoil in the latter half of the seventeenth century. When James II took the throne upon the death of his brother Charles II in 1685, he sought to reestablish Catholicism as the official religion of the realm. Religious conflict, first between Catholics and the Church of England and then between High Church Anglicans and Puritans, had marked the previous century, and Britons were eager to avoid it. In 1688, a group of nobles invited William of Orange, a Protestant, to take the throne. He landed on the English coast, encountered little resistance from the king's forces, and took the throne. However, he refused to do so as an absolute monarch. Instead, he stipulated that he would only assume power under a bill of rights that limited royal privilege and guaranteed a number of basic rights to citizens. England became a constitutional monarchy. Perhaps most importantly for writers such as Congreve, the bill of rights allowed for a free press in England, which made it more difficult for writers to be suppressed by the king or by religious authorities for sedition, immorality, or blasphemy.

The Rake / The Wit

The best-known stock character of Restoration comedy is the wit. The cult of wit and verbal wordplay was at its height in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and such writers as Alexander Pope, Oliver Goldsmith, and Samuel Johnson are known as much for their wit and skill in conversation as for their writings. Since power and influence was often obtained through social settings, an ability to use words articulately and with air could not only gain a person prestige and respect but tangible benefits as well.

Reflecting this aspect of society, Restoration plays often have as their primary characters men and women who succeed by their wit. Often the humor in such plays come from two sources: first, the ridiculous, often sexual, predicaments in which the characters find themselves (this humor was meant to appeal to lower-class audiences); second, from the eloquence, subtlety, and wit shown by the characters as they subtly insult each other and tie their opponents in verbal knots. In *Love for Love*, the main wit is Angelica—which is ironic, for in these plays the wits are generally men. Many of the male characters—Scandal, Sir Sampson, Valentine, and even Jeremy—use their wit to ridicule others or to get what they want.

Closely related to the character of the wit is the rake. The rake was another stock character of Restoration comedy—a male who took pride in seducing the women around him. The women seduced by rakes could range from servants to the wives of important men, but the rake does not care about the consequences of his actions. In *Love for Love* three rakes all appear together in the first act: Valentine, Scandal, and Tattle. Valentine shows himself to be utterly amoral when the nurse of his illegitimate child asks him for money and he says, with disgust, that she should have "overlaid," or smothered, the child. At the end of the play, Valentine (defeated by Angelica's superior wit) gives up his rakishness for his lady's love. Tattle is an unsuccessful or classless rake, for he brags about his conquests. In the first act, Scandal, using his command of language to his advantage, tricks Tattle into admitting an affair with Mrs. Frail. With an insatiable appetite for gossip, Scandal gets Tattle to name six other conquests in exchange for keeping silent about the affair. A true rake keeps his seductions to himself, to better create an air of mystery and allure about him. Scandal is the true rake here, for he not only seduces a married woman (Mrs. Foresight), he does so secretly.

Critical Overview

As a member of some of the most eminent literary circles in London, Congreve had the support of the era's leading literary figures by the time he wrote his first play, *The Old Bachelor.* John Dryden, the most important poet and critic of the Restoration, said of Congreve "in Him all Beauties of the Age we see . . . all this in blooming Youth you have achieved." Colley Cibber, an important actor and writer of the period, also praised Congreve in the 1690s. *Love for Love* also won great approval from Congreve's circle, but Congreve was increasingly unhappy about the public's reception of his work. A tepid enthusiasm greeted *Love for Love,* and Congreve's later masterpiece, *The Way of the World* (1700), was positively rejected by audiences, probably because of its sharp criticisms of society.

Ironically, while sophisticated audiences resented Congreve's criticisms of social shallowness and libertinism, more religious audiences were beginning to react against the libertine attitudes and sexual playfulness of the Restoration. In 1698, the Rev. Jeremy Collier condemned Congreve and *Love for Love,* calling the play "blasphemy" and arguing that, for Congreve, "a fine Gentleman is a fine Whoring, Swearing, Smutty, Atheistical Man." (Congreve himself responded to Collier, arguing that the end of the play contained a virtuous message, since Valentine gave up his rakish ways for true love.) In 1748, Edmund Burke condemned the immorality of the play, writing that "the Rankness of [Angelica's] ideas, and her Expressions . . . are scarce consistent with any Male, much less Female, Modesty." The writer Fanny Burney commented in 1778 that "though it is fraught with wit and entertainment, I hope I should never see it represented again; for it is . . . extremely indelicate." Not all eighteenth-century viewers were of the same opinion, however. A reviewer in the *London Chronicle* of 1758 remarked upon the revival of the play that it was "the best comedy, either ancient or modern, that was ever written to please upon the stage." Victorian critics of the nineteenth century praised the play's wit, but, like their predecessors, regretted its "indelicacy" and immorality.

Modernist critics and writers of the early to mid-twentieth century paid little attention to the Restoration period, adhering to the belief, espoused by T. S. Eliot, that Milton and Dryden had weakened English literature by injecting too much Latin into the language. London productions of the play appeared occasionally, most notably one directed by and starring John Gielgud in 1943. But the revival of interest in the seventeenth and eighteenth century that began in the 1980s and 1990s increased the study of Congreve greatly. Recent examination of the play has focused on everything from Congreve's political stances to the presence of feminist themes in the play to an attempt to rediscover Restoration stage engineering.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

Barnhisel teaches writing and directs the Writing Center at the University of Southern California. In this essay, he discusses the varieties of love and ways in which love transforms people in Congreve's play.

In January of 1691, London saw the premiere of a new play by the popular playwright Thomas Durfey. *Love for Money,* in the words of theatre historian Derek Hughes, "uses the sexual and monetary intrigues of comedy as a way of praising the new political order . . . [it] affirms the power of law and the triumph of justice, with explicit reference to the struggle against James II and Louis XIV." By the "new political order," Hughes refers to the Glorious Revolution and overthrow of James II (who was allied, in his drive for absolute monarchical power, with France's Louis XIV) and his replacement by William of Orange and a constitutional monarchy. Love for Money also depicts "mercenary relationships" vying for supremacy with relationships based on real love and loyalty. In Durfey's play, mercenary relationships—love for money, in other words—are condemned and the libertine character (who embodies these relationships) is condemned to be hanged.

In many ways, *Love for Love* (1695) is a response to Durfey's play. Whereas in Durfey's play the libertine must pay the ultimate price, in Congreve's play the libertine willingly reforms himself, not by judicial order but by the power of love. Congreve, by answering Durfey's play in such a public fashion (theatregoers would have recognized the similarity in the plays' titles), enters into a conversation with his fellow playwrights and with the public about the meaning and importance of love in a society increasingly based on the exchange of money.

Love for Love gives us many sorts of love. There is love between a husband and a wife (the Foresights); love between a father and his sons (Sir Sampson, Ben, and Valentine); love between a father and daughter (Foresight and Miss Prue); love between sisters (Mrs. Frail and Mrs. Foresight); love between friends (Scandal and Valentine); even love between a servant and his master (Jeremy and Valentine). But the primary form of love examined in this play is romantic love, and this is exemplified in numerous false incarnations and in one valid instance. Valentine and Angelica represent in many ways the one true example of love—any kind of love—for all of the other relationships are, at their core, based on self-interest.

When we first see Valentine, he is plotting stratagems. Realizing that his financial situation has made him unable to continue his life as a rake and libertine, he resolves to give up the materialistic life and devote himself to study, writing, and the pursuit of his beloved, Angelica. "So shall my Poverty be a Mortification to her Pride," he says in act 1. He will, he feels, be more appealing to her as a poor suitor than as a wealthy one; he will stand out, if nothing else. But his pretensions to morality and a rejection of his earlier behavior are immediately undercut by his callous response to the pleas of his illegitimate child's nurse. For a rake, love and lust are essentially synonymous, and Valentine is still an adherent of the rake's philosophy, for he aims at nothing more than

"getting" Angelica. Harold Love argues that "Valentine is still in this speech picturing Angelica as a quarry to be hunted, not as a human equal to be loved."

In much of the rest of the play, the intrigues between Valentine and Angelica occur in the background. Rather than following their story in a detailed anatomy of one rake's progress toward true love, we watch any number of examples of untrue love. Congreve first examines lust-as-love through rakes like Scandal and Tattle. Tattle, we learn, is a successful seducer and has many notches on his bedpost. However, lacking wit, Tattle is tricked by Scandal into revealing the names of one of his lovers, Mrs. Frail. In order to prevent Scandal from revealing his knowledge to Mrs. Frail, Tattle must give Scandal the names of six additional conquests. Love, for these men, is simply a game, a way to gain prestige. No real affection whatsoever is expressed (except, ironically, by Scandal toward Valentine's rejected child).

The remainder of the cast that parades before the audience in the first two acts all add to the overwhelming portrayal of love as a sham and a joke. Mrs. Frail, who arrives in Valentine's chamber just as Tattle is attempting to avoid her, provides a disquisition on how a husband is the most pleasant person in the world because he saves all of his hostility for his wife. As act 2 opens, Angelica treats her uncle rudely and mercenarily, and he grouses about how he has been made a cuckold just before he vows to ruin her lover, Valentine. Sir Sampson enters and boasts vengefully,"I warrant my son thought nothing belonged to a father but forgiveness and affection." He will change his son's tune, he blusters. When Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail appear, they banter coquettishly and plan to break up an arranged marriage by introducing the prospective bride to Tattle (who, as we have learned, has already bedded Mrs. Frail).

Where the first two acts present the characters and allow them to each put forth their cynical attitudes about love, the third and fourth acts allow time for the various games and schemes that form the play's main plot to materialize and develop. After the nurse prevents Tattle from actually seducing Miss Prue, Angelica enters on the stage, and we finally see her with Valentine. But instead of a tearful reunion of lovers, Congreve gives us a deferral of love. "You can't accuse me of inconstancy," Angelica says as she walks in. "I never told you that I loved you." Angelica's defense against Valentine's rakish nature is typical of the society woman—hiding, not committing, playing games. Valentine, of course, is just as guilty of dishonesty and game playing, for he, with Scandal's help, is about to feign insanity.

After Angelica's appearance, the love between Valentine and Angelica fades into the background while further examples of false love occupy the stage. Sir Sampson appears genuinely happy to see Ben, but when he proposes a marriage Ben shows that his affections are not for women but for sea life (a suggestion of homosexuality, emphasized by Ben's lack of interest in marriage, would have been quite apparent to contemporary audiences). Additional examples of false love follow: Sir Sampson shows no concern when Scandal tells him about Valentine's insanity; Scandal and Mrs. Foresight scheme to get in bed together; Jeremy schemes to marry people without their knowledge or consent. Although Angelica and Valentine's relationship is not depicted among them, these scenes provide examples of what the couple does not want.

Scandal and Tattle show themselves to be the kind of dishonest, narcissistic, game playing men that Angelica does not want to be with, while Valentine discovers from his father's lack of concern that he needs someone willing to make sacrifices for him.

At the end of the play, then, both Angelica and Valentine give something up, accept a degree of vulnerability that is dangerous for inhabitants of such a complex and subtle society, to obtain love. As the play starts, both Angelica and Valentine view love as something with a quantifiable value. It is exchangeable; it is something with which they can barter; it is something that can be measured in terms of its worth. But Valentine is forced, because of the genuine feelings that he discovers he has for Angelica, to agree to give up everything in his life that has value (his inheritance and her) so that she can be happy. And although Angelica "wins" this encounter, in that her wit and her superior strategy get her what she wanted (a loving husband), she also has to give something up: her independence, her mistrust, her cynicism about the world of love and lovers. By showing that he is willing to give up his inheritance, Valentine not only wins Angelica's love but gets to keep the money as well.

Source: Greg Barnhisel, Critical Essay on *Love for Love*, in Drama for Students, The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

James Thompson In the following essay, Thompson explores themes in Love for Love, particularly reading and it's influence on the characters' actions and the roles they assume.

In *Love for Love* Congreve turned to Jonsonian humors characters and a romance plot that is quintessential New Comedy. This conservatism appears to be quite deliberate, as the playwright displays his mastery of the history and techniques of the stage in this particularly literary play. The characters and action come not so much from life as from literature, which makes *Love for Love*, as Arthur Hoffman notes, highly allusive; Valentine's madness, for example, recalls Achilles, Ajax, Hercules, Amadis, Orlando, Quixote, Hamlet and Lear. Congreve also invests his characters with selfconscious theatricality, for they talk about acting, while they adopt and abandon various roles, patterning their behavior on models that are often explicitly literary.

Literary models appear in the opening scene of the play, where Valentine is discovered "in his Chamber Reading" Epictetus, whose work eventually provides him with a moral ideal. The initial act of reading is doubly significant because the scene is patterned on *Don Quixote,* a fiction about reading. Like Quixote, Valentine misinterprets what he reads: Epictetus is to Valentine what the chivalric hero Amadis is to Quixote, an ideal or model which is initially misunderstood and improperly imitated, but eventually understood and validated. Reading leads to acting, and thus Epictetus and *Don Quixote* initiate two major occupations of *Love for Love.*

Few of Congreve's readers have been interested in his use of Epictetus in this play. Charles Lyons writes that Valentine is attracted to the Stoic's asceticism and "indifference to physical pleasure and pain." Aubrey Williams goes further, connecting the opening Epictetan contempt for riches with the whole strain of paradox in the play, paradoxes which prefigure Valentine's climactic renunciation. The *Enchiridion* serves as a manual or index to proper values in this play. Some of these values are explicitly Stoical, but the three Restoration translators of Epictetus praise him as a moralist who anticipates the Christian emphasis on humility, patience, resignation and renunciation, the virtues which become centrally important to Valentine. Valentine's progress may be seen in his gradual understanding and acceptance of Epictetus's message, for he initially misunderstands the Stoic, who sets forth at the beginning of the *Enchiridion* the difficulty that Valentine must face:

Respecting Man, things are divided thus:
Some do not, and some do belong to us.
Should you suppose what is not yours, your own,
Twill cost you many a sigh, and many a groan;
Many a dissapointment you will find,
Abortive hope, and distracted mind.

Love for Love dramatizes many such disappointments, particularly Valentine's vain attempts to control or manipulate people and objects not within his power; but when he humbly resigns his pretentions to an estate which is not his own, and when he allows Angelica the independence to choose for herself, he finally demonstrates his assimilation of Epictetus's moral lesson.

Valentine, however, is far from humble at the start of the play, when, setting down his book, he proposes to "follow the Examples of the wisest and wittiest of Men of all Ages; these Poets and Philosophers." According to Epictetus, this course of action can be more foolish than wise:

Wisedom, you say, is what you most desire,
The only charming Blessing you admire;
Therefore be bold, and .t yourself to bear
Many a taunt, and patiently to hear
The grinning foolish Rabble laugh aloud,
At you the sport and pastime of the Crowd,
While in like jeers they vent their filthy spleen,
Whence all this gravity, this careless mien?
And whence, of late, is this Pretender come,
This new Proficient, this Musheroom,
This young Philosopher with half a Beard:
Of him, till now, we have no mention heard.
Whence all this supercilious pride of late?
This stiff behavior, this affected gate?
This will perhaps be said; but be not you
Sullen, nor bend a Supercilious brow,
Lest you prove their vile reproaches true.

Both Jeremy and Scandal try to dissuade Valentine from turning railing poet, an occupation symptomatic not of the philosopher but the "Musheroom"; and Scandal's words, "impotent and vain," suggest the countless broken-fortuned libertines of Restoration comedy who resort to poetry and the stage for revenge. Above all, the "supercilious pride" of Valentine's proposals indicates how imperfectly he understands the philosopher; he would preach a lean diet of books, but Epictetus advises against this, too:

If you have learn't to live on homely Food,
To feed on Roots, and Lupine, be not proud.
Since every beggar may be prais'd for that,
He eats as little, is as temperate.

Epictetus provides, moreover, an even more explicit condemnation of Valentine's proud new role:

When you in ev'ry place your self profess
A deep Philosopher, you but express

Much Vanity, much self-conceit betray,
And shew you are not truly what you say.
Your knowledge by your way of living shew,
What is't, alas, to them, how much you know?
Act as your Precepts teach, as at a Feast,
Eat as 'tis .t, 'tis vain to teach the rest.

Valentine's finding Epictetus a source of pride rather than humility, in short, his misreading, may have its analogue in *Don Quixote,* because this first scene appears to be a conscious imitation of Thomas D'Urfey's play, *The Comical History of Don Quixote.* According to Colley Cibber, Congreve's play was ready before the dissolution of the United Company, that is, in early December, 1694. Parts I and II of D'Urfey's play were produced in mid and late May, and were published July 5 and July 23, 1694. D'Urfey's play was consequently on stage and in print when we may presume that Congreve was writing Love for Love.

Congreve certainly had an interest in Cervantes, for his library contained two editions of *Exemplary Novels* and five editions of *Don Quixote;* and he had alluded to "the Knight of the Sorrowful Face" in his first play, *The Old Batchelour.* He probably took particular notice of D'Urfey's *Don Quixote* because the female lead, Marcela, was the last role Anne Bracegirdle performed prior to playing Angelica, and Congreve is said to have been devoted to this actress and to have written parts specifically for her. Marcela was the occasion of notable success for Bracegirdle. It has been suggested that the success of D'Urfey's play is due to the music of Eccles and Purcell, and D'Urfey himself supports this view in his preface where he writes of "a Song so Incomparably well sung and acted by Mrs. Bracegirdle." She performed so well as to have a print engraved of her as Marcela; and in his review of a revival of the play in 1700, the only player whom John Downes mentions is Bracegirdle, indicating that Marcela and Bracegirdle had become identified in the way that Thomas Dogget became known for his portrayal of Ben. It thus may well be that D'Urfey's play was not far from Congreve's mind as he was writing *Love for Love.*

As we might expect, Bracegirdle's two roles, Marcela and Angelica, are quite similar. Marcela is described in the dramatis personae as "a young Shepherdess who hates Mankind, and by her Scorn occasions the Death of Chrysostem." When she is introduced at Chrysostem's funeral, Marcela is brazenly unrepentant for having caused his lovesickness:

Marcela . . . and could he die for love? Fie! 'tis impossible!
Who ever Knew a Wit do such a thing?
Ambrosio. Triumphant Mischief: have you no Remorse?
Marcela. I rather look on him as a good Actor;
That practising the Art of deep deceit,
As Whining, Swearing, Dying at your Feet,
Crack'd some Life Artery with an Overstrain
And dy'd of some Male Mischief in the Brain.

Angelica is similarly undaunted at having sent Valentine mad for love, for she "comes Tyrannically to insult a ruin'd Lover, and make Manifest the cruel Triumphs of her Beauty." In the end, both heroines are won by generosity, not wealth or empty protestations; in Part II, when Ambrosio saves her from rape, Marcela falls madly in love with him. She exclaims, "What Beauty, Riches, or Gloss of Honour, with all th'Allurements never could subdue, is conquer'd by this great, this generous action," just as Angelica yields to a "Generous Valentine."

It is, however, in the beginnings rather than the endings of the two plays, where the parallel is most suggestive. D'Urfey's Part I opens with a hungry Sancho Panza and a learned Don Quixote, and Sancho responds to his master's caution against unchivalric gluttony with the following aside: "Now I am to be fed with a tedious Tale of Knight-Errantry, when my guts are all in an uproar within me for want of better provision." The literally hungry servant in both plays is metaphorically fed learning by the master, and neither servant is satisfied with his intellectual feast. Compare Sancho's "Oons, this is a choice Diet, I grow damnable fat upon't" in *Don Quixote* to Jeremy's "You'll grow Develish fat upon this Paper-Diet" in *Love for Love.*

If Valentine and Jeremy are a transformation of Knight and Squire, then Valentine's misreading of Epictetus is quixotic; where Quixote's misreading of Amadis de Gaul prompts the adaptation of an inappropriate role as chivalric hero, Valentine's misreading of Epictetus prompts his adaptation of an inappropriate role as wit/poet/philosopher. Quixote, too, may be one of the many literary sources of Valentine's feigned madness; because Orlando and Amadis went mad for love, Quixote does so, too; and in his mad scenes, Valentine similarly imitates the best literary heroes, ancient and modern. Valentine's various poses are commonly connected with Theseus's exposition of madness in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* drawing together the lunatic, the lover and the poet. So, too, the play's Horatian motto indicates another literary source of methodical madness. Books have an inordinate influence here. Throughout this play, reading and role-playing become intertwined as characters like Valentine enact what they have read.

Reading and misreading in *Love for Love* are not, however, confined to literature. Like Puritans seeking signs of their salvation, all of Congreve's characters also read the book of nature, from signs and stars to faces and people. The most obvious reader is the astrologer Foresight: "A wise Man, and a Conscientious Man; a Searcher into Obscurity and Futurity." A man supposedly expert in physiognomy, Foresight misreads sickness in his own face on the suggestion of Scandal. Sir Sampson, on the other hand, reads not the heavens but human nature: "I that know the World, and Men and Manners . . . don't believe a Syllable in the Sky and Stars, and Sun and Alamanacks, and Trash." In the end, they both fail reading comprehension; as Sir Sampson concludes, "You're an illiterate Fool, and I'm another."

The complexity of reading is nicely condensed in Congreve's "hieroglyphick" metaphor. Scandal first uses "hieroglyphick" in its relatively new metaphorical sense, in reference to emblematic pictures, while Sir Sampson characteristically uses the term in its concrete, physical sense, claiming to possess "a Shoulder of an Egyptian King, that I purloyn'd from one of the Pyramids, powder'd with Hieroglyphicks." In the Restoration,

hieroglyphs were the subject of endless speculation among virtuosi; but to Sir Sampson, the Egyptian symbols have no meaning. They are only a useless possession, a collectable. To placate Foresight, Sir Sampson desires that his son "were an Egyptian mummy for thy sake"; children also are objects in his collection. To Foresight, hieroglyphs are mystical, arcane and indecipherable; Valentine's mad ravings "are very Mysterious and Hieroglyphical." The metaphor reaches its climax when Valentine likens Angelica to a hieroglyph:

Valentine. Understand! She is harder to understand than a Piece of *Aegyptian* Antiquity, or an Irish Manuscript; you may pore till you spoil your Eyes, and not improve your Knowledge.

Jeremy. I have heard 'em say, Sir, they read hard Hebrew books backwards; may be you begin to read at the wrong end.

Valentine. They say so of a Witches Pray'r, and Dreams and Dutch Almanacks are to be understood by contraries. But there's Regularity and Method in that; she is a Medal without Reverse of Inscription; for Indifference has both sides alike. Yet while she does not seem to hate me, I will pursue her, and know her if possible, in spight of the Opinion of my Satirical Friend, *Scandal,* who says, That Women are like Tricks by slight of Hand,

Which to admire, we should not understand.

Despite Valentine's protestations, it is not Angelica but Valentine who is obscure. As Jeremy suggests, Valentine may have begun at the wrong end, because if he cannot understand himself, how can he expect to understand Angelica? His attempts to bully or shame or trick her into loving him indicate that, as yet, he does not know his own mind, and he must make himself understood before he can try to understand others. In his mad scene, he tells Angelica, "You are all white, a sheet of lovely spotless Paper, when you first are Born; but you are to be scrawl'd and blotted by every Goose's Quill." But Angelica would not be so incomprehensible had not Valentine, in effect, scrawled upon her; he has complicated her, made her wary and defensive, with all his intrigues and stratagems. Valentine has turned Angelica into a hieroglyph, and his desire to "know her if possible" implies a certain misplaced pride. Scandal's view that one "should not understand" may be more admirable than Sir Sampson's, Foresight's, and Valentine's pride in their interpretive powers, for they reduce people to emblems to be deciphered. Angelica refuses to be read, just as Hamlet refuses to be played upon and mastered. Angelica, like Millamant, appears to be serious when she asks Valentine to preserve a little mystery: "Never let us know one another better." Reading in this respect is an imposition or intrusion upon another's privacy and independence. Once again, Valentine must distinguish between what is and what is not within his power and further renounce his efforts to master that which he cannot and should not control.

Reading or knowing others and reading oneself are recfiexive and interdependent: Valentine cannot read or know Angelica partly because he "does not know his Mind Two Hours." He is changeable from the very start of the play; as his father says, "You are a Wit, and have been a Beau, and may be a—," an ellipsis which is suggestive of

Valentine's protean nature. He tries fop, philosopher, poet, wit, madman—whatever will win Angelica. A word that Jeremy and Scandal apply to Valentine is "turn"; he is forever "turning Poet," or "turning Soldier," or he should "turn Pimp": "He that was so neer turning Poet yesterday morning, can't be much to seek in playing the Madman to day." "Playing" implies that Valentine's various fronts are actor's parts, just as his opening role of wit/poet/philosopher is an enacting of the precepts he has (mis)read in Epictetus. Here acting is but another aspect of misreading, the result of improper or partial understanding; Valentine does not know the whole play in which he is performing, and, like an actor in rehearsal, he is learning to read his proper role. Other characters are also conscious of the roles they play, often achieving their ends by adopting new parts and costumes. Frail, Scandal, and Sir Sampson are all said to be "Players" or to have "Parts." We are shown an actors' "nursery" as Prue carefully learns a new part at the prompting of Tattle. Nor is Valentine the only one to adopt a role from his reading, for his father's behavior in his first scene with Foresight is clearly based on travel literature. Conscious playing is hardly unique in seventeenthcentury drama, and would not be of interest here but for the fact that the efficacy and propriety of acting, involving matters of social adaptability, expediency and constancy, are questioned throughout.

Like so much of Restoration comedy, *Love for Love* contrasts those who can and cannot change. The fixity of humors characters like Ben, Prue, or Foresight is epitomized by Foresight's resignation: "if I were born to be a Cuckold, there's no more to be said." Still fixity is not always viewed so negatively; even though Ben is most often a comic butt, his stolidity contrasts favorably with the chameleon sisters, Mrs. Frail and Mrs. Foresight. Ben's simple loyalty is set against the worldly Frail, who changes roles and attitudes at a moment's notice. Similarly, Scandal, almost at the same time, plays astrologer to Foresight and lover to his wife, while she can summon up interest or indifference to Scandal on the spur of the moment; such extreme flexibility seems motivated by self-interest. Sir Sampson is only too willing to adopt a new role or a new attitude, and can change at will from despotic to doting father. He switches his family around, making each of his sons eldest for a time and subsequently abandoning both; the only constant in Sir Sampson's characters is his selfishness.

Constancy is, indeed, a major theme in *Love for Love,* one that is always before us from the song, "I tell thee, Charmion," to the images of "inconstant Element(s)"; "the Tide turn'd"; and the "Inconstancy" of the moon. Of all these traditional emblems, changeability or inconstancy is most beautifully expressed in the wind metaphor, a nautical figure that originates with Ben. Frail explains her sudden reversal towards Ben by claiming "Only the Wind's chang'd," and when Angelica rejects his father, Ben consoles him with the same phrase. While fickle characters, like ships, turn with the wind, Frail introduces the opposite metaphor: "What, has my Sea-Lover lost his Anchor of Hope." The anchor, an emblem of constancy, stability and hope, is common to Stoics, including Epictetus, who likens the constant man to a ship at anchor: "Nor rowling Seas, nor an impetuous Wind, / Can over set this Ballast of the mind."

Valentine remains constant to Angelica, his anchor of hope, but in his intrigues and poses, he is as changeable as all the other schemers. Nevertheless, though these poses designed to win Angelica are unsuccessful, it does not follow that role-playing per

se is condemned. Angelica herself pretends indifference in order "to make this utmost Tryal of Valentine's Virtue," for she must test or try Valentine in order to distinguish his love from the selfinterest displayed by every other character in the play. Role-playing is not only useful but also necessary and inescapable according to the *topos theatrum mundi.* This figure is a commonplace from Democritus to John Bunyan, but if there was a *locus classicus*, it was Epictetus, who was most famous for his elaborate, moralized analogy between the world and the stage:

While on this busie Stage, the World, you stay,
You're as it were the Actor of a Play;
Of such a Part therein as he thinks fit,
To whom belongs the power of giving it.
Longer or shorter is your Part, as he,
The Master of the Revels, shall decree.
If he command you act the Beggar's Part,
Do it with all the Skill, with all your Art,
Though mean the Character, yet ne're complain;
Perform it well, as much applause you'll gain
As he whose Princely Grandeur fills the Stage,
And frights all near him in heroick Rage.

Although this comparison is ubiquitous, it has various interpretations; it is one thing to play the role assigned by the heavenly playwright or director and quite another to play an actor in repertory, switching from one role to the next all season. Epictetus's analogy continues,

Say you a Cit or Cripple represent,
Let each be done with the best management.
'Tis in your power to perform with Art,
Though not within your pow'r to chuse the Part.

Role-playing can be seen as fundamentally artificial and unnatural, as did the Puritans in their antitheatrical writings, or as an accurate metaphor for the unalterable condition of this world. Jonas Barrish demonstrates that the player can even function as a metaphor for potentiality; in the Neoplatonism of Pico and Ficino, the protean actor, switching from role to role, represents all that men are capable of becoming.

Congreve sees acting as somewhere between the folly as it was seen by the Puritans and the glory as it was seen by the Neoplatonists; and his creation Valentine must find a middle way between his fickle father and his inflexible brother. The play suggests that role-playing is necessary but that there are proper and improper roles for each character. In his disputation with his father and Jeremy, Valentine argues that he has been brought up to accept a rightful place, which is not a natural calling so much as a specific role to which he has been raised, a role which is as different from Ben's as it is from Jeremy's. Ben can no more be turned into the eldest son than he can be turned into a beau, and it is unnatural for Sir Sampson to try to change him into either.

If Valentine has a proper role to play, it therefore follows that his contrived roles are improper, something which he himself comes to realize; but unfortunately he grows accustomed to his acting. When he tells Angelica, "The Comedy draws to an end, and let us think of leaving acting, and be our selves," she willfully refuses to understand him, and he finds himself cast in a role he no longer wishes to play. As he himself says, "I know no effectual Difference between continued Affectation and Reality." Even by the end of Act Four, Valentine has still not accepted the humility and resignation that he should have learned from Epictetus. It is Scandal who charts the correct path for his friend: "he may descend from his Exaltation of madness into the road of common Sense, and be content only to be made a Fool with other reasonable People." Instead of trying to make fools of others, he must consent to be one, and in Act Five he calls himself a fool. As Montaigne writes, "To learne that another hath eyther spoken a foolish jest, or committed a sottish act, is a thing of nothing. A man must learne, that he is but a foole: A much more ample and important instruction." Epictetus also regards the acceptance of one's folly as a mark of wisdom:

Wou'd you be wise? ne're take it ill you're thought
A Fool, because you tamely set at Nought
Things not within your pow'r.

Paradoxically, Valentine's success can only be achieved through failure, the game of "Losing Loadum," wherein he can "win a Mistress, with a losing hand." The resolution of dispossession, of renunciation, and of humility can only be effected by throwing over his plots and his roles and admitting failure; he must accept the "Ruine" with which his father threatens him. In the first scene, Valentine says, "I'll pursue *Angelica* with more Love than ever, and appear more notoriously her Admirer in this Restraint, than when I openly rival'd the rich Fops, that made Court to her; so shall my Poverty be a mortification to her Pride." Instead of her mortication, it is he who is shamed and humbled; the biter is bit, and he receives poetic justice. This plot is surely one of the world's oldest, and what Walter Davis has written of the *Arcadia* is as appropriate for Congreve's Valentine as it is for Sidney's Musidorus and Pyrocles; like them, he must undergo a trial and willingly accept the proper role assigned to him by the divine playwright: "For failure becomes the necessary condition for submission to Providence; the hero must be released from all external controls or pressures in order to act out all his tendencies to lust, lassitude, deceit, and despair and so come to know his own weaknesses, to trust God to repair them, and hence to purify himself to them."

Valentine wins Angelica through his constancy; and the answer to Scandal's central question, "Who would die a Martyr to Sense in a Country where the Religion is Folly?" is, of course, Valentine. "How few, like Valentine," concludes Angelica, "would persevere even unto Martyrdom, and sacrifice their Interest to their Constancy." Earlier, when pressed to decide, she replied, "I can't. Resolution must come to me," but in the end, Valentine brings resolution, firmness, conviction and constancy to her, the lesson he has finally learned of Epictetus. His course contains elements of both gradual improvement and abrupt conversion. The sequence of his roles suggests improvement, for wit appears better than fop, and his feigned madness does lead to his final, true madness. At the same time his final act is predicated on the recognition that all his previous roles

have been wrong; it is not that playing is condemned, but that he does not, until Act Five, know what his right role is. When Valentine is willing to give up his own good for another, when he willingly "plays the fool," he has transcended selfinterest, reaching the ideal goal of love and the ideal role of lover.

Source: James Thompson, "Reading and Acting in Love for Love," in *Essays in Literature,* Vol. 7, No. 11, Spring 1980, pp. 21-30.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay excerpt, Love explores the relationship between Valentine and Angelica, and how the townspeople affect that romance in Congreve's Love for Love.

The climax of *Love for Love* is Angelica's acceptance of the reformed Valentine. It comes in two words, 'Generous *Valentine'*, which, although they were written for the mouth of Anne Bracegirdle, not Elizabeth Barry, call for all the eloquence of an 'Ah! poor *Castalio!*' 'Generous' here is a Virgilian characteristic epithet expressing to us the significant truth of Valentine, his singularity and distinction as a human being. It is also, as the concluding point of his education, our chief clue to what the substance of that education has been. The meaning of the word in the seventeenth century was more complex than its normal sense in modern English would suggest, but seeing Angelica's words were prompted by the speech of Valentine immediately preceding them, we can assume that it is here that the nature of Valentine's generosity will be most clearly displayed:

Valentine. I have been disappointed of my only Hope; and he that loses hope may part with any thing. I never valu'd Fortune, but as it was subservient to my Pleasure; and my only Pleasure was to please this Lady: I have made many vain Attempts, and find at last, that nothing but my Ruine can effect it: Which, for that Reason, I will sign to□Give me the Paper.

The basic thing is that Valentine has learned to trust and to give, absolutely and without reservation. When Angelica sees this she is prepared to give herself just as unconditionally in return. But for her to have done so without this assurance would have been disastrous. It is therefore Valentine who has taken the crucial step in resolving the relationship, and he has done this by challenging the first principle of town morality on a scale that even the trusting Ben and pliable Prue might have baulked at.

When we first see Valentine in Act I he is in every sense a creature of the town. He has exhausted his money in his pursuit of Angelica (the interpretation of the other characters would be no doubt that she has milked him of it) but without securing any profession of love in return. This is hardly surprising: his extravagant spending has been an attempt to buy her and she has been perfectly aware of this and is not prepared to be for sale. His next plan, and one that is open to much the same objections, is to shame her:

Valentine. Well; and now I am poor, I have an opportunity to be reveng'd on 'em all; I'll pursue *Angelica* with more Love than ever, and appear more notoriously her Admirer in this Restraint, than when I openly rival'd the rich Fops, that made Court to her; so shall my Poverty be a Mortification to her Pride . . .

Valentine is still in this speech picturing Angelica as a quarry to be hunted, not as a human equal to be loved. It is also clear that his courtship is not directed at her alone, but is simultaneously a performance put on to gain the approbation of the town. In compensation for these imperceptive and rather narcissistic attitudes, we are also made

aware of an agreeable impulsiveness, a determination to make the best of whatever his situation offers, and a general openness to new possibilities, which raise him well above the usual pitch of the town. (Being unable to afford breakfast he has been edifying himself with a study of the Stoics.) He still has a chance to change. A visit from the nurse of one of his illegitimate children gives him a chance to display generosity in the limited modern sense by somehow finding her some money and his residual ill-nature by a quip about infanticide. The next visitors are Trapland, a creditor, accompanied by two officers, and, on another errand, Valentine's father's steward. Between them the choice is put to Valentine of accepting his father's proposal for the payment of his debts, which is to surrender his right in the family inheritance, or to go to prison. Valentine consents, as the arrangement will also permit him to leave his lodgings and go in search of Angelica, although here Scandal is pessimistic about his chances:

Scandal. A very desperate demonstration of your love to Angelica: And I think she has never given you any assurance of hers.

Valentine. You know her temper; she never gave me any great reason either for hope or despair.

Scandal. Women of her airy temper, as they seldom think before they act, so they rarely give us any light to guess at what they mean: But you have little reason to believe that a Woman of this Age, who has had an indifference for you in your Prosperity, will fall in love with your ill Fortune; besides, Angelica has a great Fortune of her own; and great Fortunes either expect another great Fortune, or a Fool.

From the town's point of view his reasoning could hardly be faulted.

In the following act we receive our first sight of Angelica and are given no reason to question Scandal's diagnosis of her 'airy temper.' She comes in to demand her uncle's coach, ridicules his harmless obsession with astrology, taunts him openly with his wife's infidelity, confesses to spying on him through a keyhole, and threatens to denounce him to the magistrates as a wizard. None of this is at all serious, but there is still a strong air of gratuitous bullying about it. Our hero has not given very many signs of promise, and neither at this stage does our heroine. Valentine is a town rake and she, to all appearances, is little better than a town miss, superbly adroit in the skills of social manipulation, and not above keeping these skills razor-sharp by a little practice in the domestic circle. What is not clear is whether the purpose of this formidable conversational armoury is offensive or defensive, whether there is an Araminta behind the mask or just another Belinda.

When we see Angelica next she is together for the first time in the play with Valentine and once again she is giving nothing away:

Angelica. You can't accuse me of Inconstancy; I never told you, that I lov'd you.

Valentine. But I can accuse you of Uncertainty, for not telling me whether you did or no.

Angelica. You mistake Indifference for Uncertainty; I never had Concern enough to ask my self the Question.

Later in the play, at the moment of self-revelation in Act V, we are to discover that she did love him after all; but in the present scene there is no sign of this. And it is not hard to fathom the reasons for Angelica's wariness. Living in a world of Tattles and Frails, she has had to learn to handle their weapons even better than they do themselves. To be in love is to be in a position of vulnerability. The rule of the town is to take advantage of the vulnerable. To be in love, and to reveal this love, is to invite the person you love to take advantage of you. The only safe course, therefore, is to conceal love under the affectation of indifference or dislike. This was Tattle's first lesson to Prue, and an identical principle guides Angelica's behaviour towards Valentine. The problem with Valentine is not simply that he is a town rake and lives by the assumptions of a town rake: that love is a hunt or pursuit, that women are mercenary simpletons to be bought or tricked into submission, that 'He alone won't Betray in whom none will Confide/And the Nymph may be Chaste that has never been Try'd.' If that were all that there was to him, Angelica would not have fallen in love with him in the first place. Valentine in fact has a number of very good and un-town-like instincts. He is not, for instance, interested in money for its own sake but only as a means of helping him to Angelica. (Though this still, of course, makes him guilty of the assumption that she is available to be bought.) His real trouble is that he insists on interpreting other people's behaviour, including Angelica's, according to the cynical principles of the town and Scandal. He is therefore in the grip of two wrong images, one of himself and one of Angelica, each reinforcing the other. For Angelica to reveal the wrongness of his image of her, which would not be hard as it is largely of her own creation, would be of no use until he had learned to interpret such an action according to principles other than those of the Age. It is only when he has made the breakthrough of his own accord and come to see himself in completely new terms that it will be safe for her to reveal that she is not what he thought she was. It is this which Angelica is trying to explain to him when at the end of the scene he asks her whether she is going to 'come to a Resolution' and she replies 'I can't. Resolution must come to me, or I shall never have one.' It is Valentine who has to find both their ways out of the vicious circle.

At this stage in the play, however, the probability of such a breakthrough does not seem very high. The immediate task of Scandal and Valentine is to test the genuineness of Angelica's indifference, with the aim, should they find any evidence of feigning, of exploiting the revealed vulnerability as ruthlessly as possible. Scandal, whose power to fathom the masks and stratagems of the town has already been presented for our admiration in Act I, is clearly of the opinion that there is more to her behaviour than meets the eye. Taking up her 'I never had Concern enough to ask my self the Question' quoted earlier, he inserts a sly hint of his disbelief:

Scandal. Nor good Nature enough to answer him that did ask you: I'll say that for you, Madam.

Angelica. What, are you setting up for good Nature?

Scandal. Only for the affectation of it, as the Women do for ill Nature.

Scandal's insight here amounts to nothing more than the normal town assumption that things are probably the reverse of what they seem, or, as Tattle enlarges, 'All well-bred Persons Lie! . . . you must never speak what you think: Your words must contradict your thoughts . . .' In reply to this, Angelica is rather surprisingly prepared to concede that he may be right but challenges him to persuade Valentine of this. For Angelica knows that Valentine has no real understanding of her and to this extent cannot seriously threaten her. And Valentine, again rather surprisingly, is perfectly prepared to confess to his ignorance both of her and mankind: 'I shall receive no Benefit from the Opinion: For I know no effectual Difference between continued Affectation and Reality.' This passage is sometimes quoted out of context as if it were a statement of Congreve's personal attitude towards social role-playing, but this is not so. The point of the lines is to show the inadequacy of Valentine's understanding both of himself and of others, for there is a difference between reality and continued affectation, a difference which Angelica understands perfectly because it is something she has to live with all the time.

The same issues, along with one or two new ones, inform the comedy of the subsequent scene between Angelica, the two men, and Tattle. Tattle embodies the values and expectations of the town in their purest state. Where Valentine had felt unable to distinguish between continued affectation and reality but was not prepared to deny that there was such a difference, Tattle is so far gone as to have mistaken his own affectations for reality. His conversation is a long romance on the theme of his prowess as a lover. At the same time, as we saw in Act I, he is inordinately proud of his reputation for discretion. This is partly an effect of his desire to be thought a wit and partly a technique of seduction in its own right, on the principle that women would be more inclined to have affairs with a man who could be relied on to keep it a secret. At the present juncture he is exhibiting his accomplishments, secrecy among them, for the benefit of Angelica. The fun of the scene lies in the careful man□uvring by which Valentine and Scandal set his two reputations at odds with each other, a subtle exercise in the art which Wilkinson calls 'enjoying the fool.' In trying to defend his reputation for secrecy he is forced to assert that he had 'never had the good Fortune to be trusted once with a Lady's Secret.' This brings the objection from Angelica 'But whence comes the Reputation of Mr. Tattle's Secresie, if he was never trusted?,' putting him in the position of having to betray his reputation in order to defend it:

Tattle. Well, my Witnesses are not present□But I confess I have had Favours from Persons□But as the Favours are numberless, so the Persons are nameless.

Scandal. Pooh, pox, this proves nothing.

Tattle. No? I can shew Letters, Locketts, Pictures, and Rings, and if there be occasion for Witnesses, I can summon the Maids at the Chocolate-Houses, all the Porters of *Pall-Mall* and *Covent-Garden,* the Doorkeepers at the Play-House, the Drawers at *Locket's, Pontack's, the Rummer, Spring Garden;* my own Landlady and *Valet de Chambre;* all who shall make Oath, that I receive more Letters than the Secretary's Office and that I have more Vizor-Masks to enquire for me, than ever went to see the

Hermaphrodite, or the Naked Prince. And it is notorious, that in a Country Church, once, an Enquiry being made, who I was, it was answer'd, I was the famous *Tattle,* who had ruin'd so many Women.

Valentine. It was there, I suppose, you got the Nick-Name of the *Great Turk.*

Tattle. True; I was call'd Turk-Tattle all over the Parish-

Tattle's narcissistic male egotism is exactly what Angelica is trying to protect herself from. However, his situation is also relevant to hers in another way. As he has destroyed his reputation for secrecy in defending it; so she is still in the position where to reveal her love to an unregenerate Valentine would be to resign herself forever to the role of conquered quarry. Hers is a genuine secrecy, unlike Tattle's fraudulent one, but is just as self-defeating.

By this time Scandal has a strong suspicion that Angelica is more kindly disposed than she would have the men believe. When he exits it is with the promise to Valentine 'I've something in my Head to communicate to you'—presumably the pretence of madness which is to be Valentine's last and most daring throw in his attempt to confound his father and to extract a capitulation from Angelica on his terms rather than hers. Angelica is the first to call on him after his supposed condition has been proclaimed, and on her entrance comes close to betraying her real feelings. 'She's concern'd, and loves him' is Scandal's diagnosis. But Scandal has forgotten, or perhaps never realized, that she is quite as brilliant a penetrator of pretence as himself, and he betrays his own game by an unguarded wink to Jeremy. Having gauged the true situation, Angelica's responsibility is to repay trick with trick, which she does by denying outright that she loves Valentine and then announcing on the basis of excellent London reasons that she will not see him after all:

But I have consider'd that Passions are unreasonable and involuntary; if he loves, he can't help it; and if I don't love, I can't help it; no more than he can help his being a Man, or I my being a Woman; or no more than I can help my want of Inclination to stay longer here. . .

Angelica here is doing no more than give the men the treatment appropriate to the role in which they insist on casting her. She sweeps out leaving Scandal undisturbed in his belief in the weathercock nature of 'this same Womankind.' Later she will be back to put Valentine through his paces more thoroughly.

Angelica resents the situation because it shows that Valentine is still seeing the world in terms of Scandal's bitter satiric vignettes at the close of Act I, among them 'Pride, Folly, Affectation, Wantonness, Inconstancy, Covetousness, Dissimulation, Malice, and Ignorance' as the image of a 'celebrated Beauty.' But it is now Valentine's turn to grow satirical: his 'madness' takes the form of ringing denunciations directed at such targets as lawyers, citizens, and elderly husbands; when he comes to address Angelica, however, the tone changes and the accents of simulated madness give way to a perfectly composed beauty:

Angelica. Do you know me, *Valentine?*

Valentine. Oh very well.

Angelica. Who am I?

Valentine. You're a Woman,□One to whom Heav'n gave Beauty, when it grafted Roses on a Briar. You are the reflection of Heav'n in a Pond, and he that leaps at you is sunk. You are all white, a sheet of lovely spotless Paper, when you first are Born; but you are to be scrawl'd and blotted by every Goose's Quill. I know you; for I lov'd a Woman, and lov'd her so long, that I found out a strange thing: I found out what a Woman was good for.

Tattle. Aye, prithee, what's that?

Valentine. Why to keep a Secret.

Tattle. O Lord!

Valentine. O exceeding good to keep a Secret: For tho' she should tell, yet she is not to be believ'd.

The speech is one of the few in the play where Congreve's language achieves a genuine richness of poetic implication, yet once again the images are expressions of an imperfect understanding: Angelica had asked Valentine if he knew her, and he reveals very clearly in his reply that he knows only the false self she shows to the town. He does not see that the scrawls and blots are of his own imagination: that were he to leap, he would not be sunk at all. Yet the closing lines do suggest that he has intimations of a truth unknown to him before the experiment with madness. Angelica has indeed kept a secret, two secrets in fact: that she is in love with him, and that she is not the person he and the town take her for. He is beginning to know this without knowing that he knows.

There is still, however, a long way to go. Angelica is not yet won; she is still resentful of the contemptuous shallowness of his artifices; and when he trustingly confesses the stratagem, she will not yield an inch in return. His request is that, as he puts off his pretence of madness, so she should suspend her affectation of disregard:

Nay faith, now let us understand one another, Hypocrisie apart,□The Comedy draws toward an end, and let us think of leaving acting, and be our selves; and since you have lov'd me, you must own I have at length deserv'd you shou'd confess it.

This is too simple altogether. For one thing it shows that he still regards courtship as a matter of trickery and charades. So Angelica repays him in kind by pretending that she still believes him to be mad and treating his protestations of sanity as a madman's self-delusion. She is also quick to take him up on his reasons for adopting the stratagem:

Valentine . . . my seeming Madness has deceiv'd my Father, and procur'd me time to think of means to reconcile me to him; and preserve the right of my Inheritance to his

Estate; which otherwise by Articles, I must this Morning have resign'd: And this I had inform'd you of to Day, but you were gone, before I knew you had been here.

Angelica. How! I thought your love of me had caus'd this Transport in your Soul; which, it seems, you only counterfeited, for mercenary Ends and sordid Interest.

Valentine. Nay, now you do me Wrong; for if any Interest was considered, it was yours; since I thought I wanted more than Love, to make me worthy of you.

Angelica. Then you thought me mercenary□But how am I deluded by this Interval of Sense, to reason with a Madman?

Valentine's frankness has been returned with a town miss's trick which, of course, he knows to be a town miss's trick. But he is also to be given a clue to the secret which still eludes him. Before she leaves, Angelica speaks to him in words which have some of the elegiac quality of his own mad language, and which are her most explicit statement of her sense of the situation:

Valentine. You are not leaving me in this Uncertainty?

Angelica. Wou'd any thing, but a Madman complain of Uncertainty? Uncertainty and Expectation are the Joys of Life. Security is an insipid thing, and the overtaking and possessing of a Wish, discovers the Folly of the Chase. Never let us know one another better; for the Pleasure of a Masquerade is done, when we come to shew Faces; But I'll tell you two things before I leave you; I am not the Fool you take me for; and you are Mad and don't know it.

In returning him the unmasking image Angelica is conceding what is after all a central fact of the play□that the world of masks, of illusion, of inconstancy, of trickery, of unceasing psychological combat, of the rake's pursuit and the woman's hypocritical refusal, the world in which 'Love hates to center in a Point assign'd, / But runs with Joy the Circle of the Mind', is in its way an exciting, testing world. Valentine has thoroughly enjoyed his life in it, and so far he has resisted all her attempts to make him leave it. But now that Angelica has seen beyond it she is not to be drawn back. For all its dazzle and movement it is a world in which it is impossible to trust or to love. The relationship of Angelica and Valentine has been conducted along the lines prescribed by the world and behind the masks of its making. When Valentine asks her to take off her mask it is in the expectation of finding a face beneath which will be not very different from the mask. Appreciating this, Angelica is only being fair in warning him that 'the Pleasure of a Masquerade is done, when we come to shew Faces.' If they were to live their lives according to the town's terms there would always have to be some kind of mask in place. But what if the face beneath the mask were itself a mask and the face beneath that second mask one that Valentine had never dreamed of? If this were so it is possible that she might after all not be a fool, which is the rake's basic assumption about the women he pursues by trick and bribe, and that Valentine might well be led into actions which by all the standards of the town (and when the moment comes Scandal is to use exactly this word) are 'mad' ones. If she does not succeed in enlightening him she is at

least able to puzzle him. 'She is harder to be understood than a Piece of *Ægyptian* Antiquity, or an *Irish* Manuscript; you may pore till you spoil your Eyes, and not improve your Knowledge.' Yet he has at least recognized that there is a mystery and that his 'Lesson' must have a 'Moral'; which is a start. And at the close of the scene he is even prepared to query one of the dicta of the hitherto infallible Scandal. By the time we see him again he has discovered the answer which, all things considered, is a very simple one. For Scandal's principle of 'trust to no one' he has substituted another□'if you do trust, trust absolutely'□and his trust is rewarded. At the very moment he is about to give assent to the deed of disinheritance, Angelica tears the earlier bond and in the same breath renounces the marriage with Sir Sampson. What is it that he has discovered to bring about this change? His preparedness to sacrifice himself is the most obvious thing; but this is itself the fruit of a deeper awareness. The solution is in her answer to the question he asks her before he proceeds to sign to his own undoing:

'Tis true, you have a great while pretended Love to me; nay, what if you were sincere? still you must pardon me, if I think my own Inclinations have a better Right to dispose of my Person, than yours.

The notion that other people's persons should be in their own disposal, and not one's own, is not particularly original, but the difficulty that Valentine has had in reaching it should caution us against imagining it to be self-evident. For the whole system of the town had been built on an explicit denial of it. Valentine has at last emerged from the delusion, and through this from his poverty. Ironically enough the second part of the benison has been brought about by the most arrant town trick of all□ and its perpetrator has been Angelica.

We have followed the action of *Love for Love* through to the point of resolution. The question still has to be asked whether that resolution is a satisfactory one. Triviality and self-seeking are to be countered with idealism; but how valid is the countering? May it not be open to the accusation of sentimental unreality just as Congreve's presentation of the world may be to the charge of immature cynicism? Both these suggestions have been made.

Part of the trouble here lies in the abstract, externalized way in which Congreve presents his resolution. Assuming that the real climax of the play is Valentine's acceptance of Angelica not as a quarry or an opponent but as a fellow human being with exactly the same rights as himself, it can still be argued that we do not actually experience what this realization means for Valentine. The crucial stage in his growth to realization comes between his exit in Act IV and his entrance in Act V. By the time he reappears he has discovered what previously eluded him; but we are not shown how this happens or what it feels like to have it happen; we simply have to accept it as it is stated. The same holds for Angelica. The assumption of the play is that behind the façade of the town jilt there is a profound longing for those human satisfactions that the town ignores and a genuine capacity for unselfish love; but it is only in isolated speeches that we have any direct sense of this part of her; the rest has to be deduced from things that she states in a fairly abstract way and the nature of her reactions to the stratagems of Valentine and Scandal.

I would suggest that this effect was quite deliberate on Congreve's part and is an important clue to the kind of comedy he is writing. Here we need to remember that the immediate ancestor of Restoration comedy is not Jacobean comedy but that phase of Caroline comedy when it was most under the influence of the court masque. The essence of a masque, to borrow a phrase from Chapter I, is that it should give 'sensuous life to abstract formulations.' In comedy under the influence of the masque the playwright's primary interest will be the profile of the idea rather than depth of characterization and we should not complain if the persons of the drama are occasionally allowed to dwindle into cut-outs. One could argue that this kind of comedy is more restricted in its possibilities than the kind which takes personality as its starting point and allows us not only to observe the actions of the characters, but to share in their inner growth; yet having conceded this, one is not entitled to judge one kind as if it were an unsuccessful attempt at the other. (If we object to Congreve's methods we should remember that they are also Molière's and Shaw's.) The minuet of ideas which is the structural basis of Congreve's play is there to be appreciated as a minuet, the theatrical articulation of an abstract ideal of love and gentility. Congreve is not particularly interested in how these ideals are to be made workable at the level of individual, everyday living, or at least not in *Love for Love.*

For these reasons, the criticism of the play which claims that its values are arbitrary and unrealized seems to me a little beside the point. There is still, moreover, the question of whether the abstract ideals so elegantly traced out in the course of the minuet are the true informing values of the comedy. I would suggest that they are probably not, and that the most valuable thing the play has to give us is much simpler. Despite its preoccupation with the least sublime of human passions, its singularly unsatisfactory gallery of characters, and Congreve's insistence on showing us just why these characters are unsatisfactory, the overall sense given by *Love for Love* is of an immense and heartening liveliness□ one is tempted to say a joy. Squalid and selfish as the creatures of the town are, they do not repel us in the way the corresponding characters in Jonson do and we may even envy them their unconquerable bravura and their outrageous and wholly unjustified self-admiration, much as on a larger scale we do Falstaff's. I suggested earlier that *Love for Love* was the most Shakespearean of Congreve's plays. In an in.uential essay contrasting the Shakespearean and Jonsonian styles in comedy Nevill Coghill suggested that the essence of the former lay in the assertion 'that life is to be grasped.' This is surely the reason why Congreve's characters remain attractive. Despite the fact that the life they possess is by any objective standard paltry, dishonest, and trivial, they are prepared to lay hold of it with every atom of energy in their beings. There can be a vividness, an elevation, even to being a fop, a tyrannical braggart, or a temporarily stranded porpoise, as long as one is prepared to take possession of the role with the self-proclaiming gusto of a Tattle, a Sampson, or a Ben. There may even be a sublimity of sorts in being a cuckold philosopher if one can say with the heroic fatalism of Foresight, 'Why if I was born to be a Cuckold, there's no more to be said□.' In the case of Valentine the spectacle is one of a character who has succeeded in extracting 'a quintessence even from nothingness'□ understanding from madness, truth from jest, love from despair, generosity from selfishness. It is our sense of this miracle, this heroic laying hold of every possibility of even the most tawdry and unsatisfactory existence which allows us to claim for *Love for*

Love a rank among Restoration comedies only just beneath that of *The Way of the World.*

Source: Harold Love, "Love for Love," in *Congreve,* Rowman and Littlefield, 1974, pp. 60-84.

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay, Jarvis discusses how the ideas of John Locke and other philosophers informed Congreve's writing of **Love for Love.**

Criticism of Congreve's *Love for Love* prior to Norman Holland's publication of *The First Modern Comedies* in 1959 is relatively unimpressive. Writers of articles appearing in scholarly journals have studiously avoided the larger concerns of the play by focusing their microscopes on such minutiae as the attribution of the ballad "A Soldier and a Sailor" in Act III; Sailor Ben's literary genealogy; the identification of the scene in Act III that Congreve in his dedication to the Earl of Dorset claims to have omitted from the first public performance of the play on April 30, 1695, at Lincoln's Inn Fields; and Congreve's possible indebtedness to Dryden's *Wild Gallant* for scenes in Acts III and V.

Scarcely more impressive are the perfunctory and largely repetitious readings of the play as a proto-sentimental comedy, which one finds in most of the standard studies of Restoration comedy. Bonamy Dobrée, for instance, in 1924 and again in 1963, discovers in *Love for Love* an expression of Congreve's deepest aspiration□his longing to find the world nobler than it really is. "The fear of lost illusion haunts him," Dobrée writes in 1924. "Like Valentine, in *Love for Love,* Congreve is melancholy at the thought of spoiled ideals and spoiled beauty." In a similar vein, he writes again, in 1963, "The love-affair between Valentine and Angelica brings out his [Congreve's] fear of disillusion, his insistence that the precious thing in life, affection in human relations, must be preserved at all costs."

Thomas Fujimura, ostensibly focusing his attention exclusively on the play rather than on the playwright's psyche, nearly falls victim to the same error as Dobrée. After observing that Congreve was "too warm-hearted and moral to be a Truewit," he implicitly identifies the playwright with his protagonist several pages later by analyzing Valentine in the same terms he used for Congreve. Rather than the libertine he professes to be, Fujimura writes, Valentine is a "reformed libertine, and he reveals a fundamentally sound (and even moral) character . . . He is also more introspective and thoughtful than most Truewits . . . What makes Valentine a more subtle and attractive figure . . . is the suggestion of this latent reflectiveness, of a mind sensitive enough to have some apprehension of the undercurrents of human existence."

Both of the foregoing approaches to *Love for Love*□on the one hand, investigation of the facts behind the play, and on the other, appraisal of the play in the light of Congreve's life and the changing tastes of the late 1690's□have a legitimate place in Congreve scholarship, especially since the facts of Congreve's life and career as a dramatist are relatively obscure, and since his position as a playwright in relation to the high Restoration comedy of the 1670's and the sentimental comedy of the early eighteenth century is still in dispute. Nevertheless, the narrow range of interests of the one approach and the broad, often tangential interests of the other left something of a vacuum in *Love for Love* criticism until Norman Holland's book appeared in 1959, which for the first time provided students of Restoration comedy with a thorough and

penetrating analysis of the play *qua* play. Since the publication of Holland's work three additional studies have appeared: Charles Lyons' article, "Congreve's Miracle of Love," and W. H. Van Voris' analysis of the play in a volume entitled *The Cultivated Stance: The Design of Congreve's Plays,* both of which are heavily indebted to Holland's seminal essay; and, most recently, Aubrey Williams' cursory but highly suggestive treatment of the play in a study entitled "Poetical Justice, the Contrivances of Providence, and the Works of Congreve," an independent analysis of Congreve's drama in the light of popular religious assumptions of the day, wherein the author effectively questions Lyons' premise concerning "the naturalistic perspective of Love for Love."

The vital importance of Holland's study lies in his recognition of John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) as the informing source of *Love for Love* (1695). It is an "epistemological comedy," Holland writes, the theme of which is contained in Valentine's statement, "I know no effectual difference between continued affectation and reality": "His [Valentine's] failure to realize that outside society there is a difference and his related failure to seek Angelica through something other than show or "affectation" are what keep him from winning her . . . Valentine needs education: that there is a reality which is higher and larger than 'continued affectation.'"

In schematizing the play, Holland draws an elaborate diagram that shows the relationships among the chief characters and in turn their relation to three different levels of knowledge that man is capable of attaining: presocial or sensitive knowledge; social or rational knowledge; and supra-social or intuitive knowledge, the last two of which are especially relevant to Valentine in his pursuit of Angelica. "The action of the play," Holland writes,

is to make Valentine bring his real nature out from under the shell of pretenses he has drawn round himself. In doing so, Valentine grows out of the limited social world into something larger . . . Valentine's problem in winning Angelica is that he is still too close to social pretense; he is trying to win her by putting on a show . . . He must learn to transcend his social habits through an action completely asocial, resigning both his fortune and his love; he must learn that the intrigue is not effective on the supra-social level. It is to the education of Valentine that the title *Love for Love* refers: Valentine learns to substitute real love for showy love. In return Angelica gives him real love for real love, a response not possible for love merely social . . .

Writing in the wake of Holland, Charles Lyons and W. H. Van Voris reinforce his major claims. Van Voris' study shows Congreve's indebtedness not only to *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, but to the *Two Treatises of Civil Government,* also published in 1690. Lyons' article, on the other hand, carries Holland's argument one significant step further by showing how the imagery of the play supports Holland's notion of the ideal, "suprasocial" relationship of Valentine and Angelica. He refers to what he terms the "Christian images of grace and blessing" in the last scene of the play. According to Lyons, the final statement of value in the play is Angelica's concluding couplet: "The miracle today is that we find / A lover true: not that a woman's kind." The passage is significant, Lyons writes, because "it is the final answer to Scandal's

cynicism, a lack of faith which is considered to be the despair of the infidel. In opposition to this infidelity is Valentine's constancy, conceived in . . . religious terms . . . "

While the efforts of these critics might seem at first glance to preclude the necessity for further comment on *Love for Love,* Professor Holland's suggestion of Congreve's indebtedness to Locke's Essay for the philosophical framework of the play leaves yet unanswered the question of the extent of his indebtedness: Is the Essay serviceable to Congreve only insofar as it provides him with the categories of knowledge□social and supra-social□through which Valentine must necessarily migrate before union with Angelica is possible? Or does the play perhaps deal in social terms with the fundamental problem that Locke poses in the Essay, that is, the certainty and extent of human knowledge? The point worthy of speculation is that perhaps Congreve made more extensive use of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in *Love for Love* than even Holland intimates in his essay when he pigeon-holes the major characters in the play according to the kinds of knowledge they have or attain; that perhaps the play is not only a dramatic rendering of the levels of knowledge possible in human experience, but also a live demonstration, in part at least, of *how* one arrives at such knowledge.

That Locke's *Essay* may well have been in the forefront of Congreve's mind at the time he wrote *Love for Love* is evident in the letter he sent John Dennis on July 10, 1695, a little more than two months after the play was initially performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields, on April 30. This letter, sometimes referred to by the title "Concerning Humour in Comedy," has a twofold importance as far as the play is concerned. First, it is in part an outline of Congreve's notion of a stage character as a composite of what he calls "humour," "habit," and "affectation." Second, his analysis of humor proves beyond doubt that he had fairly digested Locke's Essay at least by July of 1695, and very likely by the time he had written *Love for Love,* if one can accept as proof Professor Holland's citation of Valentine's lines toward the end of Act IV as a covert allusion to the *tabula rasa:* "You are all white, a sheet of lovely, spotless paper, when you first are born; but you are to be scrawled and blotted by every goose's quill."

In the letter to Dennis, Congreve uses the term "Humour" in two different senses: first, in a specialized sense to qualify a type of character proper to comedy, the excess of whose humor makes him appear "ridiculous upon the stage"; and second, in a looser sense, to indicate simply a man's nature, character, or identity. Humor, according to Congreve, "*shews* [italics mine] us as we *are.*"

Our Humour has relation to us, and to what proceeds from us, as the Accidents have to a Substance; it is a Colour, Taste, and Smell, Diffused through all; thô our Actions are never so many, and different in Form, they are all Splinters of the Same Wood, and have Naturally one Complexion; which thô it may be disguised by Art, yet cannot be wholly changed: We may Paint it with other Colours, but we cannot change the Grain. So the Natural sound of an Instrument will be distinguish'd, thô the Notes expressed by it, are never so many. Dissimulation, may by Degrees, become more easy to our practice; but it can never absolutely Transubstantiate us into what we would seem: It will always be in some proportion a Violence upon Nature.

The words "Substance" and "Accidents," which Congreve uses in this passage to define the relationship between a person and his humor, are nearly identical to those used by Locke in the Essay to explain the relationship between a "body" and its "qualities." Just as one's humor, therefore, shows a man as he actually is, so the qualities of a substance or a body show that object as it is. When Congreve further defines humor as a "Colour, Taste, and Smell, Diffused through all," he indicates, in effect, that one's humor is the equivalent of what Locke calls a "secondary quality," or the "power" that a body or a substance has to produce ideas in someone who perceives it. Humor, then, which shows a man as he is, is what gives him his identity in the minds of other people: "I take it [humour] to be, A singular and unavoidable manner of doing, or saying any thing, Peculiar and Natural to one Man only; by which his Speech and Actions are distinguish'd from those of other Men."

Unfortunately, however, man rarely appears as he actually is. He and his humor are often obscured by additional qualities that make him a substance or body difficult to know, that is, habit and affectation. "Habit," Congreve writes, "shews [italics mine] us as we appear under a forcible Impression." Habits are, in other words, involuntary accretions "contracted by Use or Custom," that the personality takes on: "Under this Head may be ranged all Country Clowns, Sailers, Tradesmen, Jockeys, Gamesters and such like, who make use of Cants or peculiar *Dialects* in their several Arts and Vocations." Affectation, on the other hand, "*Shews* [italics mine] what we would be, under a Voluntary Disguise." In this category fall pretense, deceit, and other forms of dissembling.

In the end, therefore, man is a fairly complicated being whose veneers of habits and affectations make him a difficult, if not impossible, object of knowledge. This multi-dimensional concept of character that Congreve outlines in his letter to Dennis is what gives *Love for Love* its richness as a play. All of the characters, even the stock-types of comedy, like the *dromo* (Jeremy and Angelica's Nurse) and the *senex* (Sir Sampson and Foresight), are considerably removed from the level of stereotype and are, instead, highly individualized.

If, as I have indicated, Congreve's letter to Dennis contains more than "such unpremeditated Thoughts, as may be Communicated between Friend and Friend," and if indeed the question of the certainty and extent of human knowledge was immediate to Congreve's mind when he wrote *Love for Love*, then the question yet remains, to what degree does Congreve's art translate the psychology and philosophy to effective dramatic action? Professor Holland correctly maintains that the focus of the play is Valentine's education, his final recognition of a reality higher and larger than continued affectation. In another sense, however, an equally important issue raised in the play is the ability or inability of the several characters to arrive at a rational understanding of the social universe, their microcosm, and of the inhabitants who people it. From this perspective, each of the characters may be regarded as a representative or symbol of an approach to knowledge, each offering his formula or prescription for registering and ordering his social experiences.

Some of the characters, like Tattle, Mrs. Frail, and Mrs. Foresight, abrogate entirely their responsibility to come to terms intellectually with the external universe. For these closed-eyed characters the broad distinctions of truth and falsity do not exist, and, consequently, they have no sense of obligation to look for an agreement between their ideas and the substances from which these ideas emanate. Appearance for them in effect has become reality, as Holland maintains. In terms of Locke's epistemology, the mental and verbal propositions they formulate from the ideas in their minds have no agreement with the reality of things. Thus Tattle, without qualm of conscience, can teach Prue in Act II that to lie and dissemble is better than to tell the truth and be honest. And similarly, Mrs. Foresight in Act IV can, without compunction, profess her virtue the very morning after she cuckolds her husband.

The prescriptions for understanding offered by Sir Sampson, Foresight, and Ben, three legitimate humors characters, are likewise tangential to the reality of things, yet the error of their respective ways lies not so much in the voluntary confusion of truth and falsity as in the frames of reference these characters use to screen experience. In other words, the propositions they formulate are made to conform to preconceived notions of how ideas and experience are ordered. For Sir Sampson the frame of reference is paternal authority, arbitrary edict, and .at: "I warrant my son thought nothing belonged to a father, but forgiveness and affection; no authority, no correction, no arbitrary power . . ." For Foresight the frame of reference is even further removed from the world of the play than it is for Sir Sampson. He sifts all experience through the sieve of prognostication, and, as a result, the mental and verbal propositions he formulates have little or no relevance to social reality:

But I tell you, I have traveled, and traveled in the celestial spheres, know the signs and the planets and their houses. Can judge of motions direct and retrograde, of sextiles, quadrates, trines, and oppositions, fiery trigons and aquatical trigons. Know whether life shall be long or short, happy or unhappy, whether diseases are curable or incurable. If journeys shall be prosperous, undertakings successful, or goods stolen recovered, I know.

Like Sir Sampson and old Foresight, Sailor Ben is a humors character, but unlike them he is also a character of habit. In keeping with his habit, Ben's frame of reference is the sea, which he uses to screen experience and in a sense transmute it to a kind of nautical poetry. Although technically the sea has as little relevance to Valentine's social world as either prophecy or .at, Congreve uses Ben as a sounding-board by which to judge and criticize that world: "You don't think I'm false-hearted, like a landman. A sailor will be honest, tho'f mayhap he has never a penny of money in his pocket." Ben, therefore, by virtue of his frame of reference outside of the world of the play, is the best qualified of the characters to pass judgment upon that world.

Just as there are three characters in the play who look at the world closed-eyed, and three whose judgments of it are distorted to varying degrees by their frames of reference, so there are three who make a serious attempt to understand it through close scrutiny and analysis. Jeremy Fetch, whose locus of reality is the tangible and the concrete, is skeptical of those areas of experience he cannot refer to immediate and

practical use: "Was Epictetus a real cook, or did he only write receipts?." He registers sense experience but seems alien to conceptual thought, and when confronted with an abstraction, he is prone to make it concrete:

Ah, pox confound that Will's Coffee-House . . . For my part, I never sit at the door that I don't get double the stomach that I do at a horse race . . . I never see it, but the Spirit of Famine appears to me; sometimes like a decayed porter, worn out with pimping and carrying billet-doux and songs; not like other porters for hire, but for the jest's sake; now like a thin chairman, melted down to half his proportion with carrying a poet upon tick to visit some great fortune; and his fair to be paid him like the wages of sin, either at the day of marriage, or the day of death . . . Sometimes like a bilked bookseller, with a meager, terrified countenance, that looks as if he had written for himself, or were resolved to turn author, and bring the rest of his brethren into the same condition. And lastly, in the form of a worn-hout punk, with verses in her hand, which her vanity had preferred to settlements, without a whole tatter to her tail, but as ragged as one of the Muses; or as if she were carrying her linen to the paper-mill, to be converted into folio books of warning to all young maids, not to prefer poetry to good sense, or lying in the arms of a needy wit, before the embraces of a wealthy fool.

Holland is right when he refers to Jeremy's knowledge as mere "belly knowledge"; Sir Sampson's impression of him is surprisingly accurate: "And if this rogue were anatomized now, and dissected, he has his vessels of digestion and concoction, and so fourth, large enough for the inside of a cardinal . . . "

In the play, Angelica is perhaps the most elusive and enigmatic of the major characters, and yet she is the object of knowledge for both Valentine and Scandal. The abortive attempts these characters make to comprehend or understand her reflects both Congreve's and Locke's conviction about the difficulty and perhaps the impossibility of arriving at perfect knowledge of a substance, whether it be an object in nature, as it is for Locke, or the human personality, as it is for Congreve.

While Jeremy invariably reduces an abstraction to a concrete particular, Scandal's habit of thought is the reverse. He looks at the particular in terms of the category it falls under, and, as a result, the abstraction is more valid for him than the concrete thing that first suggested it: "I can show you pride, folly, affectation, wantonness, inconstancy, covetousness, dissimulation, malice, and ignorance, all in one piece. Then I can show you lying, foppery, vanity, cowardice, bragging, lechery, impotence, and ugliness in another piece . . ." Scandal's effort to understand Angelica is colored largely by his knowledge of other women, and yet his "conversion" at the close of Act V indicates that the propositions he had earlier formulated have been abandoned. Through the first four acts Scandal looks at Angelica in terms of the category of which she is a member□woman:

All women are inconstant and unkind.
Angelica is a woman.
Angelica is inconstant and unkind.

Typical of his mode of judging Angelica is a passage in Act I:

Women of her airy temper, as they seldom think before they act, so they rarely give us any light to guess at what they mean. But you have little reason to believe that a woman of this age, who has had an indifference for you in your prosperity, will fall in love with your ill fortune; besides, Angelica has a great fortune of her own, and great fortunes either expect another great fortune, or a fool.

Scandal's logic obviously suffers from a faulty premise (though his experiences with Mrs. Frail and Mrs. Foresight would seem to confirm it as true). He cannot distinguish Cow (1) from Cow (2), to borrow Hayakawa's metaphor. His error in judgment is simply that he fails to see distinctions, an error that Locke anticipates in the *Essay:*

He that has an idea made up of barely the simple ones of a beast with spots has but a confused idea of a leopard; it not being thereby sufficiently distinguished from a lynx, and several other sorts of beasts that are spotted. So that such an idea, though it hath the peculiar name "leopard," is not distinguishable from those designed by the name "lynx" or "panther," and may as well come under the name "lynx" as "leopard." How much the custom of defining of words by general terms contributes to make the ideas we would express by them confused and undetermined I leave others to consider. This is evident, that confused ideas are such as render the use of words uncertain, and take away the benefit of distinct names.

Scandal's conversion at the end of the play from infidel to believer necessarily entails a revision of the major premise under which he has been laboring. In other words, Angelica as an exception to the rule compels him to abandon the universal affirmative proposition that all women are inconstant and unkind for a proposition that is particular: some women, not all, are inconstant and unkind.

Each of the major affectations that Valentine assumes in the course of the play□his postures as poet-satirist and madman□is a tactical maneuver designed to afford him knowledge of Angelica's heart. The possibility of such knowledge, however, is necessarily predicated on his ability to penetrate intellectually the concentric layers of affectation that obscure her substance and humor. But, in spite of his efforts, Angelica continually eludes him and remains outside his intellectual grasp:

Jeremy. What, is the lady gone again, sir? I hope you understand one another before she went?

Valentine. Understood! She is harder to be understood than a piece of Egyptian antiquity or an Irish manuscript. You may pore till you spoil your eyes, and not improve your knowledge.

Jeremy. I have heard 'em say, sir, they read hard Hebrew books backwards. Maybe you begin to read at the wrong end.

Valentine. They say so of a witch's prayer, and dreams and Dutch almanacs are to be understood by contraries. But there's regularity and method in that. She is a medal

without a reverse or inscription, for indifference has both sides alike. Yet while she does not seem to hate me, I will pursue her, and know her if it be possible, in spite of the opinion of my satirical friend, Scandal, who says,

That women are like tricks by slight of hand, Which, to admire, we should not understand.

It is not surprising, then, that Valentine's impersonation of a madman is thematically appropriate in the play, as is his refrain in Act IV, "I am Truth"; for in a world where certain knowledge of the object in nature is problematical, Valentine has little recourse but to retreat to the subjective world, the private inner world, the only world that seems to have coherent meaning.

lentine never does arrive at a human understanding of Angelica. She remains a perplexity even when she relents and gives her heart to him in the last act. Holland is right when he claims that Valentine arrives at intuitive knowledge at the end of the play, and when Valentine says, "Between pleasure and amazement, I am lostmdash;but on my knees I take the blessing," the emphasis falls on *amazement* as an indication of his intellectual confusion. The knowledge he attains is intuitive, apprehended immediately without the mediation of his rational powers. It is, in effect, not unlike the mystical experience that the image "blessing" suggests.

While the foregoing analysis of *Love for Love* indicates Congreve's heavy indebtedness to Locke's concept of knowledge and his explanation of how it is attained, the final effect of the play is to undercut much of what the philosopher has to say about the extent and certainty of that knowledge, particularly when the perceived object is as elusive as the human personality and the faculty for judging it is as unreliable as the human reason. One of the important implications of Congreve's letter to Dennis is that people, as objects of knowledge, defy rational understanding in a way that stones do not. Thus, the extent of one's awareness and level of perception prevents him in most cases from properly judging the social world, and this incapacity in turn often accounts for the aberrations in his own social behavior. In a sense, the play may be read on more than one level. It is, in part at least, a variation on the time-worn theme of woman's inscrutability. More importantly, however, it is a critical examination of the adequacy of rational knowledge to assess man and his behavior in society. Congreve, in the end, proves something of a skeptic in terms of his confidence in the ability of reason to discern man and consequently regulate human affairs. He would agree with Locke that there is an area of experience outside the scope of human ken and, in terms of this particular play, that area is the human personality□ ever indefinable, elusive, and enigmatic. With Locke, Congreve might say:

Thus, men extending their inquiries beyond their capacities, and letting their thoughts wander into those depths where they can find no sure footing, it is no wonder that they raise questions and multiply disputes, which, never coming to any clear resolution, are proper only to continue and increase their doubts, and to confirm them at last in perfect scepticism. Whereas, were the capacities of our understandings well considered, the extent of our knowledge once discovered, and the horizon found which sets the bounds

between the enlightened and dark parts of things, between what is and what is not comprehensible by us, men would perhaps with less scruple acquiesce in the avowed ignorance of the one, and employ their thoughts and discourse with more advantage and satisfaction in the other.

The tendency to date, among critics, has been to sentimentalize *Love for Love*, and, to be sure, Congreve's drama, unhappily, is responsive to the forces set in motion by the lugubrious comedy of Colley Cibber at the close of the seventeenth century. But in another sense, the play is a genuine comedy of errors, albeit sober and reflective in the last act. In the final analysis, *Love for Love* is a sophisticated and somewhat skeptical statement of the limitations of human reason. Neither Scandal's mental gymnastics nor Valentine's trial-and-error courtship avails the hero or his friend of an adequate knowledge of Angelica. She escapes formula and definition, as does every human being, and Valentine at the close of the play, dumbfounded by her unexpected benevolence, is confronted with the comic absurdity of man's condition: his inability to fathom, by reason at least, the people upon whom his happiness in life depends.

Source: F. P. Jarvis, "The Philosophical Assumptions of Congreve's *Love for Love,*" in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language,* Vol. XIV, No. 3, Fall 1972, pp. 423-34.

Adaptations

Restoration is not a filmed adaptation of *Love for Love*, but it is a fascinating portrayal of life in the Restoration period. The film stars Robert Downey Jr., Meg Ryan, and Ian McKellen and was directed by Michael Hoffman, for Miramax, 1995. The film is available from Miramax Home Video.

An audio recording of *Love for Love* was made by the National Theatre of Great Britain in 1966 and was produced by the RCA Victor Corporation.

Topics for Further Study

Research the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688. Who was the king who was deposed? Why were people unhappy with him? Who replaced him? What lasting changes came about as a result of the revolution?

As a group, direct part of one of the acts of *Love for Love*. How do you make sure the audience understands the jokes? How do you handle the actors' fast-paced entrances and exits? How do you interpret the characters of Angelica and Valentine?

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw many important scientific discoveries in engineering, astronomy, physics, biology, medicine, and chemistry. What were some of these discoveries? Who were the important scientific figures of the time?

Research the lives of upper-class women in English society during the late 1600s. What avenues were open to them in terms of education, careers, marriage, and owning their own property? When and why did these situations change?

The Restoration restored the royalist government after a brief period of Puritan religious rule. Who were the Puritans? What relation did they have to the Pilgrims and Puritans in America? What became of the Puritans in England?

Compare and Contrast

1690s: England is ruled by King William III; the near-absolute power of the monarchy enjoyed by Queen Elizabeth I and King James II has just been limited by the acts of William. Parliament takes on new importance as England grows slightly more democratic.

Today: England is ruled, in name, by Queen Elizabeth II, although in reality she has no political power. Tony Blair, the prime minister, is reelected for a second term.

1690s: Women cannot vote or run for political office in England or England's American colonies. Their only hope for influence in society is to enter into the royal court and curry favor from powerful people.

Today: Women can vote and run for office in the United States and England. Although the United States has never had a female chief executive, England had a female prime minister (Margaret Thatcher) for much of the 1980s.

1690s: In the New World, the country that will become the United States is just a collection of English settlements on the Atlantic coast. French trappers explore the interior of the continent, while Spain is the continent's most important power, holding all of Central America, Mexico, and territories that comprise much of what is now the present-day United States.

Today: The nations of Mexico, the United States, and Canada draw ever closer together as national borders become less important. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) encourages trade among the nations, and millions of people of Mexican descent live in the United States, transforming the cultures and economies of both countries.

1690s: Public schooling in England is far from a reality, and a university education is a reality for very few. Although literacy is widespread, it is by no means universal.

Today: In England and the United States, literacy rates approach 100 percent, and primary education is compulsory. College attendance is at an all-time high.

1690s: News travels via pamphlets and horse couriers.

Today: Because of the telecommunications industry and its technology, information can travel instantaneously. Access to computers and televisions is widespread in England and the United States.

What Do I Read Next?

The Way of the World, originally produced in 1700, is Congreve's best-known play. In this play, many critics feel, Congreve created the highest accomplishment of Restoration comedy and of contemporary social criticism.

Alexander Pope is, to many peoples' minds, the greatest wit that England ever produced. He generally wrote his works in "heroic couplets," or rhymed couplets of iambic pentameter. Although he expressed his serious ideas about religion, philosophy, and literature in his *Essay on Man* and *Essay on Criticism*, his long poem *The Rape of the Lock* is a sophisticated, funny, rewarding satire of the upper-class morals of his—and Congreve's—time.

The best and most comprehensive picture of daily life in Restoration London is not a play or a poem but a long journal. The diaries of Samuel Pepys describe in vivid and entertaining detail the social and political life of his time. Especially interesting is his portrayal of the London theater, its audiences, and conventions.

Further Study

Hughes, Derek, *English Drama 1660-1700,* Clarendon Press, 1996.

In this book, Hughes provides a brief discussion of almost every play to have been produced on the London stage during this period. The book is an excellent resource for discovering what kinds of plays were popular and what the conventions of playwriting, production, and theatre attendance were like during the Restoration.

Scouten, Arthur H., and Robert D. Hume, "'Restoration Comedy' and its Audiences," in *The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama 1660-1800,* edited by Robert D. Hume, Southern Illinois University Press, 1983.

Reading and analyzing plays, even accessing records of how they were produced, can foster a better understanding of their meaning. Knowing the composition and expectations of audiences during this early period of modern theater, is, however, much more difficult. Scouten and Hume have researched the subject thoroughly in an effort to reconstruct a picture of Restoration theatre's audiences.

Quinsey, Katherine M., editor, *Broken Boundaries: Women and Feminism in Restoration Drama,* University Press of Kentucky, 1996.

This collection of twelve original essays is noted as being the first direct study of feminism in the plays of the Restoration period. The essays discuss gender roles in Restoration drama, and in doing so, examine the place of women and men in both family and society during this period.

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Thomas, David, *English Dramatists: William Congreve,* Macmillan, 1992.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from DfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Drama for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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