THE DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMATIC EXPOSITION IN
THE PLAYS OF GEORGE FARQUHAR

APPROVED:

W. F. Buley
Major Professor

D. B. Nichols, Jr.
Minor Professor

Director of the Department of English

Robert B. Foulke
Dean of the Graduate School
THE DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMATIC EXPOSITION IN
THE PLAYS OF GEORGE FARQUHAR

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By

Dale Talmadge Adams, B. S., B. A.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION: THE REPUTATION OF GEORGE FARQUHAR</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. DRAMATIC EXPOSITION IN THE CONSTANT COUPLE, THE TWIN RIVALS, THE RECRUITING OFFICER, AND THE BEAUX' STRATAGEM</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE REPUTATION OF

GEORGE FARQUHAR

Despite George Farquhar's reputation as one of the major playwrights of the English Restoration, his dramatic skill has not been studied and, consequently, not appreciated by modern critics. Because of the popularity of his plays and critical neglect of his techniques, a reappraisal of his works seems both justified and, indeed, overdue.

Five playwrights stand out in the history of the Restoration comedy of manners.¹ They are George Etherege, William Wycherley, William Congreve, Sir John Vanbrugh, and George Farquhar. Of these five, Farquhar has been the favorite with audiences since his first play, Love and a Bottle, appeared at Drury Lane in December, 1698.

Malcolm Elwin, although his opinion of Farquhar as a playwright was unfavorable, has pointed out in his The Playgoer's Handbook to Restoration Drama that Love and a Bottle "ran nine nights, a long run

¹The term Restoration comedy of manners, for the purposes of this thesis, applies as it usually does, not only to those comedies written during the Restoration proper, 1660-1685, but also to all the comedies written up to 1707, the date of the last play of George Farquhar, as well as of his death.
for those days, and must therefore have been something of a success. \( ^2 \)

Willard Connely also reports the same information in his Young George Farquhar and explains that during the Restoration there was one and only one word for a play that failed; it was "damned". What constituted success? Evidently ten or more performances within a month or two of opening, plus a revival a few months later; the more revivals the more fame, but not money, to the author. He had to be content with the takings at his one or two benefit performances, one if it had a third night, two if it ran to a sixth. Assuming it true that barely "five plays indured six days' acting for fifty that were damned in three", we may say that Love and a Bottle was no failure. . . . It seemed to be one of the five plays out of the fifty, for it reached its ninth performance. . . . In fact, it "far exceeded" its author's expectations. \(^3\)

Farquhar's second play, The Constant Couple or A Trip to the Jubilee (1699), "made an unprecedented success."\(^4\) For this play, Farquhar was given the receipts of four third-nights. \(^5\) Connely has pointed out that The Constant Couple was such a success that Farquhar was the only playwright to win distinction during the entire year of 1699. \(^6\) Playwright after playwright failed to produce a play to rival Farquhar's success. Oldmixon, whose play The Grove appeared in February, 1700,


\( ^3 \)Willard Connely, Young George Farquhar (London, 1949), p. 82.


\( ^5 \)Ibid.

\( ^6 \)Connely, p. 104.
ingeniously "tried to court popularity by obtaining an epilogue by Farquhar. "⁷ Even Congreve's *The Way of the World* did not rival *The Constant Couple*; the initial failure of Congreve's play, however, is the play itself, rather than any superiority of Farquhar's play. Connely warns that

one must hesitate to say that the upstart Farquhar toppled over the mighty Congreve. But the lines of Congreve proved too coruscating for his audience; if not blinded by his wit, they seemed deaf to it; the play was too keen a satire to win applause, and the author's talented mistress Anne Bracegirdle, in the leading part of Millamant, failed to capture the sympathy of the playgoers.⁸

Nevertheless, Farquhar's *The Constant Couple* was a success, playing fifty-three performances during its initial season at Drury Lane.⁹ Farquhar attempted to capitalize on his success by writing a sequel, *Sir Harry Wildair* (1701), but it was not as popular as its predecessor, for it had a run of only nine performances. William Archer has affirmed that "neither then nor afterwards did it rival *The Constant Couple* in popularity. It does not seem to have been revived until 1737. In truth, it shares the usual fate of continuations and is a distinctly inferior play to its predecessors."¹⁰

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⁷Ibid.
⁸Ibid.
¹⁰Ibid., p. 9.
Of the seven\textsuperscript{11} plays that Farquhar wrote before his death in 1707, only two, both produced in 1702, can be said to have been unpopular with their first audiences, \textit{The Inconstant} and \textit{The Twin Rivals}, Farquhar's fourth and fifth plays respectively. \textit{The Inconstant}, an adaptation of Fletcher's \textit{Wild Goose Chase},\textsuperscript{12} played for six performances, although not consecutively, and Farquhar received two third-nights.\textsuperscript{13} Farquhar had faith in the play and felt that its unpopularity was due to outside circumstances, namely Lent, and he felt that he would be able to revive the play with success at a later date.\textsuperscript{14} Connely has suggested that there were factors other than Lent which kept down the attendance of the play. He mentions the popularity of Italian singers and French tumblers, as well as the death of King William III:

Motteux had also referred in his prologue [to \textit{The Twin Rivals}] to the competition which all London theatres were suffering because of the invasion of Italian singers and French tumblers. There was high salaried French opera as well. . . . But this operatic rivalry itself dwindled, and owing not entirely to Lent. Nor was it from all the causes mentioned that the reverses of Farquhar wholly arose. On March 8 died King

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11}Farquhar was also co-author with Peter Anthony Motteux of a farce, \textit{The Stage Coach}, which was an adaptation of \textit{Les Carosses d'Orléans}, by Jean de la Chapelle. The farce was designed as an after-piece and was popular throughout the eighteenth century (Farquhar, Mermaid edition, pp. 10-11).
\item \textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 9.
\item \textsuperscript{13}Connely, p. 182.
\item \textsuperscript{14}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
William III, in Kensington Palace. . . . With the whole of London now cloaked in mourning there was not a wisp of a chance for a play by George Farquhar to prosper.  

The Twin Rivals was only comparatively unpopular, for it ran for thirteen performances. However, Archer has pointed out that "Farquhar himself tells us that 'the galleries were thin during the run of this play' and the run was not a long one." Archer found the unpopularity of The Twin Rivals with its original audiences hard to understand because he thought the play "both strong and lively." Both Archer and Connely account for this unpopularity, as they do for that of The Inconstant, by citing extenuating circumstances. Archer believed that the audiences may have opposed the performance of Mrs. Mandrake by a male comedian and reminds his reader, in addition, that the play was competing with "two excellent comedies—Steele's Funeral and Cibber's She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not—which were in possession of the field" when The Twin Rivals appeared.  

Another possible reason for the The Twin Rivals's unpopularity is implied by Archer and elaborated by Connely, and perhaps has more significance in the history of English drama than has heretofore been

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15Ibid., pp. 182-183.
16Ibid., p. 198.
17Farquhar, Mermaid edition, p. 10.
18Ibid.
19Ibid.
generally accepted. Archer believed that "possibly the public resented the obtrusion of 'poetical justice' in the scheme" of The Twin Rivals. 20

The poetical justice was there through the influence of Jeremy Collier's A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, which appeared in 1698, before any of Farquhar's plays had been presented. Collier had declared that

the business of plays is to recommend virtue, and discountenance vice; to show the uncertainty of human greatness, the sudden turns of fate, and the unhappy conclusions of violence and injustice: 'tis to expose the singularities of pride and fancy, to make folly and falsehood contemptible, and to bring everything that is ill under infamy and neglect. 21

Farquhar's first three plays either ignored Collier's diatribe or, in effect, satirized it. 22 Connely explains that in The Twin Rivals Farquhar attempted to write a comedy that would satisfy Collier's pre-requisites, yet win popular approval. Accomplishing both aims in the same play, however, was difficult. Farquhar himself said Jeremy Collier had piqued him into showing how moral and satirical he could be. His purpose was "to expose the middle sort of wickedness". He thought, he said, "to have soothed

20Ibid.


the splenetic zeal of the city by making a gentleman (Ben Wou'dbee) a knave, and punishing their great grievance, a whoremaster (Richmore)". But "a certain virtuoso of that fraternity" advised him that the citizens were never more disappointed in any entertainment. "However pious we may appear to be at home", said he, "yet we never go to that end of the town [to the theater] but with an intention to be lewd". 23

The significant point is that although Collier's attack may have expressed popular sentiment, it did not express the sentiment of the theatergoer. 24 Audiences did not want the kind of comedy advocated by Collier: Connely justly insists that the galleries had wanted to see, had rather expected, another Harry Wildair and Lady Lurewell, for what did galleries care about Jeremy Collier? In their dissatisfaction the public remained away from The Twin Rivals, but pressed into Drury Lane in throngs on the evenings in which She Would and She Would Not was the attraction. 25

Whatever the reasons, The Twin Rivals and The Inconstant were not popular successes, and no other play by Farquhar appeared for four years. His last two plays, however, proved unquestionably that Farquhar was still able to absorb the attention of Restoration audiences.

The first of these was The Recruiting Officer (1706). In the introduction of an edition of Farquhar's plays, A. C. Ewald says that

23 Connely, p. 195.
24 Rothstein, p. 41.
25 Connely, p. 197.
The Recruiting Officer "at once achieved an immense success." Archer agrees that it "at once became one of the stock comedies of the English theatre." Night after night The Recruiting Officer played to full houses and left the other houses thin. "The Recruiting Officer, with a swiftness which not even A Trip to the Jubilee had matched, was raising George Farquhar to eminence renewed." The play was stamped "the hit of the theatrical year in Drury Lane."  

Farquhar wrote his last play, The Beaux' Stratagem (1707), in only six weeks and during his last illness; he lived only long enough to see his play another popular triumph. It will suffice to say that The Beaux' Stratagem's initial popularity exceeded the initial appeal of any other of Farquhar's plays; and, moreover, it has continued to do so ever since.

For the most part, then, Farquhar's plays were well received by their first audiences. In addition, his plays proved throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as in the twentieth, to be more popular than the plays of Etherege, Congreve, Wycherley, or Vanbrugh.

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28 Connelly, p. 258.
29 Ibid., p. 263.
James Lynch points out in his *Box, Pit, and Gallery* that in the eighteenth century

fewer Restoration comedies than tragedies were neglected after 1737. The most frequently revived author was Vanbrugh, whose *The Mistake, The Confederacy, The False Friend, Aesop, The Provoked Wife,* and *The Relapse* were acted, the last two being among the most popular plays of the period. Five of Farquhar's comedies were revived--*The Constant Couple, The Recruiting Officer, The Beaux' Stratagem, The Twin Rivals* and *The Inconstant*--and for a greater number of performances than those of Vanbrugh. Indeed, so frequently acted were the plays of these two writers that 15 per cent of the evenings devoted to comedy were given over to one or another of these eleven plays, and together they accounted for almost one-twelfth of the entire theatrical repertory.

Lynch says too that by 1775 *The Beaux' Stratagem* had become the perennial favorite of Restoration plays. He explains, however, that although by the end of the eighteenth century, Restoration comedy and tragedy had died down in popularity, there were notable exceptions, including two plays by Farquhar:

Restoration drama provided one-sixth of the plays in the mid-eighteenth century repertory and accounted for about one-fifth of the total number of performances. Unlike the revived drama of the early eighteenth century, however, whose influence extended with considerable strength into the last quarter of the century, the popularity of many of the Restoration plays waned in later years of the period. By that time most of the tragedies had disappeared from the boards, and with certain notable exceptions--particularly *The Beaux' Stratagem, The Provoked Wife, The Recruiting Officer*

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31 Ibid., p. 19.
and Love for Love—Restoration comedy had also given away to newer plays.  

Leigh Hunt, in the introduction to his edition of the plays of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar, summarizes Farquhar's comparative popularity in the nineteenth century:

He has far surpassed them all we believe in the number of editions, and is certainly ten times acted to their once. The "Confederacy," upon the strength of Brass and Dick Aimwell and his mother, is the only play of Vanbrugh's that can compete, unaltered, with the quadruple duration of the "Constant Couple," the "Inconstant," the "Recruiting Officer," and the "Beaux' Stratagem."  

The popularity of Farquhar in the present century is exemplified by Connely in the preface to Young George Farquhar.

The Arts Theatre in London won conspicuous favor with three seasons of Farquhar. Between November and January, 1943-4, The Recruiting Officer ran for fifty-six performances . . . and The Constant Couple was acted twenty-nine times between July and November, 1943, and again thirty-five times between September and March, 1945-6. . .  

The Beaux' Stratagem ran for four weeks during May and June, 1947, at the Intimate Theatre. "Thus, for four consecutive years [1943-1947]," Connely concludes, "audiences in England have seen Farquhar played. Of no other Restoration dramatist can this be said."  

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32 Ibid., p. 40.  
34 Connely, p. 9.  
35 Ibid.
Not only has Farquhar been universally popular with his audiences, but he has also been popular with his critics. Nevertheless, Farquhar criticism has displayed its inadequacies. Eugene Nelson James, in his doctoral dissertation, "The Development of George Farquhar as a Comic Dramatist," has made a detailed study of Farquhar criticism and determines that the major fault in this criticism has been its brevity. The only published full-length study of Farquhar has been Connely's biography; and the critical portions of this book are, in James's opinion, inadequate because they strain the biographical approach. James says that Connely "tried to find George Farquhar in some character in every one of the plays." In addition, the short studies by Farquhar's modern editors--A. C. Ewald, William Archer, Louis A. Strauss, H. Macaulay Fitzgibbon, Bonamy Dobrée, Charles Stonehill, and Tucker Brooke are inadequate because they divide their discussions into biography and criticism, and the criticism is too brief to do Farquhar proper justice.

For Farquhar criticism, consequently, one has to go to short comments in essays, anthologies, literary histories, and letters, and to the relatively few studies that deal specifically with Restoration and eighteenth-century drama.

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37 Ibid., pp. 3-4.
In 1906 William Archer, in the introduction to the Mermaid edition of Farquhar's plays, attempts to identify the source of Farquhar denigration:

Farquhar has been, if not damned, at any rate gravely depreciated, by a single line of Pope's: "What pert, low dialogue has Farquhar writ!" This casual remark has struck the keynote of criticism for more than a century and a half. 38

Today, however, it might be said that Farquhar has been, if not damned, at any rate gravely depreciated by a single line of Palmer's: "Farquhar killed the comedy to which he contributed the last brilliant examples." 39

Palmer was the first critic of importance to devote a study exclusively to the Restoration comedy of manners, and it is unfortunate that his evaluation of Farquhar is almost completely negative; for many readers, and critics too, assume that Palmer's _The Comedy of Manners_ is wholly acceptable in the criticism of this genre.

In spite of the infrequency and brevity of Farquhar criticism, however, and in spite of the detrimental remarks of Pope and Palmer, Farquhar has, with notable exceptions, been applauded by critics. It is ironic that on the basis of a few objections Farquhar does not hold a higher place in Restoration drama than he does.

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38Farquhar, Mermaid edition, p. 16.

Writing in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1882, H. A. Huntington summed up Farquhar criticism to that time. He showed first that for the most part the critics, particularly Macaulay and Thackeray, had neglected Farquhar, but also that even Farquhar's contemporaries could not agree on his merits:

This neglect of Farquhar by the writers best fitted to deal with his period is by no means due to the inferiority of his place in dramatic literature. Dr. Johnson, whose critical faculties, however they may be regarded, were fearlessly exercised, thought his writings had considerable merit. In Goldsmith's opinion he was more lively and perhaps more entertaining than either Wycherley, Congreve, or Vanbrugh. That he improved in each play we have the testimony of Oldisworth, whose obscurity lends an air of mystery to his approval. Macaulay pronounced him a man not to be hastily dismissed. All his critics have not been equally kind. Lackier, Dean of Peterborough, esteemed him a mean poet, placed by some in a higher rank than he deserved. Pope called him a farce writer, and somewhere exclaims, "What pert, low dialogue has Farquhar writ!" Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt date the decline of English comedy from the death of Farquhar. Fielding's birth in the same year [1707] would have been a better date. Nothing was more fatal to English comedy than the rise of English fiction. Moreover, comedy did not die until Goldsmith and Sheridan had written their last. They were both greater men than our author, though each was in some sort an imitator,—the former of Farquhar, the latter of Congreve and Vanbrugh. Wycherley had no follower. 40

It should be pointed out that Hazlitt and Hunt's dating the decline of English comedy with Farquhar was merely an observation, not a condemnation of Farquhar. Such an observation did not become a condemnation until Palmer's *The Comedy of Manners* in 1913. In point of fact, both Hazlitt

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and Hunt spoke favorably of Farquhar. Hazlitt gave the following evaluation of Farquhar's work, admiring particularly Farquhar's action and gaiety:

His comedies have . . . probably a greater appearance of truth and nature than almost any others. His incidents succeed one another with rapidity, but without premeditation; his wit is easy and spontaneous; his style animated, unembarrassed, and flowing; his characters full of life and spirit, and never overstrained so as to "o'erstep the modesty of nature," though they sometimes, from haste and carelessness, seem left in a crude, unfinished state. There is a constant ebullition of gay, laughing invention, cordial good humour, and fine animal spirits in his writings. 41

In the same manner, Hunt not only praised Farquhar, but considered him to be a better dramatist than either Wycherley, Congreve, or Vanbrugh, all of whose works Hunt edited:

Of the four dramatists of whom we have thus endeavored to give some account, it appears to us that Wycherley was the most reflective for reflection's sake, the most terse with simplicity in his style, the most original in departing from the comedy in vogue, and adding morals to manners, and least so with regards to plot and characters; that Congreve was the wittiest, most scholarly, most highly bred, the most elaborate in his plots and language, and the most pungent but least natural in his characters, and that he had the least heart: that Vanbrugh was the readiest and the most straightforward, the least superfluous, the least self-reverential, mistrusting, or morbid, and, therefore, with more pardon, the least scrupulous, --caring for nothing but truth (as far as he saw it) and a strong effect: and that Farquhar had the highest animal spirits, with fits of the deepest sympathy, the greatest wish to please rather than to strike, the most agreeable diversity of character, the best instinct in avoiding revolting extravagance of the time, and the happiest

invention in plot and situation; and therefore, is to be pronounced, upon the whole, the truest dramatic genius, and the most likely to be of lasting popularity; as indeed he has hitherto been. 42

Thus, the words of Hazlitt and Hunt can hardly be said to be condemnatory; their dating the decline of English comedy from the death of Farquhar was rather a lamentation than a condemnation. Moreover, Hazlitt and Hunt were not alone in their praise of Farquhar. In The Athenaeum for January 2, 1841, an anonymous reviewer of Hunt's edition of four Restoration playwrights wrote that he not only agreed with Hunt's selection of Farquhar as the superior dramatist of the four, but he also added that "there is more genuine vivacity about Farquhar, more the result of genius, than the wick and oil that saturates the writing of the others, -- Congreve especially."43

The first half of the nineteenth century did, however, produce critics who were not as kind to Farquhar as Hazlitt and Hunt. For the most part, these critics were not so much opposed to Farquhar individually as they were to Restoration comedy as a whole; and their test for acceptability was always the same--what Lamb called "the moral test."44


43 Ibid.

The artificial Comedy, or Comedy of manners, [said Lamb], is quite extinct on our stage. Congreve and Farquhar show their heads once in seven years only; to be exploded and put down instantly. The times cannot bear them . . . . The business of their dramatic characters will not stand the moral test. We screw up everything to that.

Thus, Mrs. Inchbald labeled The Constant Couple a "licentious comedy"; and her overall appraisal of Farquhar was that he, "abashed on exhibiting his person upon the stage, sent boldly thither his most indecorous thoughts, and was rewarded for his audacity."

Macaulay simply heaped all Restoration comedies into one file and labeled it immoral. He reviewed Hunt's 1840 edition of the dramatic works of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar, justified its printing on the grounds of literary history, but denounced the immorality of the plays included. He felt that he could not be too severe in his condemnation. "For in truth," he wrote in his review, "this part of our literature is a disgrace to our language and our national character. It is clever, indeed, and very entertaining; but it is, in the most

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45 Ibid.

46 Elizabeth Simpson Inchbald, editor, The British Theatre or a Collection of Plays, Which Are Acted at the Theatres Royal, Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and Haymarket (London, 1808), VIII, 2.

47 Farquhar had been an actor when he first came to London, but he had sworn never to act again after he accidentally wounded a fellow actor while performing in Dryden's Indian Emperor in 1697 (Connely, p. 47).

48 Inchbald, p. 4.
emphatic sense of the words, 'earthly, sensual, devilish.' 49 No one can know Macaulay's specific opinion of Farquhar. His only comment, as already pointed out by Huntington, is that "Vanbrugh and Farquhar are not men to be hastily dismissed." 50 Ironically, however, by abruptly ending his discussion of Restoration dramatists with Congreve, Macaulay did dismiss Vanbrugh and Farquhar, whether in haste or not.

Thackeray also dismissed Farquhar almost without comment. His only recorded observation concerning Farquhar is in a letter to Edward Fitzgerald, in which Thackeray at least places Farquhar somewhat above the other writers of Restoration comedy: "I'm quite of your opinion about Farquhar; he's the only fellow among them. [He was] something more than a comic tradesman: and he has a drunken diabolical fire in him." 51

The moral attack on Restoration comedy by the critics of the first half of the nineteenth century was simply a renewal of the attack best exemplified by Jeremy Collier. To a degree, the condemnation on moral grounds continued not only through the nineteenth century, but is still invoked today. However, the critics of the last half of the nineteenth


50 Ibid., p. 528.

century were not as severe in their criticism of Farquhar as were critics of the first half of the century. These later critics did not, for example, lump Farquhar and the other writers of Restoration comedy into one category of immorality. They did not exclude the moral issue, however, because morality was a major concern in their criticism. What they did was to look at each dramatist individually and to consider the morality or immorality of his plays. In this light, Farquhar was judged favorably.

Edmund Gosse, in his A History of Eighteenth Century Literature (1660-1780), indicates awareness of what he felt were certain indecencies in Farquhar's plays, but he did not let his personal convictions prevent his praising Farquhar's wholesomeness and gaiety:

His flighty beaux and swaggering cavalry officers too frequently forget to counsel or reprove, but Farquhar succeeds in being always wholesome, even when he cannot persuade himself to be decent. His scenes breathe of the open air while Congreve's have a heated atmosphere of musk. There is something hopeful and encouraging in finding the crowded and unsatisfactory drama of the Restoration closing not in inanity and corruption, but in this gay world of Farquhar's, this market place of life, bright with scarlet tunics and white aprons, loud with drum and bugle, and ringing with pearls of laughter and impudent snatches of ballad-music.52

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52 Gosse was referring to Farquhar's own words that "comedy is no more at present than a well-framed tale handsomely told as an agreeable vehicle for counsel or reproof" (George Farquhar, The Works of the Late Ingenious Mr. George Farquhar: Containing All His Poems, Letters, Essays and Comedies, tenth edition (London, 1832), p. 5).

In 1892, A. C. Ewald edited Farquhar's plays and in the introductory notes gave, perhaps to that time, the most objective evaluation yet of Farquhar's work. Ewald felt that Farquhar compared favorably with the other writers of Restoration comedy. He did not, obviously, place Farquhar "upon a pedestal of purity," but he did feel that Farquhar held a middle position between "the vicious writers of the close of the seventeenth century and the comparatively purer writers of the beginning of the eighteenth." In addition, Ewald was particularly impressed with Farquhar's ability to draw diverse characterizations:

His dames of fashion are as lax and faithless as women not wholly lost to all social restrictions can well be, yet on the same canvas he can depict a modest, graceful, and attractive maiden. If he represents a gallant as ever bent on intrigue and a scoffer at all the regularities of life, he is no less able to portray manhood in its nobler and more honest aspect.

Ewald also believed that Farquhar's language and morality are relatively purer than those of his contemporaries:

In the comedies of Farquhar, as is so often the case with the other dramatists of the Restoration, wit is not always allied with profanity, humour with indecency, modesty with stupidity, and rectitude with timidity or lack of opportunity.

But Ewald's highest praise is reserved for Farquhar's positive attitude toward the society he depicted:


55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.
Whatever his faults may be, Farquhar, unlike Swift or Voltaire, is never cruel or savage in his satire. He studies human nature always from a genial and kindly standpoint. The failings of the creatures of his imagination never spring from a bitter and relentless source—his *dramatis personae* sin and fall because their humanity works too strongly within them to tolerate restraint; they love and drink and gamble because they are so essentially human that they cannot prevent their frailties from assuming the supremacy. Throughout the whole of the comedies of Farquhar we never meet with a sentiment or an incident in which the author places his characters beyond the reach of our sympathy, or outside the region of humanity. He frequently errs against good taste in the scenes he depicts; we recognize his indelicacy, his often low tone of morality, his occasional ribaldry; but throughout there is nothing of the venom and savage hate of the man who loves to hurl foul scorn and degradation upon his kind.57

Ewald's total evaluation of Farquhar is that "we rise from a study of his plays regretting much that might with advantage be omitted; but still shining clear above all defects we see the genius, the cheery humour, the kindly heart, the skilful manipulation of the true master of comedy."58

Ewald was not alone in high praise of Farquhar. In 1894 Louise Imogen Guiney, in an article in *Poet-Lore*, also showed appreciation for Farquhar's language, morality, characterizations, and his "gentleness" towards the society he described.59 In comparison with the other Restoration dramatists, Farquhar was found by Guiney to be "the best playwright among them."60 She took issue with Pope and said that

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Farquhar's language was not "low" to her society. On the contrary, she felt his language had "a simple, natural gusto infinitely preferable to the Persian apparatus of the eighteenth century." Guiney recognized Congreve's superior elegance and "consummate English"; but she declared that, by contrast, Farquhar was no merely literary dramatist; he had technical knowledge and skill; he brought the existing heroes with their conniving valets, the laughing, masking, conscienceless fine ladies with their buxom, equivocal maids, out of their disreputable moonlight into healthful comic air; and he added to them, in the transfer, a leaven of loveliness which will forever keep his masterpieces upon the boards.

This extensive approbation of Farquhar by Ewald and Guiney in the last half of the nineteenth century was carried over into the twentieth century.

In 1906 J. G. Robertson, with the objectivity of a conscientious critic, recognized that Farquhar's plays lack the wit that makes other Restoration comedies great, but he also saw that there are elements in Farquhar's work "which were of more importance for the comedy of the eighteenth century than all the wit of the Restoration." Robertson thus classified Farquhar as a transitional figure between the comedy of manners and sentimental comedy; and, for Robertson, the transition

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61 Ibid., p. 407.
62 Ibid., pp. 408-409.
was toward a better drama. He saw in Farquhar a new drama with "new social and personal ideals." Robertson was especially complimentary of Farquhar's innovations in leading drama "back to nature" and in showing an interest in "local colour." Robertson lamented, however, that the playwrights who would have been able to carry on what Farquhar started "were too few and far removed in time to sustain the honour of the English stage in its subsequent history." Robertson's highest esteem was for Farquhar's characterizations, particularly their modernity and their realism:

His characters appear to us to-day more modern and refined, because they are inspired by distinctly modern sentiments, which one looks for in vain beneath the wit and brilliancy of Congreve. . . . He could draw gentlemen who were not merely fashionable rakes, and gentle ladies whose language did not always demand the mask; his soldiers and boors, his innkeepers and valets, his French refugees and Irishmen were real. In his military types, he broke with the traditions of "miles gloriosus" which had dominated European comedy since the Renaissance, and he depicted for the first time, the soldier as he was.

The critic who most esteemed Farquhar and treated his works most extensively was William Archer, who in 1906 edited the Mermaid edition of Farquhar's plays. Moreover, in 1923, Archer published The Old Drama and the New, in which he not only reiterated his assessment of

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64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., p. 59.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
Farquhar as it appeared in the introduction to the Mermaid edition, but also refuted Farquhar's most detrimental antagonist, John Palmer, whose *The Comedy of Manners* appeared in 1913.

To evaluate Archer's praise of Farquhar, one has to understand Archer's attitude toward Restoration drama in general. In dealing with Restoration comedy, Archer felt that two questions needed to be kept distinct: "First, is this body of literature defensible from the moral point of view? Second, is it admirable from the technical or purely artistic point of view?" His answer to the first question was "so emphatically in the negative" that he readily admitted that he could hardly trust himself "to form an unbiased judgement on the second question." Thus for Archer Restoration drama was "an encyclopedia of loose living," and his condemnation was more vehement than that of any critic before him. Even when he put aside morality, he found that Restoration comedy lacked "decency" and "good manners":

Putting all considerations of morality aside, who can possibly deny that the writers of this period have a morbid passion for all that is malodorous and unsavory? Where else shall we find a body of literature in which sexual disease is a constant and succulent subject of jest? Foul linen, foul breath, physical

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69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., p. 175.

71 Ibid., p. 174.
misfortunes and deformities of all sorts are the most favorite topics. We hold our noses as we read. It is all very interesting from a "historical" point of view, as illustrating the coarse insensitiveness of our ancestors' nerves. But, aesthetically, a stench is a stench, even if it is wafted to us from the seventeenth century. 72

And Archer's summation of Restoration comedy is that "had the theatre fairly represented its age, the British nation could never have emerged from such a morass of levity, cynicism, corruption and disease." 73

The significant point is that with this general attitude toward Restoration comedy, Archer was able, nevertheless, to appreciate Farquhar from "the technical or purely artistic point of view," despite his inability to exclude the moral issue in his consideration. 74 Indeed, he felt strongly that Farquhar, by comparison with Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh, "showed clear traces of an advance in moral sensibility, nowhere discernible in the other three." 75 Archer shows that Farquhar distinctly rose from a low moral plane to a high moral plane, whereas his three contemporaries did not. 76

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid., p. 176.

74 It should be noted that Archer was so opposed to what he felt was immorality in Restoration drama that his opinion of Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh was obviously influenced by his moral objections.

75 Farquhar, Mermaid edition, p. 16.

76 Ibid.
Archer's main concern, however, was to show, like Ewald and Guiney, that Farquhar is "less nauseous" in his language and characterization than the other writers of Restoration comedy.\(^7^7\) Archer admitted that in *Love and a Bottle* Farquhar descended "to a grossness almost as vile as that of his contemporaries,"\(^7^8\) but Archer excluded this first play as merely the "unfortunate effort" of a "raw provincial youth,"\(^7^9\) without any real knowledge either of the town or of the world, simply aping the cynical licentiousness of his elders.\(^8^0\) Archer also admitted that Farquhar was not completely free of "licentiousness" in his other plays, but Archer's overall view is that amid all the lewdness that doubtless disfigures Farquhar's plays (especially *The Constant Couple* and its sequel) one is conscious . . . of a sweeter, cleaner, healthier mind than can be said for Wycherley, Congreve, or Vanbrugh, to say nothing of Otway, or D'Urfey, or (alas!) Dryden.\(^8^1\)

Archer elaborated on one point that is particularly important for this study. He shows that, unlike his contemporaries, Farquhar was a superior dramatist in the "technical or purely artistic" sense of the word.

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\(^7^7\)Ibid.

\(^7^8\)Ibid., p. 17.

\(^7^9\)Farquhar was about twenty when *Love and a Bottle* was first produced.

\(^8^0\)Farquhar, Mermaid edition, pp. 16-17.

\(^8^1\)Ibid., p. 18.
Farquhar

was a dramatist and nothing else, whereas in Wycherley, Congreve and Vanbrugh the dramatist was as yet imperfectly differentiated from the social essayist. How often in their plays does the action stand still while the characters expatiate in reflection, generalization, description and criticism of other characters; in short, in essays or leading articles broken up into dialogue. . . . The essential point is that there is scarcely a scene in any of these writers wherein the characters do not pause, more or less frequently, to contemplate themselves or each other from what may be called the essayist's point of view, and to pass general remarks and theoretic judgments. 82

Archer shows that by contrast Farquhar "confines his characters within the action, and keeps the action moving."83 Another example of Farquhar's superior ability as a dramatist is that in his plays the characters are not, as they are in the plays of the other Restoration dramatists, "minutely described before they appear and then do nothing throughout the rest of the play but, as it were, copy their own portrait."84

Archer's total evaluation of Farquhar is that "had he lived to sixty instead of dying before thirty, we can scarcely doubt that he would have kept the drama more nearly abreast of the essay and its successor, the novel, than it has ever been from his day to our own."85

82 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., p. 27.
The element that marks the criticism of Farquhar by Ewald, Guiney, Robertson, and Archer is its extensive praise. This favor, however, is not shown by the next critic to be considered, John Palmer. Palmer approached not only Farquhar but the entire genre of the comedy of manners from a narrow point of view. He attempted to make his study fit a formula or pattern, so that he could say patly that the comedy of manners began with Etherege and Wycherley, rose to "perfection" in Congreve, "dropped" in Vanbrugh, and was "extinguished" in Farquhar. In addition, like a writer of literary handbooks, Palmer looked for a single, speciously suitable reason or cause for the decline of the comedy of manners; and, falling into the same fallacy as many others, Palmer chose Jeremy Collier’s *Short View*, completely ignoring the fact that all of Farquhar's plays appeared several years after Collier's *diatribe*. Paul Mueschke and Jeannette Fleisher have pointed out this same fallacy of Palmer's in their defense of Vanbrugh against the slanted attack of Palmer:

He wholly over-emphasizes, for example, the influence and importance of Jeremy Collier in accounting for the change so clearly discernible in the tone of Vanbrugh, even though he is forced to remember that Vanbrugh's two complete original plays, *The Relapse* and *The Provok'd Wife*, were written before the dyspeptic divine chose to fumigate the stage in his peculiarly noisome fashion. There is no such division of literary history as a post-Collier period, and Palmer makes a grave mistake in attributing to the influence of the Puritanical would-be reformers

86Palmer, p. 242.
of the stage those elements in Vanbrugh [and this applies to Farquhar also] which spring rather from the soil of his own personality and changed outlook upon certain phases of the life about him. 87

As to Collier's influence specifically on Farquhar, Archer had said in 1906 that to say Farquhar

was "reformed" by Jeremy Collier would be inexact, for the famous Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage appeared many months before Farquhar made his first essay as a dramatist. Collier's attack was nearly two years old when Farquhar scored his greatest success with the The Constant Couple, on which "the parson" had certainly no influence whatever. 88

But Palmer made a graver error than that concerned with Collier. He derived a limited definition of the comedy of manners as exemplified by only Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve:

The comic drama of the Restoration rested upon a comic treatment of sex. It depended for its effect upon the elimination of passion. Comic treatment is treatment in a dry light. The heart of the matter lies in the epigram of Walpole that life is a comedy to the man who thinks, a tragedy to the man who feels. The swelling of human passion and the clash of emotion may for the spectators at a play be either comic or tragic. If the author has presented them so that the audience is invited to look upon them at a distance, if he makes his appeal to the intelligence rather than to the sympathy of his hearers, he is making the comic appeal. 89

Thus, as Paul Mueschke and Jeannette Fleisher have shown, Palmer "set up a norm for the genre, from which, in his opinion, any deviation

87 Paul Mueschke and Jeannette Fleisher, "A Re-evaluation of Vanbrugh," PMLA, XLIX (September, 1934), 849.

88 Farquhar, Mermaid edition, p. 22.

89 Palmer, p. 139.
is a demonstration of inferiority or of incapacity to achieve either the method or the result. 90 And for Palmer, Farquhar, as well as Vanbrugh, deviated from the norm. 91 For example, Palmer wrote, "Where the critics find in Farquhar humanity and fresh air we shall detect an emotional and romantic treatment of sex stifling the parent stem of a comedy whose appeal depended upon an entirely different system of moral and imaginative values." 92 And throughout his study Palmer constantly objects to Farquhar and Vanbrugh on the grounds that their works do not live up to the passionless and amoral standards set, in Palmer's opinion, by Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve. Palmer ends his discussion of Farquhar and Vanbrugh with the same objection:

It has been necessary to insist that these two authors, accepting a comedy which expressed the society of the Restoration, were unable consistently to present life from the point of view of the men who served as their models. Their plays are pitted with inconsistencies. They never succeeded in bridging the gulf that separated their personal convictions from the moral and artistic conventions of the theatre into which they intruded. 93

90 Mueschke and Fleisher, p. 848.

91 Hardly any critic would deny that the plays of Farquhar are different in tone from the plays of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve. Palmer, however, is perhaps the first critic to see this difference as a fault in Farquhar. Indeed, as the survey of Farquhar criticism in this thesis shows, most critics have praised the difference in tone. Palmer wanted to derive a type of comedy as exemplified by only Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve, and he might have foreshadowed Fujimura's The Restoration Comedy of Wit or Holland's The First Modern Comedies and simply excluded Farquhar's plays as not exemplifying the kind of drama he was talking about.

92 Palmer, p. 243.

93 Ibid., p. 274.
On this reasoning Palmer concluded that "Farquhar killed the comedy to which he contributed the last brilliant examples." There is a paradox within Palmer's own statement that exemplifies the major fallacy in his treatment of Farquhar: Palmer failed to explain why Farquhar's plays are "brilliant examples." In other words, Palmer failed to consider Farquhar in any other light than that Farquhar introduced morality and passion into his drama, thus, again in Palmer's opinion, leading toward sentimental comedy and the death of the comedy of manners.

Archer took issue with Palmer's reasoning altogether. He applauded the fact that Farquhar introduced morality into his plays, but he rejected "as essentially misleading the term 'sentimental comedy'" and maintained "that sentiment has nothing to do with the admission into comedy of some approach to decency in speech, feeling, and conduct." He credited, then, the decline of English comedy, not to the advent of sentimental comedy but, in part, to "a decline in sheer literary power, and little or no advance in technical ingenuity and skill." In addition, Archer suggested that Farquhar, "a far abler playwright than either Cibber or Steele, would have been recognized, had he not died at the age of twenty-nine, as the true harbinger of the better order of things."

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94 Ibid., p. 242.
95 Archer, The Old Drama and the New, p. 206.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
Another fallacy in Palmer's criticism is that he wrote his study as if Farquhar were consciously breaking with an established tradition of the comedy of manners as set by Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve. Fujimura has quite emphatically shown the fallacy in such reasoning:

"The final weakness of the 'manners' interpretation is that it is a modern rather than a seventeenth century view, and without historical justification. The term manners, as used by critics like Palmer and Dobrée, is a sophisticated, modern conception. . . ."98

Although Palmer approached the comedy of manners from a narrow point of view and with fallacious reasoning, he has, nevertheless, had a strong influence on critics. In 1925 Henry Ten Eyck Perry announced his debt to Palmer in the preface to *The Comic Spirit in Restoration Drama*, one of the four or five major works devoted specifically to Restoration comedy. His views are merely the same as Palmer's; he believed that the character Archer in *The Beaux' Stratagem* is "the last effort of the comedy of manners to maintain its position in the teeth of Jeremy Collier and eighteenth-century propriety."99 The fallacy of this statement hardly needs reiterating. Perry did feel, however, that Farquhar's "originality" and the "fertility of his imagination had destined

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him to be a superlative creator of comic figures. "100 Perry fully realized, whereas Palmer ignored, Farquhar's ability in drawing characterizations: "From Mockmode and Lyric in his earliest play to Sullen and Scrub in his latest, his pages are peopled with clearly defined persons, sure of provoking laughter whenever and wherever they are bodied forth upon the stage. "101

John Wilcox's The Relation of Molière to Restoration Comedy, another of the few important works on Restoration comedy, also shows the distinct influence of Palmer. Wilcox repeated Palmer's formula for the history of the comedy of manners: "In little more than a decade it rose to its perfect example in Congreve, receded in Vanbrugh and Farquhar, and then fell before the onslaughts of sensibility and shifting standards of morality. "102

Palmer's influence is seen as late as 1952 in The Thread of Laughter, by Louis Kronenberger, who merely accepted unquestioned Palmer's theory that Farquhar killed English drama. 103

100 Ibid., p. 127.

101 Ibid.


Nevertheless, since Palmer's *The Comedy of Manners*, Farquhar has been considered favorably in at least one major work, besides Archer's *The Old Drama and the New*, namely Dobree's *Restoration Comedy*, and in several shorter works and articles.

Although Dobree's discussion of Farquhar in *Restoration Comedy* is relatively short and subdued, he nevertheless felt that Farquhar was more than just another writer of the comedy of manners. Dobree recognized, as does anyone who reads Restoration comedy, that Farquhar's plays are different in tone from those of Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, and, though less so, from Vanbrugh's, but Dobree believed that to compare Farquhar with the others is absurd:

So long as men write in a certain form (inside sufficiently large limits) and with a similar artistic purpose, it is possible to measure them against one another, or to compare them with some fixed standard. Thus Vanbrugh may justifiably be measured against Congreve. But when comedy comes to be written with a totally different intent, from, as far as can be judged, a quite different impulse, the comparison is invidious. We do not try to compare a hollyhock with a tulip, and it is just as absurd to compare the work of George Farquhar with the bulk of Restoration comedy. 104

Thus, Dobree was not concerned with a comparative evaluation of Farquhar. Instead, Dobree chose to evaluate Farquhar purely on his dramatic merit; and in this light, the playwright and his work are found to be quite admirable. Dobree saw Farquhar's first plays as merely imitations

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of their predecessors, as indeed they are, but he saw Farquhar's The Recruiting Officer and The Beaux' Stratagem not as imitations, nor, it might be added, as a move toward sentimental comedy, but as a return to the gaiety of Elizabethan comedy. 105 What Dobrée admired most about Farquhar's plays, however, was the pure entertainment they offer. He agreed with Hazlitt's belief that Farquhar "makes us laugh from pleasure oftener than from malice. There is a constant ebullition of gay, laughing invention, cordial good humor and fine animal spirits in his writings."106 And in Dobrée's own words, Farquhar "was more intent upon lively action and telling of a roguish tale" than simply in commenting on manners. 107 "It is all fun and frolic with him, a question of disguises and counterfeits, the gaining of fortunes, and even of burglarious entries."108

In Dobrée's comments, however, there is one paradox, which in itself is perhaps as much a compliment to the Elizabethans as it is to Farquhar; for although Dobrée saw Farquhar's plays as a return to Shakespearean times, he felt that many of Farquhar's lines are extremely modern:

105 Ibid., p. 166.
106 Ibid., p. 169.
107 Ibid., p. 162.
108 Ibid.
The most surprising thing about him is his extreme modernity: many passages might have been written yesterday. He was two hundred years ahead of his time, in the Butler-Shaw tradition when he wrote "The patient's faith goes farther toward the miracle than your prescription"; or "'Tis still my maxim, that there is no scandal like rags, nor any crime so shameful as poverty."  

Dobrée's summation of Farquhar is objective, but not unappreciative of the dramatist's ability to entertain:

If we search for a poet, for a profound critic of life, for a close thinker of the Restoration type, or for a finished artist, we shall not find him. To approach him for a torrent of semi-nonsensical amusement, mingled with that clear logic which also is the Irishman's heritage, and to ask no more, is to obtain a refreshing release from the conditioned social universe in which we are forced to live.  

To a degree, Dobrée's views are the same as those of Ashley Thorndike, who, in 1929 in his English Comedy, declared that Farquhar's plays have retained their entertaining quality, whereas, for the most part, other Restoration comedies have not:

I have tried to suggest the delight that these plays still afford to one who comes to them after reading the comedies of the preceding forty years. They maintain some of the conventions of Restoration comedy, but with what freshness of invention and spirit! They have little of the superior air of Congreve and Addison and nothing of the satire of Wycherley and Swift, and they are scarcely equalled by Steele or Fielding in their more carefree moods. Nothing so genuinely light-hearted had been seen on the stage since Fletcher, and I do not know that we have had any such contagious gaiety since.

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109 Ibid., p. 163.
110 Ibid., p. 169.
Thorndike lamented, as had other critics before him, that the plays of Farquhar disclosed "the way in which comedy might have advanced to a wider but not less entertaining view of manners and to a recovery of natural mirth without the loss of wit and raillery."¹¹²

The direction of Thorndike's evaluation of Farquhar was still being expressed when, in 1945, Julian Symons stated his admiration for Farquhar's "unaffected gaiety and freshness," which Symons felt are Farquhar's "most marked individual attributes as a dramatist."¹¹³ In addition, Symons offered greater acclaim to Farquhar by showing that the dramatist was the forerunner of modern naturalistic comedy and that Farquhar had had to wait two hundred years for a successor—George Bernard Shaw.¹¹⁴

Thus, it has been shown that throughout the years George Farquhar has been not only popular with his audiences but, with few exceptions, popular also with his critics. The significance of this applause is twofold. First, it affirms Farquhar's position as a classic dramatist, in the sense that a classic dramatist is one whose works continue decade after decade to win new audiences as well as new critical acclaim.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Julian Symons, "Restoration Comedy," The Kenyon Review, VII (Spring, 1945), 197.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.
This aspect of Farquhar's work is the reason given for Farquhar's popularity by William Winter in 1892 in his book *Old Shrines and Ivy*. His words are still applicable today:

The plays that survive from the past are the plays that are not, in their spirit, their character, their essential vitality, restricted to the particular fashion of the periods in which they were written. . . . The dramatic author who portrays representative types of humanity rather than the ephemeral eccentricities of the hour in which he lives is recognized by mankind, in all periods, as being the bearer of a significant and interesting message. Farquhar, to some extent, dealt with the permanent and abiding facts of human nature, and that is one reason why he survives as a dramatist and pleases the public today. 115

The second significant point of Farquhar's popularity with audiences and critics is that it justifies more detailed critical analyses of his plays than have heretofore been made of them. As already pointed out, the critical material, though favorable, has been infrequent and relatively brief. James has shown also that, in general, Farquhar critics have not been concerned with analyzing the dramatist's plays for their dramatic merit, but that they have been concerned with evaluating the plays mainly in two ways: First, the critics have attempted to treat Farquhar as the hero of his plays and thus approached them from the biographical point of view. 116 Or, secondly, the critics have attempted to compare Farquhar with the other Restoration comic dramatists, and


116 James, p. 15.
the comparison has usually centered on the question of whether Farquhar was more or less moral than his contemporaries. In both cases, however, the critics have not chosen to treat Farquhar's plays in any detail or at any length. James's dissertation, consequently, is a lengthy and detailed analysis of Farquhar's development as a comic dramatist.

The purpose of this thesis, like that of James's study, is to make further contribution in filling in the gap in detailed analyses of George Farquhar's plays.

Of the five Restoration playwrights mentioned most in this thesis--Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and, of course, Farquhar--the best play of each by common consent is respectively The Man of Mode (1676), The Plain Dealer (1676), The Way of the World (1700), The Relapse (1697), and The Beaux' Stratagem. Each of these plays is outstanding. Historically, The Man of Mode is important because it is not only one of the earliest comedies of manners, but also sets the mode for future Restoration comedies. Aesthetically, it is superior in the creation of Sir Fopling Flutter as a prototype for all fops. The Plain Dealer is considered by most critics to be the Restoration's finest drama of social satire. Congreve's superiority in wit and brilliance is hardly questioned. Of The Way of the World Nettleton has said, "In wit, in polish, in brilliance of dialogue, this is almost universally regarded as the finest of

117 Ibid., p. 24.
Restoration plays. Indeed, its superior quality is its wit. Nevertheless, it was not originally successful, and, in addition to the reasons given, "some modern editors have blamed the alleged faults of its plot, especially complexity." The play is complex; however, this fault is not only redeemed by the excellent wit of the play but by the brilliance of its central characters, Millamant and Mirabell, who stand on par with their originals, Shakespeare's Beatrice and Benedict in *Much Ado About Nothing*. The *Relapse* is excellent both for its humor and wit, though not superior to the humor and wit of *The Way of the World*, and for its lively action and gaiety, though in this respect not superior to *The Beaux' Stratagem*. Like *The Way of the World*, the major fault of *The Relapse* is its plot, not its complexity, however, but its loose construction. Ironically—for the author was an accomplished architect—Vanbrugh failed to coordinate the dual plots of his play. Although Farquhar has been accused of many artistic faults, not the least of which have been crude dialogue and lack of wit, he has invariably been commended for his technical skill in plotting and dramatic structure.

This feature was emphasized as early as 1894 by Ewald:

> Of all the elements which enter into the composition of pure comedy, Farquhar was a consummate master. His plots

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119 Ibid.
were invariably carefully thought out, the incidents skilfully
developed, and every scene naturally arose from the environment
of the story. 120

And the same observation was made as late as 1945, when Symons
described Farquhar as a "dramatist of great natural ability, skilful
in handling plot and sub-plot." 121 This superior ability in constructing
plots, especially in the use of dramatic exposition, is exemplified best
in The Beaux' Stratagem.

But this praise of Farquhar's use of dramatic exposition cannot be
awarded to all of his plays. In the relatively short span of nine years
during which Farquhar wrote plays, he developed his technical skill of
dramatic exposition from the simple imitation of other Restoration
dramatists, who simply used unartistic conventions for exposition, to
the creation of exposition that was both artistic and natural.

The specific purpose of this study, then, is to trace the development
of Farquhar's use of dramatic exposition as a means of appreciating the
dramatic skill of a playwright, who, as has been shown, by his continuous
popularity with audiences and critics should rank as a major English
comic dramatist.

120Farquhar, The Dramatic Works of George Farquhar, p. xii.

121Symons, p. 192.
CHAPTER II


Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar each used a traditional dramatic structure; that is, each adhered to the five-act structure of classical comedy, which may be divided into five categories: introduction or exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion or dénouement.\(^1\) Important in evaluating dramatic exposition is an understanding that it essentially "creates the tone, gives the setting, introduces the characters, and supplies other facts necessary to the understanding of the play, such as events in the story supposed to have taken place before the part of the action included in the play."\(^2\) In addition, the exposition may foreshadow future action and characters. Dramatic exposition, therefore, is the initial task faced by the playwright in opening his play.

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In considering Farquhar's development in using dramatic exposition, one should have clearly in mind the methods and conventions of exposition as used by other Restoration dramatists, as well as by dramatists before the Restoration.

In their tragedies, classical Greek dramatists had utilized the chorus, soliloquy, dumb show, and dialogue for exposition. In their comedies, however, the Greeks generally presented the necessary exposition by means of dialogue alone. For example, Aristophanes often began his comedies with dialogue "between two saucy slaves" who discussed their masters and thus in the process related to the audience the necessary information for understanding the play.

By contrast, the exposition in a Roman comedy was often presented in a formal prologue, which was usually delivered by one of the gods or major characters in the play. Sometimes, however, the speaker of the prologue was simply a character called the prologue, who presented the prologue and then was seen no more.

The prologues of Plautus often not only gave expository information, but also ended with a "request for quiet and courteous

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5 Ibid., p. 100.
6 Ibid., pp. 100-101.
attention" from the audience. 7 Seneca—probably because he wrote his plays for educated audiences and noblemen, who were more sympathetic toward plays than were proletarian audiences—did not open his comedies with a prologue or plea to the audience. His exposition was usually contained in a long opening soliloquy, often delivered by one of the main characters. 8

The Elizabethan playwrights, who, of course, learned much of their comic trade from classical drama, renewed the prologue and soliloquy for expository purposes. However, under the leadership of Shakespeare, who used few prologues and an opening soliloquy in only one play, Richard III, dramatists came to understand that, if possible, exposition should be conveyed within the action of the play itself. 9 Thus, by the time of the Restoration, for the purpose of exposition the prologue, chorus, dumb show, and opening soliloquy were generally considered outdated conventions. 10 Consequently, to properly evaluate

7 Ibid., pp. 101-102. These Roman prologues should not be confused with the prologues used by Restoration dramatists. Whereas a Roman prologue included exposition as well as a plea to the audience for attention, a Restoration prologue had nothing to do with exposition. The purpose of a Restoration prologue was simply to "bespeak the favor of the audience for the play to follow" (George Pierce Baker, Dramatic Technique [Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1919], p. 144).

8 Ibid., p. 104.

9 Baker, p. 144.

10 Ibid., p. 167.
Farquhar's use of exposition, it is more important to have a detailed analysis of exposition in a few representative Restoration comedies than in classical and Elizabethan comedies.

It will not be denied that dramatic exposition is, for the most part, a matter of technical skill. Nevertheless, it is an important aspect of many Restoration comedies, especially *The Man of Mode*, *The Plain Dealer*, *The Way of the World*, and *The Relapse*; for, among other reasons, the plot complication in each of these plays is determined by some action that has occurred before the opening of the play, and that action has to be related to the audience through exposition.

The plots of *The Man of Mode*—the main plot, which involves Dorimant, Mrs. Loveit, Bellinda, Harriet, and Sir Fopling Flutter, and the subplot, which involves Young Bellair, Old Bellair, Emilia, and Lady Townley—are so dependent on events which have occurred before the opening of the play that the entire first act, with the exception of one short sequence with Tom the shoemaker, is designed to reveal these events. To understand the main plot, the audience needs to know first that Mrs. Loveit is Dorimant's mistress; second, that because Dorimant wishes to break with Mrs. Loveit, he has arranged to quarrel with her; third, that in order to accomplish the quarrel, Dorimant has been scheming with Bellinda who is to tell Mrs. Loveit that Dorimant has been unfaithful to her; fourth, that Sir Fopling Flutter has met Mrs. Loveit; and, finally, that Harriet has admired Dorimant and wishes
to meet him. To understand the subplot, the audience needs to know
that Young Bellair is in love with Emilia, that Old Bellair has arrived
in town, that he is staying in the same lodging house as Emilia, that
he does not know that his son wishes to marry Emilia, and that Old
Bellair has arranged another match for Young Bellair. All of this
action for both the main plot and subplot has taken place prior to the opening
of the play and is presented through exposition in the first act, which
includes practically every expository device, technique, and convention
used by Restoration comic dramatists.

The Man of Mode opens on the dressing room of Dorimant,
who immediately enters. He is carrying a letter, from which he reads,
""For Mrs. Loveit'"; and then continuing in a short soliloquy he relates
directly that Mrs. Loveit is his mistress, but that for him the "heat of
the business is over."¹² This information is central to the plot
complication; yet, as it is introduced, this information can hardly be
said to be skillful exposition because it is thrown at the audience almost
before they are in their seats. In addition, soliloquy, as has been stated,
was considered by the time of the Restoration to be an outdated method
of exposition.

¹¹A convention in Restoration comedy is to have the opening scene
on a major character, who will reveal his personality and give other
expositional information, usually in dialogue with a servant or confidant,
as, for example, in The Plain Dealer, The Relapse and The Way of the
World.

¹²Nettleton and Case, p. 159.
The audience next learns that Harriet has admired Dorimant and wishes to meet him. This is related by an expository character, Foggy Nan, an orange woman. Dorimant hears the orange woman and Swearing Tom, a shoemaker, outside; and, on the pretense that "fruit is refreshing in a morning," tells his servant, Handy, to order the orange woman and Tom to come in. The orange woman is clearly an expository character, for she relates the necessary expository information concerning Harriet:

Or. Wom. . . . God's my life, I had almost forgot to tell you there is a young gentlewoman lately come to town with her mother, that is so taken with you.

Dor. How came she to know me?
Or. Wom. She saw you yesterday at the Change; she told me you came and fooled with the woman at the next shop.

Dor. I remember there was a mask observed me indeed.

At this point, Medley enters. He too is an expository character and will serve as Dorimant's confidant, so that the audience may receive further expository information. In the meantime, the orange woman continues with exposition, relating Harriet's whereabouts:

Dor. . . . Come, tell me the lady's name and Handy shall pay you.
Or. Wom. I must not; she forbid me.

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13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., pp. 159-160.
Dor. That's a sure sign she would have you.
Or. Wom. They lodge at my house. 15

Then, after the orange woman briefly describes Lady Woodvill, Medley serves his expository purpose and gives the names of Lady Woodvill and Harriet.

From one point of view the presence of the orange woman as an expository character is skillful, for all the exposition in which she is involved occurs within the dialogue and action of the play. This method of exposition is generally considered the best. However, critics have generally concluded that the purpose of the orange woman, as well as Swearing Tom, is to introduce "a touch of low life and suggest vices among the lower classes like those of the aristocracy." 16 Generally, critics have not been concerned with the orange woman's expository purpose, nor have they been concerned with the fact that it is highly unlikely that the orange woman would possess the information of Harriet that she does. For example, it is obvious that Nan is a procurress. Harriet, on the other hand, is virtuous. But when Dorimant receives the information from the orange woman, he refuses to pay the procurress, ostensibly for her fruit, until she has brought the "gentlewoman" to him, assuming then that Harriet is nothing more than a prostitute whose

15 Ibid., p. 160.

procureess is the orange woman. Thus, it does not appear logical that
the orange woman should bring the information concerning Harriet.
In addition, it does not seem logical that Lady Woodvill and Harriet,
who are admittedly affluent, would be lodging at the orange woman's
house. It appears, therefore, that even though Etherege has given the
orange woman many valuable expository lines, he has nevertheless
erred in bringing in both the orange woman and Swearing Tom for
"purely gratuitous bits of local color." This is especially true of
Tom, for he adds no exposition to the play, nor does he add anything to
the main action.

Before the orange woman leaves, both she and Medley contribute
to detailed descriptions of Lady Woodvill and Harriet. This describing

17Tbid. Holland offers an ingenious reason for the presence of
Foggy Nan and Swearing Tom: "Actually, they serve as 'sign-post
characters.' They establish the two scales along which the other
characters are ranked. Nan's business is fruit, something appropriate
to one's natural self as opposed to one's social front. (The rest of the
designs within the limits of society.) Thus, fruit is used later in the
play... as a double-entendre for Bellinda's misbehavior: 'She has
eaten too much fruit, I warrant you.' 'Tis that lyes heavy on her
Stomach.' 'I was a strange devourer of Fruit when I was young, so
ravenous--' says Mrs. Loveit's ingenious maid. Harriet's mother
criticizes the appetite of the age for 'green Fruit,' instead of ladies like
herself, 'kindly ripen'd'.... Swearing Tom, on the other hand, deals
in shoes, and the men in the play are ranked by clothing or inner vices
'too gentile for a Shoemaker.' 'There's never a man i' the town,' he
says, 'lives more like a Gentleman, with his Wife, than I do....'
Just as Medley and Dorimant are called atheists by Bellair, the orange-
woman calls Tom an atheist, religious devotion being a continued metaphor
in the play for love. ... Tom's chief attribute, swearing, reflects
Dorimant's pretended loves and broken vows" (Holland, p. 89.).
of characters before they appear on stage is an expository convention in Restoration comedy.

After the orange woman exits, Medley, as Dorimant's confidant, is implemental in revealing more of what has happened before the opening of the play, namely that Dorimant has a plan to quarrel with Mrs. Loveit. Thus, when Medley spies Dorimant's letter to Mrs. Loveit, he reads it to the audience:

I [Dorimant has written] never was a lover of business, but now I have a just reason to hate it, since it has kept me these two days from seeing you. I intend to wait upon you in the afternoon, and in the pleasure of your conversation forget all I have suffered during this tedious absence.  

A letter or note that reveals expository information is another common convention used by Restoration dramatists.

The dialogue that follows the reading of Dorimant's letter is direct exposition, for Medley simply relates that Dorimant has been seen the previous day with a visard at the playhouse. Dorimant admits that the visard is part of his plan to quarrel with Mrs. Loveit, and he reveals his plan:

Dor. . . . I will make you comprehend the mystery: this mask, for a farther confirmation of what I have been these two days swearing to her, made me yesterday at the playhouse make her a promise before her face utterly to break off with Loveit, and, because she tenders my reputation and would not have me do a barbarous thing, has contrived a way to give me a handsome occasion.

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18Netleton and Case, p. 161.
She intends about an hour before me, this afternoon, to make Loveit a visit, and, having the privilege, by reason of a professed friendship between them, to talk of her concerns.

She means insensibly to insinuate a discourse of me and artificially raise her jealousy to such a height that, transported with the first motions of her passion, she shall fly upon me with all the fury imaginable as soon as ever I enter; the quarrel being thus happily begun, I am to play my part, confess, and justify all my roguery, swear her impertinence and ill-humor makes her intolerable, tax her with the next fop that comes into my head, and in a huff march away, slight her, and leave her to be taken by whosoever thinks it worth his time to lie down before her.

The dialogue between Medley and Dorimant, then, is entirely for relating expository information. The exposition is not, however, skillfully introduced; for, although there is a great deal of enjoyment in seeing Dorimant's plan carried out, the exposition itself amounts to nothing more than a long narration, broken up only with short responses from Medley.

After the gratuitous sequence with Swearing Tom, Young Bellair enters, and the audience is given the information concerning Sir Fopling Flutter. This exposition is skillfully introduced, for it develops logically from the action and dialogue of the play. For example, Handy begins "fiddling" about Dorimant, who, all the while, has been finishing his dress, and the dialogue that follows leads logically to a discussion of Sir Fopling:

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19 Ibid.
Dor. (to Handy, who is fiddling about him).
Leave your unnecessary fiddling; a wasp that's buzzing about a man's nose at dinner is not more troublesome than thou art.
Hand. You love to have your clothes hang just, sir.
Dor. I love to be well dressed, sir, and think it no scandal to my understanding. 20

This dialogue then leads to a discussion of clothing, which, in turn, leads logically to the discussion of Sir Fopling, who has "lately arrived piping hot from Paris." 21 Sir Fopling is described in detail, so that the audience is prepared for his entrance. In addition, the discussion of Sir Fopling reveals that he has met Mrs. Loveit, and Dorimant, foreshadowing what is actually going to happen, capitalizes on the idea of making Sir Fopling the dupe in the planned quarrel with Mrs. Loveit.

Young Bellair's expository purpose in the first act, however, is not mainly to help describe and foreshadow Sir Fopling, but is to reveal the necessary information for the audience to understand the subplot. This is accomplished through direct exposition in the dialogue between Young Bellair and Dorimant. Handy has informed Young Bellair that his servant wishes to speak with him outside. During Young Bellair's absence, Medley and Dorimant continue to reveal expository information, namely that Emilia is a virtuous woman who is looking for a husband. When Young Bellair returns, however, he relates directly that Old Bellair has arrived in town and lodges at the same house as Emilia.

20 Ibid., p. 163.
21 Ibid.
Young Bellair also says that Old Bellair does not know that his son wishes to marry Emilia and has arranged another marriage for him.

All of this exposition in the last part of the first act can be said to be skillfully introduced only because it occurs in the dialogue. Yet, on the other hand, the exposition is simply narration broken up into dialogue. Indeed, the play suffers because some very lively action has taken place before the opening of the play and is given to the audience only through exposition, rather than through action. It must be pointed out, however, that the exposition in *The Man of Mode* is particularly skillful in establishing Dorimant as a Don Juan. This fact is especially important, for the major theme of the play, in addition to its satire of Sir Fopling Flutter as a type of fop, is that Dorimant, as a Don Juan type, is finally subdued by true love. Moreover, the exposition sets the tone of the play, particularly in the scenes with Foggy Nan and Swearing Tom, albeit their appearances, as it has been shown, are not wholly justifiable.

Nevertheless, Etherege uses most of the expository conventions and devices used by Restoration dramatists: letters, dialogue, soliloquy, expository characters--particularly the confidant and servant, and the technique of describing characters before their entrances.

Although Wycherley uses many of the same expository conventions that Etherege uses, the exposition in *The Plain Dealer* is decidedly
more skillfully and artistically introduced than the exposition in The Man of Mode. This is true, first of all, because the two plots of The Plain Dealer—the main plot, which is an intrigue involving Manly, Fidelia, Olivia, and Vernish, and the subplot, which involves Lady Blackacre, Jerry Blackacre, and Freeman—unlike the two plots of The Man of Mode—are not so dependent on action that has taken place before the opening of the play. In fact, the subplot, which begins, develops, and ends all within the action of the play, is not dependent on any major event that has occurred before the beginning of the first act. Moreover, the main plot is dependent on only two prior actions. One is that Manly has entrusted his mistress, Olivia, who has possession of a large amount of Manly's fortune, to the care of his best friend, Vernish. The second is that Fidelia is in love with Manly and has disguised herself as one of his faithful sailors.

The method of revealing this disguise is a blemish on an otherwise artistically constructed first act, for Wycherley lazily lets Fidelia identify herself and her goal in a soliloquy:

His Olivia, indeed, his happy Olivia!
Yet she was left behind, when I was with him:
But she was ne'er out of his mind or heart.
She has told him she loved him; I have showed it,
And durst not tell him so, till I had done,
Under this habit, such convincing acts
Of loving friendship for him, that through it
He first might find out both my sex and love;
And, when I'd had him from his fair Olivia,
And this bright world of artful beauties here,
Might then have hoped, he would have looked on me,
Amongst the sooty Indians; and I could
To choose there live his wife, where wives are forced
To live no longer, when their husbands die;
Nay, what's yet worse, to share 'em whilst they live
With many rival wives. But here he comes,
And I must yet keep out of his sight, not
To lose it forever.  

Thus Fidelia's soliloquy is in effect nothing more than a reading of her
billing in the dramatis personae: "FIDELIA [GREY], in love with MANLY,
and followed him to sea in man's clothes." One regrets that Wycherley
did not create a confidant for Fidelia, as Shakespeare did for Viola,
Fidelia's prototype, in Twelfth Night.

That Manly has entrusted Olivia to the care of Vernish is, by
contrast to Fidelia's information, revealed with particular art and skill;
not, however, for what is revealed, but for what is not revealed. In
short, Wycherley does not reveal everything. By comparison, the fault
in Etherege's exposition is that Etherege tells in detail everything that
has happened before the play begins and, for that matter, practically
everything that is going to happen. Wycherley, however, in revealing
what has already occurred, tells only what is immediately necessary and
lets the rest of the situation unfold before the eyes of the audience. In
this manner, Wycherley lets the audience know that Manly has left Olivia

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22 Ibid., p. 213.

23 Ibid., p. 206.
in the care of Vernish, but the author does not let the audience know immediately that Olivia has a large sum of Manly's money or that Olivia has married Vernish. All this intrigue comes out as part of the action of the play.

Not only is Vernish and Olivia's deceit worked in as part of the action, but it is artistically foreshadowed through irony. Throughout the first act, Manly's declarations of the faithfulness of Olivia and the loyalty of Vernish are so emphatic that the most naive student of literature can sense that Olivia and Vernish are indeed going to prove to be the most unfaithful and disloyal of characters. This can be seen, for example, in Manly's reply to Freeman's question, "But what will you see nobody? not you friends?"  

**Man. Friends! I have but one, and he, I hear, is not in town; nay, can have but one friend, for a true heart admits but of one friendship, as of one love; but in having that friend I have a thousand; for he has the courage of men in despair, yet, the diffidence and caution of cowards; the secrecy of the revengeful, and the constancy of martyrs; one fit to advise, to keep a secret, to fight and die for his friend. Such I think him, for I have trusted him with my mistress in my absence, and the trust of beauty is sure the greatest we can show.**

And there is similar irony when Manly exaggerates Olivia's virtues:

She has beauty enough to call in question her wit or virtue, and her form would make a starved hermit a ravisher; yet her virtue and conduct could preserve her from the subtle lust of a pampered prelate. She is so perfect a beauty that art could not better it.

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nor affectation deform it; yet all this is nothing. Her tongue as well as face ne'er knew artifice; nor ever did her words or looks contradict her heart. She is all truth, and hates the lying, masking, daubing world, as I do; for which I love her, and for which I think she dislikes not me: for she has often shut out of her conversation, for mine, the gaudy, fluttering parrots of the town, apes and echoes of men only, and refused their commonplace pert chat, flattery, and submissions, to be entertained with my sullen bluntness and honest love. 26

Thus, Wycherley's exposition reveals and foreshadows what the audience needs to know to understand the play, but how much more artistically is that information revealed than in the direct narration of Etherege's characters!

The major purpose of the exposition in The Plain Dealer, however, is not to disclose what has taken place before the opening of the play, but is to introduce the characters, establish the theme, and set the tone of the play. All three of these goals are skillfully accomplished, particularly in the opening dialogue between Manly and Lord Plausible. Manly declares himself a "plain-dealer," and Plausible, by his words and actions, is exposed as "a ceremonious, supple, commending coxcomb." 27 But more important than this obvious disclosure of character is that the opening exposition establishes the theme of the play. Rose A. Zimbardo has shown convincingly that the satire in The Plain Dealer follows the design of classical or formal satire, and she points out that

26 Ibid., pp. 213-214.
27 Ibid., p. 206.
the play begins, as formal satire must, with a crashing declaration of the theme. The vice under consideration by Manly and Lord Plausible is hypocrisy. It is ubiquitous, and even a plain-dealer, who attacks, or tries to free from it, is in danger of being overtaken. The thesis is declared both in the spoken rebuke of Lord Plausible made by Manly, and dramatically—that is, Manly, a plain-dealer, is pursued by Lord Plausible, a personification of hypocrisy. The former figure lashes out at the latter but finds he is fighting a shadow; the more fierce his attack, the more elaborate the flattery it arouses.  

In addition, the opening exposition, through the humorous battle that Manly has with Plausible in trying to persuade him to leave, sets the tone of the play. And this tone is continued in the following scene with Manly's sailors, who, like Foggy Nan and Swearing Tom, are types of low life and are used as expository characters. It should be pointed out, however, that the presence of the sailors is more logical than the presence of Foggy Nan and Swearing Tom. The humor of the sailors is farcical, especially in the sense that they are kicked and berated by Manly. Nevertheless, the sailors serve as a means of moving the action from one scene to another, particularly by introducing Mrs. Blackacre and fore-shadowing the entrances of Mr. Novel and Major Oldfox. Freeman, as Manly's confidant, is also an expository character; but, unlike Dorimant's Medley, Freeman plays a central role in the subplot.

It can be determined, then, that for the most part Wycherley is considerably more skillful and artistic in his exposition than is Etherege.

Nevertheless, many of the expository conventions used in The Man of Mode are repeated in The Plain Dealer, namely soliloquy, dialogue, expository characters—confidants and servants in particular, and the technique of describing characters before their entrances.

Although The Relapse is a sequel to Cibber's Love's Last Shift, a knowledge of the original play is not necessary for one to understand Vanbrugh's comedy. The only event in Cibber's comedy important to the action of The Relapse is Loveless's being unfaithful to Amanda. This fact, however, is related in the opening scene of The Relapse and presents no problem in understanding the play.

One point must be clear if one is to evaluate the exposition in The Relapse correctly, and that is that neither of the two plots of the comedy—the one involving Loveless, Amanda, Worthy, and Berinthia, and the other involving Young Fashion, Lord Foppington, Sir Tunbelly Clumsey, and Miss Hoyden—is subordinate to the other. Moreover, the two plots hardly interrelate. Although they run parallel to each other, they are connected only by intermittent ties. It must also be noted that the play as a whole moves with remarkable rapidity, a feature which may be attributed in part to a clever switching from one plot to the other. Nevertheless, in having two separate plots, the play also has two separate units of exposition; and, understandably, each of these must be considered separately.
The exposition in the Young Fashion plot is more skillfully introduced than is that in the Loveless plot. Of the first three scenes in the play, only the first is concerned with the Loveless plot. Much of the second act, however, which is one long scene, is devoted to exposition of the Loveless plot. Vanbrugh's design is to present in the opening scene just enough exposition to start the Loveless plot, then switch to exposition of the Young Fashion plot, then, at the beginning of act two, continue the exposition of the Loveless story. Unfortunately, the opening scene fails as exposition, mainly because it does not set the tone of the play. The play opens on Loveless, who speaks for sixteen lines in soliloquy:

How true is that philosophy which says
Our heaven is seated in our minds!
Through all the roving pleasures of my youth,
(Where nights and days seemed all consumed in joy,
Where the false face of luxury displayed such charms
As might have shaken the most holy hermit,
And made him totter at his altar)
I never knew one moment's peace like this.
Here—in this little soft retreat,
My thoughts unbent from all the cares of life,
Content with fortune,
Eased from the grating duties of dependence,
From envy free, ambition under foot,
The raging flame of wild destructive lust
Reduced to a warm pleasing fire of lawful love,
My life glides on, and all is well within. ²⁹

One can readily see that the opening language is deliberately poetic and

²⁹Nettleton and Case, p. 265.
even sentimental. Though such language may be appropriate for some comedy, it nevertheless presents in _The Relapse_ a dull beginning for what is otherwise a lively play. Moreover, the dialogue that follows between Loveless and Amanda is equally poetic and sentimental. In the course of this dialogue, however, Amanda and Loveless manage to reveal the specific information that the audience needs to know in order to understand the Loveless plot, namely that Amanda is uneasy at Loveless's going in to town for fear that he might relapse into his "past follies."\(^{30}\) In addition, there is obvious irony in Loveless's protestations of his constancy, similar to the irony in Manly's protestations of Vernish and Olivia's faithfulness. Loveless's complacency suggests strongly that he will indeed relapse into his past follies.

The play then switches from the Loveless plot to the Young Fashion plot, in which the exposition is especially skillful because not only does the exposition set the tone of the play as a whole, but it also develops rapidly and moves the action from one scene to another. The scene opens on Young Fashion and his servant Lory, who are attempting to persuade a waterman to grant them credit on Young Fashion's portmanteau. In the ensuing dialogue, the audience learns the necessary facts for understanding the play, specifically that Young Fashion is completely penniless and must apply to his elder brother, Lord Foppington, for

\(^{30}\) _Ibid._, p. 266.
a loan. Lory, as a faithful servant-confidant to Young Fashion, is particularly important in the disclosure of this expository detail. More important, however, is Lory's assumption of the role of a witty-fool and his creation of the humor that sets the tone of the comedy. For example, after the waterman has carried away the portmanteau, the last vestige of Young Fashion's wealth, Lory says,

So! Now, Sir, I hope you'll own yourself a happy man; you have outlived all your cares.
Y. Fas. How so, sir?
Lo. Why you have nothing left to take care of.
Y. Fas. Yes, sirrah, I have myself and you to take care of still.
Lo. Sir, if you could but prevail with somebody else to do that for you, I fancy we might both fare the better for't. 31

It is at this point that Lory makes a logical suggestion that Young Fashion apply to his brother for a loan. In addition, Lory's final comment in this scene briefly foreshadows the nature of Lord Foppington, a coxcomb who is overly fond of "his periwig, his cravat, his feather, his snuff-box." 32

At this point, Vanbrugh craftily shifts the scene to Lord Foppington, whose dialogue with his servants and attendants affirms that he is indeed a humorous coxcomb. In addition, this scene presents a good deal of humorous movement and action with the servants, tailors, shoemakers,

31Ibid., p. 267.
32Ibid.
and hosiers coming and going and dickering with Lord Foppington. In this manner, the scene not only presents the character of Lord Foppington, but also enhances the tone of the play. More important, however, from an expository point of view, is that this scene leads logically to the entrance of a matchmaker, Coupler, who is the most important expository character in the play, for he presents the situation that is to cause the complication for the Young Fashion subplot. Coupler says that he has arranged a marriage between Lord Foppington and Miss Hoyden, the daughter of Sir Tunbelly, but since Coupler is afraid that Lord Foppington will not pay him his fee, he decides to marry Young Fashion to the wealthy Miss Hoyden. In return, Young Fashion is to pay a large fee.

The exposition of the Loveless plot continues in the second act but is not as skillful as the previous exposition. At least in part, the exposition in the second act must start over completely because since Loveless and Amanda were first seen in the first act, they have moved to town, where Loveless has fallen in love with Berinthia and Worthy has made advances to Amanda. All of this action, like events that have occurred before the opening of a play, have to be related to the audience through exposition. To accomplish this exposition, the scene opens appropriately with Amanda and Loveless describing the agreeableness of city life, a conversation which leads logically to a discussion of the theater. Here, however, Loveless clumsily reveals to Amanda that he
has been taken by the beauty of a woman at the theater. The most glaring fault of Vanbrugh's exposition is evident in the following scene with Berinthia, for Vanbrugh reverts to the use of asides for exposition. For example, when Berinthia enters, the way Vanbrugh chooses to let the audience know that she is the same woman Loveless has admired at the theater is to let Loveless exclaim in an aside, "Ha! By heavens, the very woman!" 33 Again in the third act, Worthy observes Loveless kissing Berinthia, and once more Vanbrugh lazily uses an aside to let the audience know that Berinthia is Worthy's ex-mistress: "Ha! What's here? my old mistress, and so close, I'faith." 34

It should be pointed out that since the Loveless plot is episodic and never develops toward a final dénouement, each episode has its own little exposition, the most awkward of which is a soliloquy of some forty-seven lines by Loveless at the beginning of the third act. Also, an awkward aside is used for exposition at the beginning of an episode between Worthy and Berinthia in Scene Two of the third act:

Wor. (aside). This discovery's a lucky one; I hope to make a happy use on' t. That gentlewoman there [Berinthia] is no fool, so I shall be able to make her understand her interest. 35

Thus the episodes go on without a central design, and even in the last act

33 Ibid., p. 273.
34 Ibid., p. 282.
35 Ibid.
new intrigue is being planned by Berinthia and Worthy, who scheme
to make Amanda doubt her husband's faithfulness, a scheme, however,
that is never fully developed and leaves the Loveless plot hanging with
no final dénouement.

It can be seen from the analysis of the exposition in *The Man of
Mode*, *The Plain Dealer* and *The Relapse* that the more crucial events
which have taken place before the opening of a play, the more complicated
is the exposition. Such is the case with *The Way of the World*.

Critics nearly always point out that *The Way of the World* has
never been a popular stage success, and two of the reasons they give
for the failure are that the plot is excessively complicated and that the
wit is too keen for common tastes. But most critics then proceed,
reasonably, to redeem the play's failure with audiences by showing that
as a whole the play is a supreme work of art. In accomplishing this
purpose, some critics point out that what is assumed to be a
structural fault is not a fault at all. For example, Holland declares
that the "complexity of the plot . . . is intended to be confusing; the
confusion is an essential part of the dramatic impact."36 Similarly,
Nettleton believes that the complexities of the plot are in keeping with
the theme of the play, which "is intended as a satirical picture of an

36 Holland, p. 176.
artificially complex society. "37 Palmer believes that The Way of the World is simply too great a work of art to be appreciated by common audiences, who demand "an intelligible story, characters strongly marked, and diverting situations, not too elaborately prepared."38

And Palmer goes on to say that

the audiences of the Restoration period were being educated into expecting a different sort of merit. The tendency from Etherege to Congreve was to encourage the qualities in which The Way of the World excels every English comedy. Plot counts hardly at all; characters are finely shaded, manners are the principal theme; style is the necessary excellence. This type of comedy has never succeeded in England with a popular audience. Undoubtedly it would have done so, had the Restoration influence survived; but causes [Farquhar and Vanbrugh] . . . were already at work, which damned the current of English comedy. 39

The significant point here is that Palmer is saying that the complexities of the plot of The Way of the World should not be considered because the plot is unimportant anyway. Fujimura recognizes the complexities of the plot, but, unlike Palmer, believes that the plot is not only central but admirable because "the situation in the play is the familiar one of Truewits outwitting rivals and guardians, exposing Witwouds, and at the same time conducting a wit combat between themselves."40


38Palmer, p. 189.

39Ibid.

40Fujimura, p. 184.
Thus, the complexities of *The Way of the World* can be justified; however, no justification can deny that the exposition of the play is strained to reveal all that has occurred before the opening of the play and to reveal all the complexities of the character relationships. Indeed, the relationships of the characters are so complicated that many critics are compelled, in discussing the play, to draw a genealogical chart to keep the relationships in order. Nevertheless, the exposition is skillful and artistic in setting the tone and introducing the characters.

The play begins in medias res, and there are at least nine facts determined prior to the play's opening which must be explained to the audience: (1) Mirabell loves Millamant, (2) Millamant cannot marry without the consent of her Aunt, Lady Wishfort, who controls Millamant's inheritance, (3) Mirabell has pretended to make love to Mrs. Wishfort in order "to conceal" his love for Millamant, (4) Mirabell has been exposed by Mrs. Marwood, (5) Mrs. Wishfort, having been tricked, despises Mirabell and will not consent to his courting Millamant, (6) Mirabell plans to have his servant, Waitwell, court Mrs. Wishfort in order to trick her into compliance with his designs on Millamant, (7) Mr. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood are lovers, (8) Mrs. Fainall is next in line to receive Millamant's inheritance if Millamant should lose favor with Mrs. Wishfort, and finally (9) Mrs. Fainall placed her

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41Netleton and Case, p. 313.
property in trust with Mirabell. All this expository information is disclosed through dialogue, but because there is so much to be disclosed, the complexities in the dialogue at times blemish what is generally accepted as the finest comedy of manners.

The artificiality of the expository dialogue can be seen, for example, in the opening sequence with Mirabell and Fainall, who are conversing in a chocolate house. Fainall suggests that Mirabell is in a bad humor because Millamant has shown favor to "some coxcomb" in Mirabell's presence. Admitting the truth of what Fainall has said, Mirabell replies with an annoyingly contrived answer: "Witwoud and Petulant; and what was worse, her aunt, your wife's mother, my evil genius or to sum up all in her own name, my old Lady Wishfort came in." In addition, the dialogue at times reverts to nothing more than narration, but its wit often redeems this fault. For example, in answer to Fainall's comment that Mirabell has been ignored by Mrs. Wishfort because he has insulted her, Mirabell narrates,

I did as much as man could, with any reasonable conscience; I proceeded to the very last act of flattery with her, and was guilty of a song in her commendation. Nay, I got a friend to put her into a lampoon, and compliment her with the imputation of an affair with a young fellow, which I carried so far, that I told her the malicious town took notice that she was grown fat of a sudden; and when she lay in of a dropsy, persuaded her she was

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42Ibid.

43Ibid.
reported to be in labor. The devil's in't if an old woman is to be flattered further, unless a man should endeavor downright personally to debauch her; and that my virtue forbade me. But for the discovery of that amour, I am indebted to your friend, or your wife's friend, Mrs. Marwood. 44

The purpose of Mirabell's narration is clearly to relate to the audience his amorous intrigue with Mrs. Wishfort, but the wit included also helps to set the tone of the play.

By comparison with the exposition used by Etherege, Wycherley, and Vanbrugh, the most noticeable difference in Congreve's exposition is that Congreve does not employ nearly so many hackneyed conventions. For the most part, Congreve's exposition is contained in the dialogue of his play; however, he does conventionally use a servant for exposition. In addition, Fainall, to a degree, serves as Mirabell's confidant as the two discuss Mirabell's amours. Petulant and Witwoud are cleverly described before their entrances, and thus Congreve also employs the convention of describing characters before their entrances. Generally, however, Congreve avoids the use of other threadbare conventions, such as soliloquy, asides, and introduction of characters whose only purpose is exposition.

From a survey, then, of exposition in The Man of Mode, The Plain Dealer, The Relapse, and The Way of the World, certain conclusions can be drawn, namely that at its worst, exposition in Restoration comedy

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44 Ibid.
was introduced through the use of outdated conventions, and, at its best, was part of the dialogue and action of the play and enhanced the themes. In summary, the most often used conventions were the soliloquy and asides, confidants, messengers, and servants, and the technique of describing characters before their entrances. Another convention, and the most important, was beginning the plays in *medias res*.

From the survey of exposition in these representative Restoration comedies, certain qualities may be identified as basic requirements for skillful and artistic exposition. To accomplish its purpose of introducing the characters, setting the tone, and revealing what has occurred before the opening of a play, exposition should (1) occur naturally and logically as part of the action and dialogue of the play, (2) be introduced as quickly as possible, (3) be interesting in itself, while relating necessary information, (4) be clearly understood, and (5) harmonize with the theme of the play.

It is the contention of this thesis that all five of these prerequisites, though not used together in any one of the plays already considered, are all exemplified in Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem*, and a survey of the exposition in Farquhar's plays will show that Farquhar with each successive play became more and more conscious of his art as a dramatist and improved it.
CHAPTER III

DRAMATIC EXPOSITION IN THE CONSTANT COUPLE,

THE TWIN RIVALS, THE RECRUITING OFFICER,

AND THE BEAUX' STRATAGEM

As exemplified in their best plays, Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh are not extremely concerned with writing skillful and artistic exposition. Their exposition, of course, sets the tone of their plays, introduces their characters, and reveals prior actions, but in accomplishing these goals, Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh are willing to use whatever conventions are workable. Similarly, the early plays of George Farquhar employ commonplace techniques in a conventional way. At his worse, Farquhar, like the other authors of Restoration comedy, employs hackneyed expository conventions. Nevertheless, Farquhar shows evidence of being concerned with writing inventive exposition. At his best, he writes exposition that flows smoothly as part of the action and dialogue of his plays.

The exposition in The Constant Couple utilizes many of the expository conventions used in the Restoration comedies already discussed: letters, aside, and short soliloquies, as well as confidants, messengers, and servants. In addition, Farquhar uses the technique of describing
characters before they enter. His use of these conventions, however, is more ingenious than is their use by earlier Restoration comic dramatists.

The main plot of *The Constant Couple* is a series of foiled amours involving Sir Harry Wildair, Angelica, Lady Lurewell, Standard, Vizard, and Smuggler, concluding with marriage agreements between Sir Harry and Angelica and between Standard and Lurewell. The sub-plot is a farcical battle between Clincher and Clincher Junior for their father's fortune. Naturally, the main plot of *The Constant Couple* is contingent on action prior to the opening of the play. To understand the play, an audience needs to learn that Lurewell's resentment of men is the result of her having been seduced and supposedly jilted at the age of fifteen by a man to whom she gave a ring inscribed with "Love and Honor." In addition, an audience needs to know that Lurewell is the mistress of Vizard, Standard, Smuggler, and Sir Harry. The circumstances of Lady Lurewell's first romance, as well as her relationships to her four paramours, have all been established before the opening of the play and are revealed in the exposition. It is particularly noticeable that, unlike several instances in the Restoration comedies already considered, the action and movement of the play is not delayed until the necessary exposition has been given. Indeed, the expository information in *The Constant Couple* is given little by little.
as it is necessary for the audience's comprehension and is an integral part of the action.

The subplot is dependent only on the death of Clincher's father, which, though it occurs prior to the play's opening, presents no expository problems; and, in effect, the subplot begins, develops, and ends all within the framework of the play.

The play opens with an expository convention. Vizard and his servant-messenger are discussing a letter which has been returned unopened by Angelica. In anger, Vizard sends his servant to learn whether Lurewell will be at home in the evening, for, as he says, "Her beauty is sufficient cure for Angelica's scorn." This reaction is logical for a man who has been insulted by a woman. Moreover, Vizard's remark is the first example of Farquhar's ability to contrive his exposition as a logical sequence of the action and dialogue.

As the servant leaves, Alderman Smuggler arrives and immediately reveals that he is indeed a smuggler. Then Standard enters and immediately discloses that he is completely penniless and disheartened because his regiment has been disbanded. Here again, one is conscious of logical exposition because Standard would naturally begin a conversation by speaking of his problems. The dialogue between Vizard and Standard leads logically to a discussion of mistresses:

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1Farquhar, Mermaid edition, p. 44.
Viz. Come, come, Colonel, there are ways of making your fortune at home. Make your addresses to the fair; you're a man of honour and courage.

Stand. Ay, my courage is like to do me wondrous service with the fair. This pretty cross cut over my eye will attract a duchess. I warrant 'twill be a mighty grace to my ogling. -- Had I used the stratagem of a certain brother colonel of mind, I might succeed.

Viz. What was it, pray?
Stand. Why, to save his pretty face for the women, he always turned his back upon the enemy. He was a man of honour--for the ladies.

Viz. Come, come, the loves of Mars and Venus will never fail; you must get a mistress.

Stand. Prithee, no more on't. You have awakened a thought, from which, and the kingdom, I would have stolen away at once. -- To be plain, I have a mistress. 2

While the purpose of this passage is to let the audience know that Standard has a mistress, it also exemplifies another merit of Farquhar's exposition, and that is that although his exposition is designed to reveal necessary facts it nevertheless is interesting in itself. Standard's jest about his brother officer's courage, however, is not an example of Farquhar's most successful humor.

Sir Harry's entrance is awkwardly contrived because Sir Harry first crosses the stage as if he were walking through the park. This gives Standard and Vizard, who is a friend of Sir Harry's, an opportunity to discuss Sir Harry's nature. Sir Harry then re-enters and merely mirrors what Vizard has just said of him:

His florid constitution being never ruffled by misfortune, nor stinted in its pleasures, has rendered him entertaining to others,

2 Ibid., pp. 46-47.
and easy to himself: --turning all passion into gaiety of humour, by which he chooses rather to rejoice his friends than be hated by any; as you shall see. 3

The dialogue that follows is humorous and leads logically to its design, namely to reveal that Sir Harry also has a mistress, whose whereabouts he does not know. Sir Harry has recently returned from Europe, and in the course of the conversation, Vizard asks logically, "But we heard that you designed to make the tour of Italy; what brought you back so soon?" 4

Sir Har. That which brought you into the world, and may perhaps carry you out of it: a woman.

Stand. What! quit the pleasures of travel for a woman!

Sir Har. Ay, Colonel, for such a woman! I had rather see her ruelle than the palace of Lewis le Grand. There's more glory in her smile than in the Jubilee at Rome; and I would rather kiss her hand than the Pope's toe.

Viz. You, Colonel, have been very lavish in the beauty and virtue of your mistress; and Sir Harry here has been no less eloquent in the praise of his. Now will I lay you both ten guineas a-piece, that neither of them is so pretty, so witty, or so virtuous, as mine.

Stand. 'Tis done!

Sir Har. I'll double the stakes. --But, gentlemen, now I think on't, how shall we be resolved? for I know not where my mistress may be found; she left Paris about a month before me, and I had an account--

Stand. How, sir! left Paris about a month before you!

Sir Har. Ay, but I know not where, and perhaps mayn't find her this fortnight.

Stand. Her name, pray, Sir Harry?

Viz. Ay, ay, her name; perhaps we know her.

Sir Har. Her name! Ay, --she has the softest, whitest hand that ever was made of flesh and blood, her lips so balmy sweet!

3Ibid., p. 47.

4Ibid., p. 49.
This scene, then, is artistically contrived because not only does Farquhar present a great deal of comedy in the verbal battle for Lurewell's name, but he also has clinched his expository purpose by previously letting the audience know that both Vizard and Standard have mistresses. And in addition, he has slipped in the fact that Sir Harry does not know the whereabouts of Lady Lurewell, a point that will be important to the main plot. It also should be pointed out that the asides, although they do give the fact that Lurewell is the mistress of both Vizard and Standard, are used essentially for comic effect, which is a more sophisticated use of asides than using them simply for exposition. As evidence of this fact, one can consider that, except for comic effect, the asides are hardly necessary because the audience already knows that Lurewell is Vizard's mistress, and, in addition, the obvious irony of the wager on whose

5Ibid., pp. 49-50.
mistress is the most beautiful adequately foreshadows the dénouement that Vizard, Standard, and Sir Harry all have the same mistress. Thus with the knowledge that there are three paramours for one mistress, the audience can anticipate the humorous intrigue that is to follow.

At this point, however, Farquhar reverts awkwardly to the use of a short soliloquy to disclose Vizard's stratagem to dupe Sir Harry. The dialogue that follows, however, is again artistically written, for it leads naturally to Sir Harry's question, "Prithee, Vizard, can't you recommend a friend to a pretty mistress by the by, till I can find my own?" This, in turn, allows Vizard to hoodwink Sir Harry in to thinking that Angelica is a prostitute. Vizard's motive has been skillfully prepared for by the opening exposition, which has set forth Angelica's scorn of Vizard. With the knowledge that Sir Harry believes that Angelica is a prostitute, the audience can again anticipate the obvious intrigue that is to follow.

At this point, Farquhar cleverly switches to the subplot. Clincher, "a pert London 'Prentice turned Beau, and affecting travel," enters in a gay mood. He speaks to his friend Vizard and announces that he is off to meet his brother, who has just arrived in town. With this last point, Farquhar slips in another point of exposition, thus preparing for Clincher Junior's entrance.

\[6\text{Ibid.}, \ p. 51.\]

\[7\text{Ibid.}, \ p. 42.\]
As already indicated, the subplot is dependent only on the death of Clincher's father, and this event is disclosed skillfully, again because it follows logically as part of the dialogue and is humorous in itself:

Sir. Har. Prithee, dost know him?

Viz. Know him! why, 'tis Clincher, who was apprentice to my uncle Smuggler, the merchant in the city.

This is a clever mention of Smuggler because it confirms his identity and directs the audience's attention toward him.

Sir Har. What makes him so gay?

Viz. Why, he's in mourning for his father, the kind old man, in Hertfordshire t'other day broke his neck a fox-hunting; the son, upon the news, has broke his indentures, whipped from behind the counter into the side-box, forswears merchandise, where he must live by cheating, and usurps gentility, where he may die by raking. He keeps his coach and liveries, brace of geldings, leash of mistresses, talks of nothing but wines, intrigues, plays, fashions, and going to the Jubilee.

Thus having given all the necessary exposition of the subplot, at least to this point, Farquhar makes a timely shift back to the main plot and a scene with Lurewell and her maid Parly. Here again Farquhar uses a convention, for Parly serves as Lurewell’s confidante. Through the dialogue between Lurewell and Parly, the audience learns that from Lurewell’s point of view, Vizard, Standard, Smuggler, and even Clincher are merely fops to be lampooned. More important, however, is the fact that Lurewell reveals her resentment of men and her reasons:

I hate all that don’t love me, and slight all that do. Would his [Standard’s] whole deluding sex admire me, thus would I slight

8 Ibid., p. 53.
them all! My virgin and unwary innocence was wronged by faithless man, but now glance eyes, plot brain, dissemble face, lie tongue, and be a second Eye to tempt, seduce and damn the trecherous kind. 9

Farquhar is conscientiously letting his audience know just what they need to know at the time and no more, for not yet does he let the audience know the specific circumstances of Lurewell's seduction. Since this knowledge would have no meaning to the audience at this time, it is saved to be revealed in another scene between Lurewell and her confidante. However, another important bit of expository information is presented in Lurewell and Parly's conversation:

Par. I can't be persuaded though, madam, but that you really loved Sir Harry Wildair in Paris.
Lady Lure. Of all the lovers I ever had, he was my greatest plague, for I could never make him uneasy; I left him involved in a duel upon my account; I long to know whether the fop be killed or not. 10

This exposition prepares for the action that follows. Standard enters and mentions Sir Harry. Lurewell then gives to Standard all of her letters from Sir Harry to be returned to him, ostensibly in order to finally "make him uneasy." 11 Again, however, Farquhar skillfully withholds some information; he does not let the audience know that Lurewell has enclosed a note to Sir Harry, asking him to call on her. This comes more advantageously in another scene.

9 Ibid., p. 54.
10 Ibid., p. 55.
11 Ibid.
Standard's scene with Lurewell ends the first act, and one can review with admiration Farquhar's ability to present expository material that falls logically within the dialogue and action of the play, and, at the same time, moves the play rapidly into the plot intrigues. A review of the exposition in the first act will also show that Farquhar creates his exposition deliberately where and when it is needed. This point is particularly important because Farquhar lets his exposition occur in the same manner throughout the rest of the play. For example, not until the fourth scene of the second act does Vizard learn that Lurewell is also the mistress of Standard. At this time, through exposition, the audience learns that Vizard plans to dupe both Standard and Sir Harry by plotting a duel between them. Unfortunately, however, it must be pointed out that to reveal this plot, Farquhar again uses a short soliloquy. And not until Scene Five of the third act does the audience learn the circumstances of Lurewell's first seduction. This scene prepares for the dénouement in which Standard, who appears with the inscribed ring, is revealed as Lurewell's first love. Nevertheless, by the end of Act One, the audience has been presented with the necessary exposition to anticipate the intrigue that will occur between Sir Harry and Angelica and among Lurewell and her five paramours. In addition, the subplot has been adequately introduced. For the most part, the farcical scenes of the subplot develop as part of the action of the play without the need
for much exposition. For example, in Act Three, Standard observes Lurewell coquetting with Clincher Senior. But Lurewell hears Standard entering and has Tom Errand and Clincher Senior exchange clothes, so that the latter can escape unseen by Standard, who comes in and rebukes Lurewell for her unfaithfulness to him, only to be rebuked in turn for "mistaking" Errand for Clincher Senior. Standard apologizes, but Lurewell leaves in affected rage. Then Clincher Senior re-enters still disguised as Errand, and Standard, who has previously sent Errand with a message to Wildair, beats "Errand" for not having delivered the message. The review of this scene shows how the subplot develops in farcical episodes which need no elaborate exposition.

In summary, the exposition in The Constant Couple is artistically designed to introduce the characters, set the tone, and disclose prior action, and the overall result is a gay, fast-moving introduction.

The Twin Rivals is generally considered the most "regular" of Farquhar's plays, in the sense that it follows closely the neoclassical adherence to the dramatic unities. The play has two plots, which are perfectly connected and end neatly, one after the other, in the last two scenes of the play. The main plot is an intrigue involving Richmore, Trueman, and Aurelia. The subplot is a hilarious scheme of Benjamin Wouldbe's attempts to cheat his brother of their father's fortune. Farquhar connects these plots very craftily with two central characters:
first, Mrs. Mandrake, who is the author of both Richmore's plan to seduce Aurelia and Benjamin's plot to defraud his brother; and, secondly, Teague, who, by his own bungling, nullifies all that Mrs. Mandrake has contrived. To understand the main plot, an audience needs to know of Richmore's seduction of Clelia, who never appears in the play. This information is disclosed efficiently in the opening scene, so that, in effect, the main plot is confined in its entirety within the framework of the play. To understand the subplot, an audience needs to know at least four points: (1) that Benjamin Wouldbe is the younger of twin brothers, (2) that he has been disowned by his father and is penniless, (3) that he is in love with his brother's fiancée, and (4) that his brother is traveling in Europe. Although Farquhar reverts to conventional narration in order to deliver these facts, he nevertheless deliberately contrives most of his exposition as part of the logical action and dialogue of his play.

The play opens on Benjamin Wouldbe, who is complaining to his valet about the annoyance of every morning's "buckling shoes, gartering, combing and powdering." Richmore enters, and because Benjamin Wouldbe persists in complaining, the dialogue leads logically to Richmore's suggestion that Wouldbe is in bad humor for having gambled away his money. To this, Wouldbe replies, "No, no, Fortune took care of me

12Ibid., p. 151.
there—I had none to lose.  

One expository fact is thus established—

Wouldbe is penniless. Richmore further suggests that Wouldbe is irritable because he has the spleen. What follows leads logically to another point of exposition, and, what is more important, begins to set the humorous tone of the play:

Ben. Would. Yes, I have got the spleen; and something else. —Hark'ee—

Rich. How!

Ben. Would. Positively. The lady's kind reception was the most severe usage I ever met with. Sha'n't I break her windows, Richmore?

Rich. A mighty revenge truly! Let me tell you, friend, that breaking the windows of such houses are no more than writing over a vintner's door as they do in Holland, Vin te koop. 'Tis no more than a bush to a tavern, a decoy to trade, and to draw in customers; but upon the whole matter, I think, a gentleman should put up an affront got in such little company; for the pleasure, the pain, and the resentment, are all alike scandalous.

Ben. Would. Have you forgot, Richmore, how I found you one morning with the Flying Post in you hand, hunting for physical advertisements?

Rich. That was in the days of dad, my friend, in the days of dirty linen, pit-masks, hedge-taverns, and beefsteaks; but now I fly at nobler game; the Ring, the Court, Pawlet's, and the Park: I despise all women that I apprehend any danger from, less than the having my throat cut: and should scruple to converse even with a lady of fortune, unless her fortune were loud enough to give me pride in exposing it. —Here's a letter I received this morning; you may read it.  

The letter, which, of course, is an expository convention, discloses the fact that Clelia has been seduced by Richmore. But even the conventional

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13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., p. 152.
use of a letter fits smoothly into the exposition, for Wouldbe asks, "But why would you trust it with me? You know I can't keep a secret that has any scandal in't." And Richmore replies,

For that reason I communicate: I know thou art a perfect gazette and will spread the news all over the town: for you must understand that I am now besieging another; and I would have the fame of my conquests upon the wing, that the town may surrender the sooner. 16

Here, Farquhar begins to prepare for Richmore's visit to Mrs. Mandrake, whom Richmore wants to help him with his designs on Aurelia. In addition, however, this passage leads logically to more discussion of amours and mistresses and to Richmore's comment, "You never attempt a woman of figure," 17 which gives Wouldbe the opportunity to narrate the unhappy facts of his life. But, unfortunately, this narration is not in harmony with the overall tone of the play, and, what is worse, it stops the movement of what is otherwise a lively play:

I am a younger brother, and yet cruelly deprived of my birthright of a handsome person; seven thousand a year in a direct line would have straightened my back to some purpose. But I look, in my present circumstances, like a branch of another kind, grafted only upon the stock which makes me grow so crooked.

Then after a perfunctory remark by Richmore, Wouldbe continues:

15 Ibid., p. 153.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
My twin-brother! Ay, 'twas his crowding me that spoiled my shape, and his coming half an hour before me that ruined my fortune. My father expelled me his house some two years ago, because I would have persuaded him that my twin-brother was a bastard. He gave me my portion, which was about fifteen hundred pound, and I have spent two thousand of it already. As for my brother, he don't care a farthing for me. 18

And thus the narration continues with only token remarks from Richmore.

However, Farquhar somewhat redeems the inferiority of this exposition by immediately juxtaposing a comical scene between Wouldbe and Mr. Balderdash, who refuses, as did Richmore, to lend Wouldbe any money, a fact which further establishes Wouldbe's desperate financial situation, and sets the circumstances for Wouldbe to call on the services of Mrs. Mandrake after he learns of his father's death. To disclose this fact, Farquhar employs a conventional servant-messenger, who merely enters and announces that old Wouldbe is dead. The servant is then sent to Mrs. Mandrake, after which Farquhar reverts to another awkward soliloquy to disclose the necessary expository facts:

That woman was my mother's midwife when I was born, and has been my bawd these ten years. I have had her endeavours to corrupt my brother's mistress; and now her assistance will be necessary to cheat him of his estate; for she's famous for understanding the right side of a woman, and the wrong side of the law. 19

Though his use of soliloquy is unskillful, Farquhar does craftily shift the scene immediately to Mrs. Mandrake, who is conversing with

18 Ibid., p. 154.
19 Ibid., p. 160.
her maid. Richmore enters and carries on a humorous conversation concerning Clelia. His purpose, however, is to obtain Mrs. Mandrake's help in order to accomplish his designs on Aurelia. Mrs. Mandrake refuses her services unless Richmore will find a husband for Clelia. This establishes the basis for the Richmore-Aurelia plot, for Richmore agrees to trick his nephew, Captain Trueman, into marrying Clelia. While all this expository information is being presented, the tone of the play is continued by the humorous dialogue and action. For example, Richmore offers to pay Mrs. Mandrake for her services, and Mandrake, a very unvirtuous bawd, replies,

Pardon me, sir! -- [Refusing the money] Did you ever know me mercenary? No, no, sir; virtue is its own reward.

Rich. Nay, but, madam, I owe you for the teeth-powder you sent me.

Mrs Man. Oh, that's another matter, sir! -- [Takes the money.] I hope you liked it, sir?

Rich. Extremely, madam. -- [Aside.] But it was somewhat dear of twenty guineas. 20

More important for the exposition of the play, however, is the fact that this conversation leads logically to a disclosure that Benjamin Wouldbe loves Constance, Hermes Wouldbe's fiancée. Farquhar then effectively shifts the scene to Aurelia and Constance at the beginning of the second act. The exposition then continues throughout the play to be given as it is needed for comprehension. In this respect the exposition is cleverly handled because it moves the action from one scene

20 Ibid., p. 164.
to another. A review of the exposition in the first act, however, shows that Farquhar has committed some glaring mistakes, namely that he has interrupted the action of the play with narration and has resorts to expository soliloquies. Moreover, the first act of The Twin Rivals fails to sustain a gaiety of tone that, for example, characterizes the first act of The Constant Couple and especially the first act of The Recruiting Officer.

In The Recruiting Officer, Farquhar uses as many expository conventions as he does in any other of his plays. Nevertheless, as a whole, the exposition is remarkably well-written, for in no other play, with the exception of The Beaux' Stratagem, does Farquhar introduce his characters, set the tone, and disclose necessary facts with such comical effect as he does in The Recruiting Officer. Moreover, the play is well constructed. In effect, there is only one plot with two romantic intrigues occurring simultaneously. One intrigue is between Melinda and Worthy; the other, between Silvia and Plume. Skillfully interwoven into these intrigues are a series of farcical scenes with Serjeant Kite and his rustic recruits. The circumstances of both intrigues have been established prior to the opening of the play and must be disclosed to the audience in the exposition. This necessity presents no problems because the circumstances are revealed logically within the dialogue and action of the play. Actually, Farquhar takes advantage of this necessary
exposition to include some of his funniest lines. For example, when Worthy explains that he has been rejected by Melinda, Plume replies,

'Tis the way of 'em all. Come, Worthy, your obsequious and distant airs will never bring you together; you must not think to surmount her pride by your humility. Would you bring her to better thoughts of you, she must be reduced to a meaner opinion of herself. Let me see: the very first thing that I would do, should be to lie with her chamber-maid, and hire three or four wenches in the neighbourhood to report that I had got them with child. Suppose we lampooned all the pretty women in town, and left her out? Or what if we made a ball, and forgot to invite her, with one or two of the ugliest?

Wor. These would be mortifications, I must confess; but we live in such a precise, dull place, that we can have no balls, no lampoons, no--

Plume. What! no bastards! and so many recruiting officers in town! I thought 'twas a maxim among them to leave as many recruits in the country as they carried out.

Wor. Nobody doubts your good-will, noble captain, in serving your country with you best blood. . . .

The opening scene with Serjeant Kite and his prospective recruits is a perfect beginning for a comedy because the beat of the drum, the hustle and bustle of the crowd in the market place, and the bellowing voice of Kite, spurting hilarious lies, immediately set a perfect atmosphere for comedy. Kite's robust personality, like that of Falstaff, is so well established in the first scene that his mere entrance in other scenes will bring laughter. More important, however, is the fact that no expository points are thrown at the audience until after the opening scene. This feature of the play is important because it shows an improvement in Farquhar's writing of exposition. By contrast, The Man of Mode, The

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21Ibid., p. 258.
Plain Dealer, The Relapse, and The Way of the World, as well as The Constant Couple and The Twin Rivals, all offer expository facts before the tone of the play is clearly established.

After a perfect opening in The Recruiting Officer, however, Farquhar ineffectively allows Plume to introduce himself with a short soliloquy:

By the Grenadier March, that should be my drum, and by that shout, it should beat with success.--Let me see--[Looking on his watch.]--four o'clock. At ten yesterday morning I left London.--A hundred and twenty miles in thirty hours is pretty smart riding, but nothing to the fatigue of recruiting. 22

This soliloquy is hardly necessary, for Plume reveals in his first few lines with Kite and Worthy all that is of importance in the soliloquy. The exposition that follows this soliloquy is generally well-contrived because Farquhar develops his exposition, as he does in his other plays, as part of the action and dialogue of the play. Thus Plume, a recruiting officer, logically inquires of his sergeant the number of recruits that have been enlisted, and this request leads in turn to the expository fact that Plume has seduced Molly at the Castle:

Kite. . . .--But, sir, you have got a recruit here that you little think of.
Plume. Who?
Kite. One that you beat up for last time you were in the country: you remember your old friend Molly at the Castle?
Plume. She's not with child, I hope?
Kite. No, no, sir--she was brought to bed yesterday. 23

22Ibid., p. 253.
23Ibid., p. 254.
This exposition smoothly prepares for the entrance of Silvia, who has taken an interest in Molly's child. In addition, the passage affords an opportunity to continue the tone of the play with some humorous lines by Kite, who, though he already has five wives, is compelled to wed Molly for the sake of his captain. More important in discussing Farquhar's exposition is the fact that this passage may serve to illustrate that for the first time Farquhar's exposition begins to harmonize with a dramatic theme. As it has been indicated, the plays of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve are artistically concerned with developing a theme as well as presenting an entertaining play. By contrast, Farquhar's early plays are concerned mainly with presenting "good theater." The Recruiting Officer is more than good theater, however, because it is a satire on the military, and Kite's unethical recruiting methods, Plume's casual concern for his bastard child, as well as his attempted seduction of Rose, and the soldiers' questionable embraces are all satiric jabs at the military.

After Kite is sent to wed Molly, Plume and Worthy carry on a discussion in which all of the necessary facts concerning the intrigues of the two plots are disclosed naturally as part of the dialogue. And in addition to satiric humor, this discussion between Plume and Worthy contains a clever conceit which not only presents more expository facts, but also, in itself, satirizes the idiom of the military:
Plume. . . . Pray, who is this miraculous Helen?
Wor. A Helen indeed, not to be won under a ten years' siege: as great a beauty, and as great a jilt.
Plume. A jilt! pho! Is she as great a whore?
Wor. No, no.
Plume. 'Tis ten thousand pities. But who is she? do I know her?
Wor. Very well.
Plume. Impossible!—I know no woman that will hold out a ten years' siege.
Wor. What think you of Melinda?
Plume. Melinda! Why, she began to capitulate this time twelvemonth, and offered to surrender upon honorable terms; and I advised you to propose a settlement of five hundred pounds a year to her, before I went last abroad.
Wor. I did, and she hearkened to't, desiring only one week to consider: when, beyond her hopes, the town was relieved, and I forced to turn my siege into a blockade.
Plume. Explain, explain!
Wor. My lady Richly, her aunt in Flintshire, dies, and leaves her, at this critical time, twenty thousand pounds.
Oh! the devil! What a delicate woman was there spoiled!
But, by the rules of war now, Worthy, blockade was foolish. After such a convoy of provisions was entered the place, you could have no thought of reducing it by famine; you should have redoubled your attacks, taken the town by storm, or have died upon the breach.
Wor. I did make one general assault, and pushed it with all my forces; but I was so vigorously repulsed, that, despairing of ever gaining her for a mistress, I have altered my conduct, given my addresses the obsequious and distant turn, and court her now for a wife. 24

In this manner Farquhar again harmonizes exposition and theme.

Worthy and Plume's conversation is interrupted by Kite, who brings the information that Silvia intends to be the godmother of Molly's child. This, of course, redirects attention to Silvia, and after quickly tacking on the exposition that there is another recruiting officer in town,

24 Ibid., pp. 257-258.
Farquhar shifts the scene to Silvia and Melinda. Structurally, this is a clever move for two reasons. First, Plume and Worthy have adequately prepared for the entrances of the two women. Secondly, this scene with Silvia and Melinda, the heroines of the two romantic intrigues, directly parallels the previous scene with Plume and Worthy, the heroes of the intrigues. Thus, Farquhar presents the exposition of the two intrigues from the view of both the male characters and the female characters.

From an expository point of view, this scene is remarkable for another reason. The complication of both the love affairs is contingent on an altercation between Silvia and Melinda, and Farquhar devises this quarrel superbly:

Silv. ... how stands your affair with Mr. Worthy?
Mel. He's my aversion!
Silv. Vapours!
Mel. What do you say madam?
Silv. I say, that you should not use that honest fellow so inhumanly, he's a gentleman of parts and fortune; and besides he's my Plume's friend, and by all that's sacred, if you don't use him better, I shall expect satisfaction.

Mel. Satisfaction! You begin to fancy yourself in breeches in good earnest. But to be plain with you, I like Worthy the worse for being so intimate with your captain, for I take him to be a loose, idle, unmannerly coxcomb.

Silv. O madam! You never saw him, perhaps, since you were mistress of twenty-thousand pounds; you only knew him when you were capitulating with Worthy for a settlement, which perhaps might encourage him to be a little loose and unmannerly with you.

Mel. What do you mean, madam?
Silv. My meaning needs no interpretation, madam.
Mel. Better it had, madam; for methinks you are too plain.
Silv. If you mean the plainness of my person, I think your ladyship's as plain as me to the full.
Mel. Were I sure of that, I should be glad to take up with a rakehell officer, as you do.

Silv. Again!—Lobk'ee madam, you're in your own house.

Mel. And if you had kept in yours, I should have excused you.

Silv. Don't be troubled, madam, I sha'n't desire to have my visit returned.

Mel. The sooner, therefore, you make an end of this the better.

Silv. I am easily persuaded to follow my inclinations so, madam, your humble servant. [Exit.

Mel. Saucy thing! ²⁵

By contrast, how much more artful and entertaining is this quarrel than is Dorimant's simple explanation that he is tired of Mrs. Lovelit or Fainall's narration that Mirabell has quarreled with Mrs. Wishfort.

In the first act, the tone of the play has been set from the opening lines and sustained throughout the act, the major characters have been introduced, and the two intrigues have been initiated. The only expository convention that Farquhar uses tritely is Plume's short soliloquy. The other expository conventions that Farquhar uses are so skillfully handled that one is hardly aware of any conventions at all. For example, Kite is an expository character, like Foggy Nan, a "low" fellow used to set the tone of the play. Like Manly's sailors, he is also used to introduce other characters. Like Coupler, he is a plot manipulator. In addition, he serves the function of a faithful-servant to Plume. By contrast to any of these others, however, Kite is not used in a conventional way, because he remains a central and necessary character throughout the play. This is

²⁵Ibid., pp. 263-264.
an important factor in considering Farquhar's use of exposition, for the
essential point is that none of Farquhar's plays contains any purely
expository characters. Expository lines are given almost entirely to
central characters, and this is a major reason why Farquhar's exposition
usually occurs rapidly and smoothly within the dialogue and action of his
plays. This same feature can be seen in the roles of Plume and Worthy,
who serve each other as confidants, as initially do Silvia and Melinda.
But none of these is comparable to Dorimant's Medley, for example, who
after serving his expository purpose is simply a dispensable character.

In the last four acts of The Recruiting Officer, Farquhar does rely
on one or two short soliloquies, letters, and servant-messengers; but
for the most part, the exposition, which occurs as it is needed, is
presented as cleverly and artistically as it is in the first act.

By common consent, The Beaux' Stratagem is Farquhar's best
comedy. In singling out its superior qualities, critics have most often
praised its characters and its plot. In addition, the play exemplifies
Farquhar's finest achievement in the use of dramatic exposition.

Except for the sudden appearance of Sir Charles Freeman as a deus
ex machina in the final act, the play is extraordinarily well constructed
because the plot develops entirely from the social circumstances of
the characters. Consequently, Aimwell and Archer, "two Gentlemen of

26James, p. 354.
broken Fortunes, the first as Master, and the second as Servant, "27

come to Lichfield because they have been compelled to leave London
"for no crime upon earth but the want of money. "28 Their plan is to
travel from town to town in hope of gaining their fortune through amours
with wealthy country ladies. However, the two amorous adventurers
have to go no further than Lichfield because here are Dorinda and
Mrs. Sullen, both of whose domestic situations make them susceptible
to and available for romantic encounters, Dorinda because Lichfield
offers no beau equal to her character and Mrs. Sullen because she is
exasperated, not only with the boredom of country living, but also with
her drunken and splenetic husband, Mr. Sullen. In addition, the plot
develops because Bonniface, the surreptitious boss of a gang of high-
waymen, and his daughter, Cherry, mistake Aimwell and Archer for
competitive highwaymen. This mistake, in turn, leads to Farquhar's
characteristic farcical scenes, which in The Beaux' Stratagem are
provided, in part, by Gibbet, a highwayman, and his roguish companions,
Hounslow and Bageshot. No summary of plot and characters, however,
would be complete without mentioning Scrub, Mr. Sullen's comic servant
and jack-of-all-trades: "Of a Monday I drive the coach; of a Tuesday I
drive the plough; on Wednesday I follow the hounds; a Thursday I dun the

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28 Ibid., p. 364.
tenants; on Friday I go to market; on Saturday I draw warrants; and a Sunday I draw beer. " And as a messenger, Scrub is incomparable:

    Scrub. Madam, I have brought you a packet of news.
    Dor. Open it quickly, come.
    Scrub. In the first place I inquired who the gentleman was; they told me he was a stranger. Secondly, I asked what the gentleman was; they answered and said, that they never saw him before. Thirdly, I inquired what countryman he was; they replied, 'twas more than they knew. Fourthly, I demanded whence he came; their answer was, they could not tell. And fifthly, I asked whither he went; and they knew nothing of the matter, --and this is all I could learn. 29

Like The Recruiting Officer, The Beaux' Stratagem has a perfect opening for a comedy, both in setting and action, as well as in characters. The opening setting, Bonniface's inn, allows conveniently for the coming and going of the characters. As the play opens, Bonniface, who is Kite turned innkeeper, comes rushing on stage, shouting, "Chamberlain! maid! Cherry! daughter Cherry! all asleep? all dead?" 30 From his dialogue and costume—an apron would suffice, no one would have difficulty recognizing Bonniface as an innkeeper. Although this point may appear insignificant, it is actually an important aspect of Farquhar's exposition, an aspect that is not noticeable in the exposition of Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh. For example, The Man of Mode, The Plain Dealer, and The Relapse open on a major character in his lodging, and the audience has no immediate way of recognizing the role the character

29Ibid., pp. 387-388.

30Ibid., p. 359.
is to play. And all too often another character simply enters unannounced, with no apparent reason or explanation for his entrance. This is true, for example, of the initial entrances of Medley and Young Bellair in *The Man of Mode*, as well as those of Freeman and Fidelia in the opening scene of *The Plain Dealer*; it is true too of several entrances of characters in *The Relapse*, especially that of Berinthia in the second act. Farquhar, on the other hand, appears to be concerned that his audience will immediately recognize both his setting and characters, a feature which, of course, is a primary concern of dramatic exposition. Farquhar exemplifies this concern not only in *The Beaux' Stratagem*, but also in *The Recruiting Officer*, for Kite is easily discernible by his dress, dialogue, and action as a comical recruiting sergeant.

Bonniface's rushing and shouting immediately begins to set the pace for the fast-moving action that continues throughout the play. The dialogue that follows enhances the comical tone and also begins to set the situation of the play:

**Cher.** Here! here! Why d'ye bawl so, father? d'ye think we have no ears?

**Bon.** You deserve to have none, you young minx! The company of the Warrington coach has stood in the hall this hour, and nobody to show them to their chambers.  

Here, because it is logical that a coach would be arriving at the inn, is the first step in the logically convincing development of this play.

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31 Ibid.
Thus Aimwell and Archer enter with the other travellers. By his dress, but not by his demeanor, Archer is recognizable as Aimwell's servant.

Aimwell asks for wine, a logical request for a man who has been travelling by stagecoach. Bonniface is a boastful landlord, and it is logical that he should begin to praise his ale. This he does, and the discussion, in turn, leads logically to the mentioning of the death of Bonniface's wife:

Bon. --Ha! delicious, delicious! fancy it burgundy, only fancy it, and 'tis worth ten shillings a quart.
Aim. [Drinks.] 'Tis confounded strong!
Bon. Strong! It must be so, or how should we be strong that drink it?
Aim. And have you lived so long upon this ale, landlord?
Bon. Eight-and-fifty years, upon my credit, sir--but it killed my wife, poor woman, as the saying is. 32

Bonniface logically speaks of Lady Bountiful, who had treated his wife and who is supposed to have particular skill in administering drugs.

Naturally, Aimwell, because his stratagem is to find a wealthy lover, is inquisitive about any of the gentry of the countryside and is perfectly willing to listen to the loquacious Bonniface narrate the history of Lady Bountiful, Sullen, Mrs. Sullen, and Dorinda. Indeed, the more he learns--especially that Lady Bountiful is "worth a thousand pound a year"33--the more inquisitive he becomes. Moreover, Aimwell's questions help to motivate Bonniface's expository report as well as to break up what might be a long narrative. In addition, Bonniface presents

32 Ibid., p. 361.
33 Ibid.
the necessary expository facts humorously, so that neither the action nor the tone of the play is interrupted; this humor can be seen, for example, when he says

My Lady Bountiful is one of the best of women. Her last husband, Sir Charles Bountiful, left her worth a thousand pound a year; and I believe, she lays out one-half on't in charitable uses for the good of her neighbours. She cures rheumatisms, ruptures, and broken shins in men; green-sickness, obstructions, and fits of the mother, in women; the king's evil, chin-cough, and chilblains, in children. In short, she has cured more people in and about Lichfield within ten years than the doctors have killed in twenty; and that's a bold word.  

Bonniface also adds humor to his narration, as he does throughout the play, by the constant repetition of his pet phrase, "as the saying is," which Farquhar also capitalizes on later by letting Archer use the expression in mockery.

In addition to the facts concerning Lady Bountiful, Bonniface mentions that there are French officers in Lichfield. This is an expository fact that prepares for the entrance of Foigard. Immediately, however, it prepares for the entrance of Archer, who interrupts Bonniface and Aimwell's conversation by announcing that some French gentlemen are asking for the landlord. That Archer brings this information may seem an insignificant observation, that Archer's message is simply a means of getting Bonniface off stage and Archer on stage. However, this point is not insignificant, because a playwright less concerned with

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34 Ibid.
technique might simply have had a servant enter, announce to Boniface that he is wanted and leave. Then Boniface could leave and Archer enter. Similar situations and uses of servants—who have no names but are merely functional characters—are common in the plays of Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh. The essential fact is that Farquhar has eliminated any strictly functional or expository characters in *The Beaux' Stratagem*. All of the exposition occurs through the action and dialogue of the important characters. This point is true, as already indicated, of Scrub, who, though a servant, is an important figure, and the same is true of his saucy sweetheart, the maid Gypsy.

That Archer brings the information concerning the Frenchmen is important for another reason. The two romantic intrigues in the plot are obviously contingent on the fact that Aimwell and Archer will meet Dorinda and Mrs. Sullen. A lesser craftsman than Farquhar might simply have opened his play *in medias res* with the characters already acquainted. Indeed, the fact that most of the characters are already acquainted when the plays open appears to be the trend in the best plays by Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh. Not so, with Farquhar, for the major conflict in his masterpiece is Aimwell and Archer's conniving to meet the ladies and, ironically, the ladies' conniving to meet Aimwell and Archer. Thus, Archer's message concerning the Frenchmen is Farquhar's way of preparing logically for Scrub's suggestion,
in the third act, that Archer is a Frenchman, a suggestion which sets
in motion the ladies' scheme to meet Aimwell:

Scrub. Why, some think he's a spy, some guess he's a
mountebank, some say one thing, some another; but for my own
part, I believe he's a Jesuit.

Dor. A Jesuit! why a Jesuit?
Scrub. Because he keeps his horses always ready saddled,
and his footman talks French.

Mrs Sul. His footman!

Scrub. Ay, he and the Count's footman were gabbering
French like two intriguing ducks in a mill-pond; and I believe they
talked of me, for they laughed consumedly.

Dor. What sort of livery has the footman?
Scrub. Livery! Lord, madam, I took his for a captain, he's
so bedizened with lace! And then he has tops on his shoes up to his
mid leg, a silver-headed cane dangling at his knuckles; he carries
his hands in his pockets just so--[Walks in the French air]--and
has a fine long periwig tied up in a bag. --Lord, madam, he's clear
another sort of man than I!

Mrs Sul. That may easily be. --But what shall we do now,
sister?

Dor. I have it--this fellow has a world of simplicity, and
some cunning; the first hides the latter by abundance. --Scrub!
Scrub. Madam!

Dor. We have a great mind to know who this gentleman is,
only for our satisfaction.

Scrub. Yes, madam, it would be satisfaction no doubt.

Dor. You must go and get acquainted with his footman, and
invite him hither to drink a bottle of your ale, because you're
butler to-day.

Scrub. Yes, madam, I am butler every Sunday.

Thus, Archer's bringing a message to Bonniface serves in several ways
the overall construction of the play and is just one example of Farquhar's
inventiveness and concern for his craft. This technique is seen too in
Bonniface's mentioning that Lady Bountiful administers drugs, for Archer

and Aimwell will utilize this fact in order to get into Lady Bountiful's house.

After Bonniface leaves, Archer and Aimwell are alone for the first time since the opening of the play. This scene is important from an expository point of view because it establishes the nature of their characters and gives the necessary facts of their circumstances and plan. For the most part their conversation offers direct exposition, but many of the lines are certainly interesting in themselves: for example, Archer's comment that, "'tis still my maxim, that that there is no scandal like rags, nor any crime so shameful as poverty," and later his perfect description of the typical Restoration rake:

Give me a man that keeps his five senses keen and bright as his sword; that has 'em always drawn out in their just order and strength, with his reason as commander at the head of 'em; that detaches 'em by turns upon whatever party of pleasure agreeably offers, and commands 'em to retreat upon the least appearance of disadvantage or danger! For my part, I can stick to my bottle while my wine, my company, and my reason, holds good; I can be charmed with Sappho's singing without falling in love with her face; I love hunting, but would not, like Actaeon, be eaten up by my own dogs; I love a fine house, but let another keep it; and just so I love a fine woman.  

It is significant to note that in this relatively long expository scene with Aimwell and Archer, Farquhar intended for there to be a great deal of visual humor because he wrote the part of Archer for Wilks, the great

\[\text{Ibid., p. 363.}\]

\[\text{Ibid., p. 366.}\]
Restoration actor, who was famous for his visual humor:

In this scene Farquhar supplies Archer with what amounts to a series of impersonations. There are Jack Handicraft, "the handsome, well-dress'd, mannerly, sharping Rogue," Nick Marabone, riding in the coach he formerly sat behind as footman, Jack generous in his "Autumnal Periwig, shading his melancholy Face," and so on. The realization of this sort of comedy lay in Wilks' mimicry, his "business," and his general cavorting around stage as he manufactured a spontaneous comic scene using the script as a scenario. 38

Archer and Aimwell, quite naturally in order to impress their landlord, whom they do not wish to be demanding payment of their bills, give their money to Bonniface for safekeeping. It follows that with their stealthy and precarious undertakings, Aimwell and Archer would want to be able to flee at a moment's notice. Thus, as Aimwell gives the box of money to the landlord, he says,

Here, landlord, the locks are sealed down both for your security and mine; it holds somewhat above two hundred pound; if you doubt it, I'll count it to you after supper. But be sure you lay it where I may have it at a minute's warning; for my affairs are a little dubious at present; perhaps I may be gone in half an hour, perhaps I may be your guest till the best part of that be spent; and pray order your ostler to keep my horses always saddled. But one thing above the rest I must beg, that you would let this fellow [Archer] have none of your Anno Domini [Bonniface's best ale], as you call it; for he's the most insufferable sot. --39

Characteristically, Farquhar adds humor to exposition, but the importance of Aimwell's instructions is that they arouse Bonniface's suspicions and

lead to the mistaken assumption that Aimwell and Archer are highwaymen. This error, in turn, leads to the spicy episodes between Archer and Cherry, who uses her charm in attempting to learn Archer's identity. And, finally, Bonniface's suspicions prepare for the farcical subplot with Gibbet and his gang. More important and more subtle, however, is the fact that the exposition that leads to Bonniface's doubt harmonizes with the predominant theme of the play, the theme that the morality of high society is no better than that of highwaymen.

It must be pointed out here that critics are in disagreement about the theme of *The Beaux' Stratagem*. The common interpretation is that taken by such scholars as Dobrée, Archer, and Connely, who suggest that Farquhar's play is a satire on irrational divorce laws. 

It is true, as Archer has shown, that

we have in this comedy (especially in the scenes between Mrs. Sullen and Dorinda at the end of Act III, and between Squire Sullen and Sir Charles Freeman at the beginning of Act V.) a serious and very damaging criticism of the conventional view that there can be no immorality in marriage save breach of the marriage vow. These scenes are, in fact, a plea for what Farquhar regarded, rightly or wrongly, as a more rational law of divorce.

One would have to strain an analysis, however—and neither Dobrée nor Connely nor Archer has attempted it—to prove that this divorce theme is

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40 Hopper and Lahney, p. 39.

41 Farquhar, Mermaid edition, p. 28.
dominant throughout the play. It has been explained that acceptance of this divorce theme obviously implies clearly, if not startlingly, that Farquhar was the inventor of the social conscience and the thesis play, that The Beaux' Stratagem embodies a brilliant and conscious innovation: the use of the theatre as a vehicle of specific social criticism and domestic reform.  

Hopper and Lahney reject the idea that the dominant theme in the play is a satire on rigid divorce laws. Instead, they submit that the play has no governing theme at all, that Farquhar's epilogue and advertisement show clearly that the author's only intention was that "his play would be successful."  

On the other hand, while acknowledging the play's comments on divorce, James, whose dissertation consists of the most complete and detailed analysis to date of Farquhar's plays, argues convincingly that the predominant theme in the play is a "comparison of the morality of the world of high society with that of the underworld." The exposition in the first act harmonizes with James's explanation of the theme, most obviously in Boniface's mistaking Aimwell and Archer for highwaymen. And it can be seen throughout the play that the morality of Aimwell and Archer is no better than that of the highwaymen.

42 Hopper and Lahney, p. 40.

43 Ibid., p. 43.

44 James, p. 379.
The only difference is that Gibbet and his gang are content with stealing "two hundred sterling pounds, . . . three wedding or mourning rings, . . . two silver-hilted swords," and a diamond necklace, or mere trifles compared to the fortunes Aimwell and Archer would steal from Dorinda and Mrs. Sullen.

Farquhar's exposition in the first act of *The Beaux' Stratagem* is unique, for it contains no hackneyed expository conventions. All of the exposition occurs logically as part of the action and dialogue of the play. There are no expository letters, asides, or soliloquies. Neither Aimwell nor Archer can be classified as a confidant because each is equally involved in and knows of their mutual plan. Lady Bountiful, Sullen, Dorinda, and Mrs. Sullen are all mentioned and somewhat described, but this information comes naturally in the dialogue. In addition, there are no exclusively expository or functional characters. More important, however, is the fact that, while the exposition in each of the Restoration comedies considered in this thesis sets the tone, introduces the characters, and reveals events supposed to have taken place before the opening of the play, *The Beaux' Stratagem* is the only comedy whose exposition meets all the requirements of skillful and artistic exposition. The exposition has occurred naturally and logically as part of the dialogue and action; it has occurred as quickly as possible--the first act is

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relatively short, only about 457 lines, and it is significant that within the first 75 lines, Boniface and Aimwell are discussing Lady Bountiful and her family; the exposition is humorous and interesting in itself; it presents no ambiguity—the characters, the opening circumstances, and the setting are all perfectly clear; and, finally, the exposition harmonizes with the play's theme. Not all of this can be said of the exposition of any other Restoration comedy.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Of the reputations of the five outstanding authors of Restoration comedies of manners, that of George Farquhar is the most hazy.
Although his plays have been more popular with audiences than those of Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh and although his work was praised by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics, Farquhar has failed to receive the approval of major modern critics of the Restoration comedy of manners. For the most part, modern critics have either ignored Farquhar altogether or condemned his work without offering a thorough analysis. And it is significant that those who have treated Farquhar fairly, namely Archer, Connely, and James, have shown a greater appreciation of his work than those who have dealt with him only briefly. Under no circumstances, however, can any critic deny that the majority of Farquhar's plays have been popular with their audiences.

Only two of Farquhar's plays, The Inconstant and The Twin Rivals, were not successful with their first audiences. And of these, the former was unpopular only in comparison with Farquhar's earlier plays.
Moreover, the failure of *The Twin Rivals* can be accredited to outside circumstances, namely Lent and the competition of Italian singers and French tumblers, who were popular during the run of the play. In addition, the play was appearing at the time of King William III's death and could hardly be expected to succeed when the whole nation was in mourning.

There is no question, however, that Farquhar's other five plays were immediate hits. *Love and a Bottle* had a run of nine nights, which at that time was considered to be a long engagement. *The Constant Couple* was unprecedented in its success, providing Farquhar with the receipts of four third-nights and playing for fifty-three performances. So successful was *The Constant Couple* that in the season of its initial performance, no other play was able to win distinction. Farquhar's sequel to *The Constant Couple*, *Sir Harry Wildair*, which ran for nine nights, was unsuccessful only by contrast to the overwhelming popularity of the original play. Although there was an interval of four years, between 1702 and 1706, in which Farquhar wrote no plays because of the failures of *The Twin Rivals* and *The Inconstant*, his last two plays, *The Recruiting Officer* and *The Beaux' Stratagem*, again set precedents with their popularity, the latter becoming the most popular of Restoration comedies and, by 1775, the perennial favorite.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Farquhar's plays continued to be more popular than those of Etherege, Wycherley,
Congreve, and Vanbrugh. Today, *The Beaux' Stratagem* is perhaps the only Restoration comedy that is still regularly performed by commercial theaters.

For the most part, modern critics have recognized Farquhar's superior popularity with audiences, but, in general, these critics have neglected to accord any significance to this popularity. In addition, modern critics have failed to attribute any significance to the fact that of the writers of the Restoration comedy of manners Farquhar was treated the most favorably by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics, primarily because of the moralistic bias of the Victorians. This criticism however was brief and infrequent; consequently, for Farquhar criticism one has to go to short comments in essays, anthologies, literary histories, and letters, and to the relatively few studies which deal exclusively with Restoration drama. Nevertheless, Farquhar has been praised by such men as Dr. Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, William Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, and William Makepeace Thackeray, in spite of the disfavor of one negative remark by Pope. In general, Farquhar was attacked most, before the twentieth century, by those critics, especially Macaulay, who felt that Farquhar was just another obscene playwright of Restoration comedy, which they felt was wholly and unforgivably immoral. Even from a moralistic viewpoint, however, critics often placed Farquhar on a higher level than Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve or Vanbrugh.
In the twentieth century, Farquhar's reputation has been almost destroyed by the first major work devoted exclusively to Restoration comedy, Palmer's *The Comedy of Manners*. Palmer's thesis is that Farquhar's work, yielding to the onslaughts of Jeremy Collier's *Short View*, prepared the way for sentimental comedy and, consequently, the death of English comedy. Although rebuttals have pointed out that all of Farquhar's plays appeared after Collier's *Short View* and that *The Twin Rivals*, the only play of Farquhar's which attempted to satisfy some of Collier's demands, was a failure—partly because Restoration playgoers did not want the kind of comedy advocated by the *Short View*—Palmer's evaluation has remained as Farquhar's epitaph.

Nevertheless, Farquhar's popularity both with audiences and with early critics has justified a detailed analysis of his works. Though he has been accused of many artistic faults, he has invariably been commended for his technical skill in dramatic structure. In this respect, the exposition in Farquhar's plays is more skillfully and artistically constructed than that of the best plays by Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve and Vanbrugh.

The purposes of dramatic exposition are to introduce characters, to set the tone, and to reveal action that is supposed to have taken place before the opening of a play. These purposes are certainly accomplished in the exposition of *The Man of Mode*, *The Plain Dealer*, *The Way of the World*. 
and The Relapse, but in doing so, the author of each of these plays employs hackneyed expository conventions, the most common of which are letters, asides, short soliloquies, expository characters, such as confidants, servants, and messengers, and the technique of describing characters before their entrances. In addition, each of these plays begins in medias res and, for the most part, depends so much on action which is supposed to have occurred before the opening and which must be revealed to the audience that the exposition is distractingly taxed to present all the necessary facts. From an analysis of these four plays, however, can be derived certain characteristics of effective exposition, namely that the exposition should occur within the dialogue and action of the play, that it should occur as quickly as possible, that it should be interesting and clear, and that it should harmonize with the theme of the play. Not all of these prerequisites are met in any of Farquhar's early plays, which, in general, make use of the trite expository conventions used by Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, and Vanbrugh. An analysis of the exposition in four of Farquhar's plays, however, has shown that with each successive play Farquhar improved his skill in writing exposition, so that his last play, The Beaux' Stratagem, exemplifies all the qualities of skillful and artistic exposition.

It is perhaps fruitless to speculate what George Farquhar might have done, what an influence he might have been, had he not died at an
early age; however, with his tremendous progress in dramatic art within the relatively short span of nine years that he wrote drama, perhaps Archer's evaluation is not unwarranted:

Had he lived to sixty instead of dying before thirty, we can scarcely doubt that he would have kept the drama more nearly abreast of the essay and its successor, the novel, than it has ever been from his day to our own. We might have had in him a Fielding of the theatre.  

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1 Farquhar, Mermaid edition, p. 27.
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