THE PLAYS OF SIR JOHN VANBRUGH

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by

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: An examination of the Plays of Sir John Vanbrugh aimed at defining some aspects of their thematic unity.

PREFACE

For the purposes of this thesis I have used Bonamy Dobree's edition of the plays of Sir John Vanbrugh, which generally gives the text of the first edition, noting variants in one or more subsequent editions and the earliest collected editions. I have retained Dobree's capitalisation, as this is essential for correct dramatic emphasis in the dialogue, but for the sake of a clear typescript, italicisation has been ignored. All quotations from Vanbrugh are from Dobree unless otherwise stated.

I am glad to have this opportunity of thanking Mr. Richard Morton for his tactful advice and most generous help in ensuring that this thesis was produced.

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF VANBRUGH'S PLAYS

1696 The Relapse. D.L. December.

1697 Aesop, part I. D.L. December/January. (Boursault: Aesop à la Ville, 1690).

Aesop, part II. D.L. March.

The Provok'd Wife. L.I.F. April.

1698 A Short Vindication of The Relapse and The Provok'd Wife from Immorality and Prophaneness. June 8th.

1700 The Pilgrim. D.L. April 29. (Fletcher: The Pilgrim, 1621).

1701 The False Friend. D.L. January. (Le Sage: Le Traitre Puni, c. 1700).

1703 (?) The Country House. D.L. January. (Dancourt: La Maison de Campagne, 1688).

1704 Squire Trelooby. L.I.F. March 30. In collaboration with Congreve and Walsh. (Molière: Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, 1669).

1705 The Confederacy. H. October 30. (Dancourt: Les Bourgeoises à la Mode, 1682).

The Mistake. H. December 27. (Molière: Le Depit Amoureux, 1654).

1707 The Cuckold in Conceit. H. March 22. No copy known. (Molière: Le Cocu Imaginaire, 1660).

1726 Dies. March 26.

1728 A Journey to London. (fragment). Published January.

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CHAPTER ONE

> Ramble . . . . we will talk of a Gentleman of superior Sense, the Author of several good Plays, Mr. Vanbrugh.
>
> Sullen. Ay, now you have touch'd Olympus: He is indeed all that we can say.[1]

In A Comparison Between the Two Stages, (1702), Charles Gildon shows himself to be a neo-classical critic clearly in favour of the reformation of the stage. He voices a preference for a definitely moralistic type of drama, and invokes neo-classical dogma to defend that preference. It is all the more surprising, especially in the light of more modern criticism of the plays, to find that, even allowing for the neo-classical bias, he treats Vanbrugh as one of the foremost playwrights of his day. For apart from the intelligent and enlightened comments of Mueschke and Fleisher[2], writing in the early 1930's, who were the first to realise what might almost be called the social-realist elements in his work, the critics have been severe to Vanbrugh. He has suffered for a number of reasons: the biographical approach begun by Colley Cibber has persisted, and obscures much that is worthwhile in Bonamy Dobree's remarks; Jeremy Collier's attack and the perennial difficulty that arises when moral judgements are called for continue to plague all but the most objective critics. The criticism of Hazlitt, or Leigh Hunt, comparing Vanbrugh with other Restoration dramatists, fails precisely because it compares him with the wrong figures and thus expects from him the type of drama that he did not intend to write. Vanbrugh is often neglected because he does not fit conveniently into a category which includes Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve. In this chapter I propose to assess some of the more outspoken of Vanbrugh's few critics: not only does this put the plays into critical perspective, but it serves as a sound basis for my own remarks that follow.

The fairly common assumption that Vanbrugh is a second-class writer may perhaps stem from Colley Cibber's comments in the Apology for his Life (1742)[3]. The impression given of him as an "agreable author" whose pen "is not to be a little admir'd, for its spirit, ease and readiness in producing plays so fast, upon the neck of one another" and whose "most entertaining scenes seem'd to be no more than his common

1. Gildon, A Comparison Between the Two Stages, 95.
2. Mueschke and Fleisher, "A Re-Evaluation of Vanbrugh", PMLA, XLIX, 1934, 848-89
3. Colley Cibber, An Apology for his Life, 113-115.

conversation committed to paper", throws more light on Vanbrugh's personality than his works. That he was highly regarded for his wit and good humour is indicated many times in the literature of the period. This stanza by Rowe is one of the more glowing examples:

> I'm in with captain Vanbrugh at the present,
> A most sweet natur'd gentleman, and pleasant;
> He writes your comedies, draws schemes, and models,
> And builds duke's houses upon very odd hills:
> For him, so much I dote on him, that I
> If I were sure to go to Heaven, would die.[1]

Yet to allow such information on his character to colour critical analysis of his works seems to me to be a grave error. Colley Cibber's comments do just this. Speaking of Vanbrugh's "wit and humour" he continues:

> . . . may it not be more laudable to raise an estate (whether in wealth or fame) by pains, and honest industry than to be born to it? Yet, if his scenes really were, as to me they always seem'd, delightful, are they not, thus, expeditiously written, the more surprising? Let the wit and merit of them then, be weigh'd by wiser critics than I pretend to be. But no wonder, while his conceptions were so full of life and humour, his muse should sometimes be too warm to wait the slow pace of judgement, or to endure the drudgery of forming a regular fable to them.[2]

The cumulative effect of such criticism is to accept Vanbrugh to be an entertaining writer but a shallow one, a wit with very little substance in his plays.

Alexander Pope comes to just such a conclusion when dealing with the state of comedy in the 1730's. His concern to produce neat, polished and harmonious style leads him to write "How Van wants grace, who never wanted wit!"[3], and Vanbrugh is elegantly assessed for a posterity unmindful of Pope's own particular critical dogmas. Yet such a comment is in part responsible for later criticism. Cibber, working within a "sentimental" moralistic framework sets a precedent for criticism of the "no moral purpose/superficial wit" school; Pope, with his generalised concepts of decorum and his lack of concern for

1. Quoted by Harris, Sir John Vanbrugh, 26.
2. Colley Cibber, An Apology for his Life, 115.
3. Pope, Imitations of Horace, II, 1.

precise literary criticism, does the same for those who cannot appreciate the conscious subtleties of Vanbrugh's style, and endorses the general drift of Cibber's appraisal with his depiction of Vanbrugh as "the most easy, careless writer and companion in the world . . . who wrote and built just as his fancy led him, or as those he built for and wrote for directed him".

By the middle of the eighteenth century changing criteria of literary excellence had relegated Vanbrugh to a place in the second rank. A trend would seem to have been established, a trend which gave little support for Gilden's remarks quoted above, or for Giles Jacob who, in 1719, besides acknowledging that Vanbrugh " . . . has a great deal of Wit in all his Performances, and shows a very great sprightliness of Conversation", goes on to say that "His Dialogue is extremely easy, and well turn'd, and I may venture to say, that this Gentleman and Mr. Congreve have justly gained the Preference of all our Modern Writers of Comedy."[1] Surely high praise indeed!

While Pope and especially Colley Cibber must certainly take part of the blame for misrepresenting Vanbrugh's plays with their insistence on his personal qualities, it is to Jeremy Collier that we must look for the most harmful and at the same time influential criticism. The mainly irrelevant zeal of his book, aggressively entitled A Short View of the Immorality and Prophaneness of the English Stage: Together with the Sense of Antiquity upon this Argument has dominated over two and a half centuries of criticism of Restoration comedy. Vanbrugh falls into especial disrepute in that Collier uses him, with Congreve, as a typical example of the lewd playwright of the period. I shall deal more fully with Collier and his censures in Chapter Three, but at this point the crux of the argument will suffice. In answer to the playwrights' view that they were holding a mirror up to vice and folly in order to expose them, Collier has this to say:

> Take them at the best, and they do no more than expose a little Humour, and Formality. But then, as the Matter is managed, the Correction is much worse than the Fault . . . It cherishes those Passions and rewards those Vices, which 'tis the business of Reason to discountenance.[2]

1. Jacob, The Poetical Register, 262.
2. Collier, A Short View of the Immorality and Prophaneness of the English Stage: Together with the Sense of Antiquity upon this Argument, 286-7.

In other words these plays encouraged vice because vicious characters appear to be rewarded in them. This "egregious jackass", as Lytton Strachey calls him, makes the cardinal error of assuming that any opinion held by any character in a play is automatically that of the author himself, and whilst ostensibly working from a pseudo-religious moral platform is in effect using neo-classical criteria, the Rules which stem from Aristotle, Rapin, Boileau and Dryden rather than the Bible and Church Fathers. Collier's eventual aim, as appears in the later sections of his work, was complete prohibition of the theatre. That Congreve and Vanbrugh were chosen to illustrate his theories, is, I believe, significant solely insofar as they were the most popular playwrights when Collier was writing. Many other authors engaged in far more lascivious scenes and dialogue than these two; the works of Aphra Behn are an excellent example. Yet in Cibber's comments quoted above, and in most other critics we see the same strictures passed on the moral worth of Vanbrugh's plays. Theophilus Cibber's compilation in 1753 endorses his father's view of Vanbrugh, and records opinions of the "looseness of the scenes" and the "unguarded freedom of the dialect" in The Relapse and shows that The Provok'd Wife was considered a "loose performance"[1]. The editor of Biographia Dramatica (1782) summarises the situation:

> (Vanbrugh and Congreve) gave new life to the English stage, and restored it to reputation, when it had, in reality, been sinking for some time. It would, however, have been more to their credit, if while they exerted their wit upon this occasion, they had preserved it pure and unmixed with that obscenity and licentiousness which, while it pleased, tended to corrupt the audience.[2]

It is to the nineteenth century that we owe the first real attempts at objective criticism of Vanbrugh's plays. William Hazlitt, in his Lectures on the English Comic Writers (1819), abandoned the method of broad generalisation and discussed the works of Wycherley, Congreve and Vanbrugh play by play, with an intelligence and restraint which are as valuable as they are refreshing. Vanbrugh is treated as

1. Theophilus Cibber, The Lives of the Poets, IV, 100-101.
2. Baker, Biographia Dramatica, 36 .

a part of the mainstream of Restoration comedy although Hazlitt succumbs to the temptation of analysis which compares him with other dramatists, thus moving towards those early twentieth century critics who erect a standard of critical values from the works of Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve and assess all other dramatists from it - invariably to the detriment of Vanbrugh who, as we shall see, works from a different viewpoint. Comparative criticism certainly has its place: much can be gained from a knowledge of Vanbrugh's contemporaries. But while this academic approach is valuable, we should beware of trying to make Vanbrugh conform to the wrong pattern; although he certainly uses high Restoration material he is working within the sentimental terms of Cibber and Farquhar, and it is the basic flaw in the criticism of Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt that they fail to realise this.

I am concerned in this thesis to work closely with the plays of Vanbrugh and keep comparison to a minimum. For plays are meant for actual performance and while a wealth of detail on the broad themes of a period have useful application, a director is necessarily limited in the amount of derived information he can convey to an audience. I prefer to show the value of Vanbrugh's plays intrinsically, rather than try to put them into a category of drama which is itself very difficult to define, and which is quite beyond the scope of this study.

To Hazlitt Vanbrugh "holds his own with the best", although he "has none of Congreve's graceful refinement, and as little of Wycherley's serious manner and studied insight into the springs of character".[1] Hazlitt still follows Cibber in his basic theme. Vanbrugh "has more nature than art: what he does best, he does because he cannot help it"; and the emphasis is placed on theatricality or entertainment value: "He has a masterly eye to the advantages which certain accidental situations of character present to him on the spot, and he executes the most difficult and rapid theatrical movements at a moment's warning".[2] That Hazlitt should concentrate on theatricality at all is a very large point in his favour; so often are we confronted with pedantic academia obscuring the life of a play with critiques which forget that drama is primarily a medium for public entertainment.

1. Hazlitt, Lectures on the English Comic Writers, 79.
2. Hazlitt, Lectures on the English Comic Writers, 79.

Like Collier, Hazlitt is concerned with the bawdy aspects of the plays. Vanbrugh "could not do without the taint of grossness and licentiousness"[1]; "The author's morality . . . sits very loose upon him".[2]. This in fact denies the theory of comedy which holds the mirror up to folly, and Vanbrugh himself makes plain that he follows such a concept:

> The Stage is a Glass for the World to view itself in; People ought therefore to see themselves as they are; if it makes their Faces too Fair, they won't know they are Dirty, and by consequence will neglect to wash 'em. (I.206).

This is obvious testimony to some measure of moral purpose in Vanbrugh's plays, and that it is so often ignored is less for critical than psychological and social reasons. Collier's success and the rise of "sentimental" drama embodying his basic faith in the rewards and punishments scheme stems from a basic need in society for reassurance. For if the stage is the mirror of life and a continual picture of virtue triumphant and vice defeated is displayed, then the ultimate end is that the audiences will believe in their minds what their day to day experience tells them not to believe. The main implication of the rewards and punishments scheme is that there is a Divine Providence ordering the world making the good prosper and the evil perish, and as it were keeping a tight rein on human existence. However, the political and intellectual climate of this period hardly seemed to support such a view. Obviously by 1695, when Vanbrugh seems to have started writing for the stage, the close and comforting Elizabethan concept of the universe had been almost wholly superceded. Empirical scientific discovery, The Royal Society, the thinking of Descartes and Hobbes among others were but a few of the contributing factors. The Great Chain of Being had provided an order and stability which in effect supported and endorsed the existing semi-feudal social order; it was of politico-economic as much as religious value. However, the trial and execution of Charles I did not bring about a universal collapse of nature; instead it stood as a vivid symbol of profound change - not only in the social system as a whole, but in man's attitude to individual experience. For as soon as the feudal conception of society dis-

1. Hazlitt, Lectures on the English Comic Writers, 84.
2. Hazlitt, Lectures on the English Comic Writers, 81.

integrated, man was necessarily isolated within the natural order of things; the Great Chain of Being no longer held him within a rigidly defined pattern of the universe. He had to make up his own mind. In addition, the scientific tradition of sensory scepticism was linked coincidentally with Cartesian science and its separation of appearance and reality which was so dangerous to religion. Professor Douglas Bush perhaps rather too neatly stresses the resulting divorce of faith from reason, but his comments are germane to assessing the inadequacies of Vanbrugh's critics. He shows the fusion of Christian faith and reason which was the humanistic tradition of the Renaissance split into two quite different positions: a Cavalier rationalism, sceptical, naturalistic, scientific and thus anti-Christian, and a Puritan anti-rational fideism.[1] Vanbrugh would appear to be writing within the first of these positions and Collier within the second.

It is surprising therefore to find that Hazlitt has anything sympathetic to say for Vanbrugh if we realise how the controversy over moral value moved from a critical to a quasi-religious basis. And that his comments on the moral aspects of the play are at least restrained is a very large point in his favour, although no assessment can be wholly useful unless it attempts to come to terms with the problem rather than ignores it. Hazlitt has the good sense not to follow Collier, but fails in that he attempts to find an alternative approach to the moral question thus expending his critical energies on enlightening yet less important points. Charles Lamb is a good example of just such an approach. In 1823 he published in the first series of Elia his famous essay "On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century", embodying the then radical suggestion that these plays were a world to which the ordinary moral reactions of the audience ought not to apply.[2] Finding the plays lacking in moral relevance, he inevitably focuses his attention on their more trivial aspects.

Collier was correct in his insistence on treating the moral aspects in Vanbrugh's plays, although his ultimate aim of prohibiting all forms of dramatic performance gives his criticism limited value.

1. Bush, The Renaissance and English Humanism, 54-55, 85-86.
2. Works of Charles and Mary Lamb, II, 141-147.

Writing in 1840, Leigh Hunt returns to the question of morality, but deals with it in a far more sympathetic fashion than Collier. He is perhaps the first critic to recognise that there is a moral value of a positive kind as well as fine characterisation and "natural" style in the plays. He is also responsible for an edition of the plays and a biographical notice, The Dramatic Works of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh and Farquhar, and I feel that the work that he has done in collecting material for these two is reflected in his criticism. The biographical study is sound, and obviously provides more than the backbone for Mr. Bobree's later study, Essays in Biography. The perceptive comments on Colley Cibber leave us in no doubt where Hunt's sympathies lie. His apology for passing over The Provok'd Wife provides an excellent example of his objectivity:

> We find we have passed over The Provok'd Wife, which, to say the truth, is a play more true than pleasant; and it is not so much needed as it was in Vanbrugh's day, when sottishness had not become infamous among decent people. So long do the vices of the stronger sex contrive to have themselves taken, if not for virtues, at least for manly privilege![1]

Here is implicit recognition of the moral function which Vanbrugh himself acknowledges coupled with a perfectly valid judgement on why the play should not be as congenial to audiences in 1840. Having singled out for especial commendation the passage in The Provok'd Wife (V.4) between Constant and Heartfree on true love, he continues:

> But the old question may here be asked, "What signify one or two passages of this sort when all the rest is so different?" To which it should long ago have been answered, everything; when the difference is more in appearance than reality, and fighting the battles of virtue itself by unmasking the pretenders to it.[2]

This is a really significant statement, for not only does the appearance and reality idea go straight to the centre of Vanbrugh's art, as I hope to show later, but it appreciates the relativity of nearly all

1. Swaen, Sir John Vanbrugh, 36.
2. Swaen, Sir John Vanbrugh, 37.

critical statements where moral judgements are concerned. It was Hunt's grave misfortune - as indeed it was for all criticism of Restoration comedy - that in January 1841, his book was reviewed by Macaulay. This champion of nineteenth century mores adopted an attitude which is in effect a direct repetition of Jeremy Collier for whom he had nothing but praise.

Macaulay's crushing style, embodying all that is wholly reactionary, and his ad hominem attacks on the playwrights themselves seemed to inhibit any further appraisals until John Palmer's historic The Comedy of Manners of 1913.

Palmer makes a conscious distinction between "comedy of morals" and what has continued to be called "comedy of manners". His answer to Macaulay is the uncompromising assertion: "The excellence of Restoration comedy is, in fact, directly due to the honest fidelity with which it reflects the spirit of an intensely interesting phase of our social history." The answer to the "morals" critics is at first sight very reasonable:

> Art is not primarily concerned with morality, but morality is the stuff of the poet's art. The artist is dealing with emotions and conduct which in the world whence he draws his material are determined by positive morality. Morality is his subject, though it is not his object.
>
> There is a higher morality than that of Jeremy Collier . . . and without in the least circumscribing the sphere of the artist one may confidently say that the highest art has invariably expressed the highest morality.[1]

Yet the morals/manners dichotomy, while it raised a valid critical point at reopened the way for treatment of Restoration comedy did as much harm as good. For not only did it stress the view that "manners are the principal theme", a view which with one exception[2] has held good until the 1950's, but it also took as its paradigm the comedies of Congreve. The resulting tendency thus became to measure the value of Restoration dramatists' work relatively and not intrinsically - to the complete detriment of Vanbrugh. Because he does not conform to

1. Palmer, The Comedy of Manners, 22, 289, 290.
2. Mueschke and Fleisher, "A Re-evaluation of Vanbrugh", PMLA, XLIX (1934), 848-889.

the Palmer conceived Congrevian pattern he is eternally damned:

> Vanbrugh (and Farquhar) tried to turn the comedy of manners into something entirely different without in the least realising what they were about. They tried to introduce morality and sentiment into a comedy which was non-moral and an artificial pageant of agreable attitudes.[1]

This is as much a misrepresentation of Congreve as it is of Vanbrugh, yet it is at least significant that Palmer recognises the moral quality of Vanbrugh's work even though it does not fit into his pattern. However, he practises an amazing reductio ad absurdum when he concludes that "Vanbrugh . . . killed comedy in England".[2] His implication that Vanbrugh is responsible for altering the stream of English comedy is certainly correct, but this is a virtue and not a vice. Having successfully by-passed the vexing question of morals Palmer does not have a good word for Vanbrugh:

> Vanbrugh (and Farquhar) . . . accepted a form which had perfectly served the purpose of their predecessors and turned it to purposes directly antithetical and destructive of its spirit . . . (They) introduced into the ingenious hazards of Congreve's mechanical plots a vein of sentimental and moral reflection that turned Congreve's beautiful puppets into tiresome and extremely crude imitations of the English taxpayer.[3]

He recognises that Vanbrugh takes typical Restoration material and makes of it something peculiarly his own, but - sadly for Vanbrugh's reputation - sees this as a fault. And then, wholly missing the point, secure as he feels with his tight critical theory, he reverts to criticism worthy of Collier: "Vanbrugh's indecencies are Aphrodisiac."[4] What really shows in Palmer's work is his inability to come to terms with Vanbrugh; this becomes obvious when we notice how his normally controlled style becomes far more loose and metaphorical when dealing with the dramatist.

Dobree follows Palmer's theory of manners, so it is no surprise that he denotes Vanbrugh to the second rank while at the same time

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1. Palmer, Comedy, 39-40.
2. Palmer, Comedy, 43.
3. Palmer, Comedy, 48-49.
4. Palmer, Comedy, 53.

making some worthwhile points. His concern for biography, however, leads him to revert to the kind of criticism stemming from Cibber and Pope, which I outlined above. Vanbrugh was "above all things a man of the world, but a very simple and honest man of the world who did things as they came to his hand to do"; "He probably took his comedies no more seriously or strenuously than he took life: both for him were a matter of easy adaptation, a little rough and tumble, and a great deal of good luck."[1] Dobree gets carried away by his biographical interest to the detriment of his critical judgement[2], and this leads him to the absurdity of "(Vanbrugh) was too good-natured for critical comedy",[3] Hardly a sensitive appraisal; or the patronisingly complacent: "We shall in vain look for the rigour of a Dryden or the exquisiteness of a Congreve, but for a breath of a good-humoured and spacious England that we hope will never die, we may settle ourselves in our chairs with a book of Vanbrugh's letter or plays."[4] Such final and confident criticism claims to be definitive, and stems mainly from the idea that Congreve's plays are the epitome of Restoration comedy, of polished wit and social vitality in the later seventeenth century:

> Vanbrugh had one valuable requisite of the writer of critical comedy, a contempt for all cant and humbug; but he failed to be anything of a poet because he had no particular vision, and thus his plays can add nothing to our knowledge of life, or to our aesthetic experience.[5]

The moral purpose is once again recognised to exist, but the full import is ignored. Like Hazlitt, Dobree concentrates on theatricality, "In all his works it is the plot that matters, and he put the moral second."[6] This totally ignores what seems to me the crux of Vanbrugh's technique as he explains it in the Short Vindication: "I believe I could show, that the chief entertainment as well as the Moral, lies much more in the Characters and the Dialogue, than in the Business and the Event".[7] If, as I believe, this is so, then it is highly significant that so much

1. Dobree, Restoration Comedy, 151-152.
2. Essays in Biography, passim.
3. Dobree, Restoration Comedy, 157.
4. Dobree, The Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, I, xi.
5. Dobree, Restoration Comedy, 151-152.
6. Dobree, Restoration Comedy, 152.
7. Dobree, The Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, I, 209.

emphasis has been placed on the fluidity of his dialogue. Dobree continues from Cibber in questioning the value of the opinion held by the actors that Vanbrugh's lines are easy to remember: "What is so easy to learn may not be worth the learning", and criticises a passage between Amanda and Berinthea (The Relapse II.i.p.46) as "wretched either as life or as art".[1] This is a direct result of comparison with Congreve and can safely be dismissed as such. Discussing technique Dobree says:

> Indeed the only technique worth bothering about is that which concerns the writers inner materials, his intuitions, his general apperceptions; we wish to know what these are, and why the writer chose certain aspects of the life about him to symbolise these, and how he arranged them. Vanbrugh appears to have had none: it is this which marks him out from Wycherley and Congreve.[2]

And again "Vanbrugh was in no grand sense a thinker, and he had nothing original to say".[3] It is a great pity that Dobree is blinded to the depth of much of the material he treats; had he not concentrated on a comparative approach, his basic attitude as quoted above (2) would have rendered his comment far more valuable than in fact they are. As it now stands Dobree's greatest contribution is undoubtedly the scholarly edition of Vanbrugh's plays which still remains the standard text.

This edition called forth a number of reviews which are significant mainly insofar as they endorse Dobree or carry his hostile criticisms yet further. Raymond Mortimer[4] follows Palmer: "Miss Hoydon is worthy of Wycherley, Lady Brute of Congreve, but never Congreve at his best"., "Vanbrugh is absurdly simpliste in his Mohock view of life". Mario Praz[5] is equally bored: ". . . the fact remains that little else can be derived from those plays beyond a quarter of an hour of bland amusement", "Bonamy Dobree . . . seems to have been perfectly aware of the relative importance of his author". Edward Shanks[6] agrees: "Fortunately neither Mr. Dobree nor Mr. Webb (who edited the letters in Vo. IV), shows the slightest inclination to lose his head

1. Dobree, Restoration Comedy, 156.
2. Dobree, The Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, I, xxv.
3. Dobree, The Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, I, xxvi.
4. Mortimer, "Vanbrugh", Nation and Athenaeum, April 14, 1928.
5. Praz, "A Review of the Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh", Criterion, September 1928.
6. Shanks, "Sir John Vanbrugh", Saturday Review, March 3, 1928.

over Vanbrugh . . . . they do not force us . . . to put up with eulogies we could not attempt to accept". And he continues with the by now familiar cry: "One values Sir John Vanbrugh more than anything he ever wrote".

There is, however, one point which nearly all critics have agreed upon and that is the peculiarly striking quality of Lord Foppington. Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt and Dobree recognise the mastery of this characterisation, but Dobree improves on the other two when he indicates the man behind the fop: ". . at bottom he is a very sound man of business". The anonymous reviewer of Dobree's edition for The Times Literary Supplement[1] goes one stage further than this and as such makes a major contribution to Vanbrugh criticism: "Such a character as Lord Foppington betrays Vanbrugh's individuality: in that he seems to have been something of a poser, and to have deliberately assumed his character because it paid. But his character as a poser is scarcely worked out; he is almost always a plain fop, and it is only at moments that the shrewd observer allows a little of his observation, not the fairly common observation of manners and customs of the time, but the more interesting observation of more subtle curiosities of character, to appear in the interstices of an ordinary and academic play. Vanbrugh deals in humours like many other playwrights of his time, but he is interested to see what is the root of these humours and their cause"[1]. He continues: "We must not speak of Vanbrugh's realism, for that, as Mr. Dobree says, is a purely relative term; but in that he was unwilling to take humours at their face value he is different from many of his contemporaries". Whilst denying the value of a realist approach to Vanbrugh, nonetheless these comments indicate a depth to at least one of his plays which had not previously been recognised. The same reviewer seems a little uncertain when he comes to assess the so-called translations. Whereas most previous opinion had skipped over the translations (Dobree simply says that they are "derivative"), this reviewer notes

1. "Vanbrugh's Plays and Letters", Times Literary Supplement, April 19, 1928.

rather uncertainly: "at any rate there are moments when he seems at home in his writing, when he is speaking of country people, of servants, or of his curious and misguided, but, it would seem, not wholly unreasonable fops and fine ladies." Rene Hague[1], while in fact seeing Vanbrugh's translations as evidence of paucity of imagination, touches on a very significant topic: "Except in The Mistake (from Moliere's Le Dépit Amoureux) in which his changes were slight, he either altered, added or omitted, or did all three, according to his inclination". These two last views point towards aspects of Vanbrugh's art which are vitally important to an understanding of his purpose. It is the mistaken assessment of his adaptations as "bad translations" which has been mainly responsible for their neglect; it seems to me that no exhaustive treatment of Vanbrugh should fail to give as much attention to the adaptations as it does to his other plays.

Perhaps mention should be made of three books which contributed to the development of Vanbrugh criticism, and which occurred between Dobree's Restoration Comedy (1924) and his Collected Works of Sir John Vanbrugh (1927). Joseph Wood Krutch's influential Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration (1924) is significant not only for the refreshing contrast it makes with the straight comedy of manners school, but for his wide terms of reference and ability to approach his material from an objective point of view. His analyses of the dramatic scene at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries are useful in that he is not afraid to return to the moral value question. He states quite firmly his belief that "Vanbrugh does indeed move with the reform stream", and that "here again Collier made a mistake in choosing The Relapse, rather than some less equivocal comedy for his attack".[2] He also emphasises that one can indicate a moral direction without necessarily rewarding the good and punishing the bad, and altogether his comments tend to a realistic account of Vanbrugh's plays.[3] Henry Ten Eyck Perry has limited value, for his theory of "The Comic

1. Hague, "Sir John Vanbrugh", The London Mercury, August 1928, 395-402.
2. Krutch, Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration, 112.
3. Krutch, Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration, passim, 112-3.

Spirit" is a generally unsuccessful attempt to systematise comedy as a "philosophical attitude towards laughter"[1] which few critics have accomplished successfully; however, the detailed attention that he gave to Vanbrugh is at least an indication of the important place Perry feels he holds. And his treatment of the adaptations went some way towards lifting them from the obscurity they seemed destined to lie in. Perry deserves mention for compared with the attention given to Wycherley and Congreve, the most noticeable thing about Vanbrugh criticism is that there is so little of it. Miss Kathleen M. Lynch's The Social Mode of Restoration Comedy, 1927, has directed critics towards the values of the comedies and is the complete answer to Palmer and Dobree. It shows the comedies to be not simply an exposition of manners but a fusion of this précieuse tradition of conduct with Jonsonian realism, and like Krutch it recognises the objectivity of authors towards their material by showing that they do not unhesitatingly approve of their heroes and heroines. Whether Miss Lynch felt that such an approach could not meaningfully be applied to Vanbrugh or whether she felt his plays did not merit attention anyway, I cannot tell. Unfortunately she did not see fit to include him in her study and Vanbrugh's claim to be treated in the same breath as the so-called major Restoration dramatists has been practically ignored from that time.

There is one exception to this sad deficiency. Paul Mueschke and Jeannette Fleisher writing in PMLA[2] in 1934 produced what is still the most detailed and incisive appreciation of Vanbrugh's aims and achievement. They place Vanbrugh in the transition period between the comedy of manners of Congreve and Wycherley and the sentimental drama of the early eighteenth century, and point out the fallacy of attempting to assess him under either of these two headings. They then go on to point out the features of his plays which seem peculiar to him while at the same time showing his connection with Farquhar. The scope of their article covers only what are mainly considered his best plays, The Relapse, The Provok'd Wife, and A Journey to London; and therefore

1. Perry, The Comic Spirit in Restoration Drama, 1.
2. Mueschke and Fleisher, PMLA, XLIX, 1934, 848-889.

only touches on part of his total viewpoint. But the aspects that they do mention are vital to the whole Vanbrugh oeuvre. Working from a comparison of The Relapse with the obviously sentimental Love's Last Shift of Colley Cibber which inspired it, they show how Tom Fashion's conscience differs from the usual Restoration young man of the world and continue by contrasting Vanbrugh's sympathy against the aloofness of the comedy of manners. In The Relapse the interest is shown to be an almost psychological one in the predicament of the younger brother and marital infidelity. Previously marital infidelity and incompatibility were incidental; Vanbrugh uses them as a basic point of the plot. Briefly their further ideas can be summarised as follows. Following the technique of Etherege, Vanbrugh keeps his plots simple (quite unlike those of Congreve and Wycherley); the distinction between true and false wits disappears and the fops are modified into far more "human" figures; the normal sexual antagonism between the sexes now occurs as much between characters of the same sex; and most important of all, the force of the plays is seen to be derived from the persistent relation of ideas to the social life of the period. Vanbrugh is shown to treat his material in a particularly unique fashion - he is neither wholly comic nor wholly sentimental but works from a rational and sympathetic point of view. He presents a realistic problem situation within a comedy of manners framework, and "contributes to what might have developed into a new type of critical drama, had not the forces of sentimentalism prevailed".[1] This positive recognition of a guiding principle is particularly significant and I shall refer to it later, for it acknowledges a conscious direction in Vanbrugh's work that has never been fully realised. It seems high time that the balance be put straight.

1. Huescbke and Fleisher, PMLA, XLIX, 1934, 889.

CHAPTER TWO

The scope of this thesis is necessarily confined to a consideration of the internal merits of Sir John Vanbrugh's plays. As I have shown, he has suffered above all from attempts to place him within a framework of preconceived notions of what Restoration comedy is - or should be. I propose therefore to treat the plays individually and in chronological order of performance in the hope that any merits that they have will naturally appear from the material itself. It would perhaps be more satisfactory for a just appraisal if the dates of composition could be verified. But what correspondence of Vanbrugh we have pertains mainly to his social life and architecture[1], and Colley Cibber's account of the earlier plays[2] is hardly sufficient authority for close dating.

The Relapse was first performed at Drury Lane in December 1697[3], and is described on the title page as "Being the Sequel of The Fool in Fashion", Colley Cibber's first play, produced in January of 1695/6 also at Drury Lane. Significantly enough, it was played again in 1696[4], in each case with Cibber himself playing Sir Novelty Fashion, and it is fair to assume therefore that it would have been familiar to Vanbrugh's audience. The most significant feature of Cibber's play is the ending. Loveless, who for the better part of the action is almost the anti-hero, "after eight or ten years absence" from his wife Amanda, is tricked into seducing her. Amanda has preserved her virtue while her husband has been away, and with true wifely submission reveals her identity to him, pure and unsullied. Her noble and forgiving nature combined with "the full possession of two thousand pounds a year", conveniently left by her uncle, Sir William Wealthy, effect a vast transformation on Loveless:

> Oh, thou hast rous'd me from my deep Lethargy of Vice!
> For hitherto my Soul has been enslav'd to loose Desires,
> to vain deluding Follies, and shadows of substantial
> bliss: but now I wake with joy to find my Rapture Real ...
> Thus let me kneel and pay my thanks to her, whose conquering Virtue has at last subdued me.[5]

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1. Webb, The Collected Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, IV.
2. Colley Cibber, An Apology for his Life, 113-115.
3. Although Nicoll, A History of English Drama 1660-1900, I, 436, gives November.
4. Ibid., 379.
5. Colley Cibber, Love's Last Shift, 92.

This wooden declamation is followed by Loveless' delivery of this revealing couplet as he goes off:

> 'Twas heedless Fancy first, that made me stay
> But Reason now breaks forth, and lights me on my way.[1]

The linking of Virtue with Reason indicates the moral center of the play. Vice is shown the error of its ways by the shining example of Virtue which is consequently rewarded. All live happily ever after - and so will the audience if they follow their Reason and not their Fancy. All of Loveless' profligate life has been a shadow of substantial bliss, an appearance of happiness: the reality of life lies in virtue and the consequent observance of the laws of society which are themselves indirectly the laws of God. The reward for chastity is happiness, the punishment for adultery is misery. However, if we examine these premises closely in the light of the text, a rather different picture emerges. Loveless had returned to London as he told Worthy in Act I (p.3) to "persuade Sir Will. Wisewood (if he be alive) to whom I mortgaged my estate, to let me have Five hundred pounds more upon it, or else to get some honest Friend to redeem the Mortgage, and share the overplus!" His Reason may be moved by Amanda's virtue but it cannot be wholly blind to the economic advantages accrueing to him.

In terms of an imposed moral this may well be a splendid play; but the denouement is certainly at odds with the initial tone of the action where Cibber instills some degree of realism into his characters. He himself admits that it was written mainly to provide a role in which he could do justice to his talents - Sir Novelty Fashion would, I suppose, have been a more striking figure than the dialogue indicates, simply due to the entertaining business Cibber would have constructed around him - we should not therefore look for subtleties which are not intended. However, the play does stand very obviously at the beginning of a trend in drama which found its high point in the emnervating sentimentalism of Steele and Addison. That the total and unlikely reformation of

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1. Colley Cibber, Love's Last Shift, 93.

Loveless was, to say the least, unsatisfying to Vanbrugh comes out plainly from his remarks on the genesis of The Relapse:

> I observ'd in a Play, called Love's Last Shift, or the Fool in Fashion, a Debauchee pay so dear for his Lewedness, and his Folly, as from a plentiful Fortune, and a Creditable Establishment in the World, to be reduc'd by his Extravagance to want even the Common Supports of Life.
>
> In this Distress, Providence (I ask Mr. Collier's pardon for using the word) by an unexpected turn in his favour, restores him to Peace and Plenty: And there is that in the manner of doing it, and the Instrument that brings it to pass, as must necessarily give him the most sensible View, both of his Misery past, from the Looseness of his Life; and his Happiness to come, in the Reform of it. In the close of the Play, he's left thoroughly convinc'd it must therefore be done, and as fully determin'd to do it.
>
> For my part, I thought him so undisputably in the right; and he appear'd to me to be got into so agreeable a Tract of Life, that I often took a pleasure to indulge a musing Fancy, and suppose myself in his place. The Happiness I saw him possest of, I lookt upon as a Jewel of a very great worth, which naturally lead me to the fear of losing it; I therefore consider'd by what Enemies 'twas most likely to be attack'd, and that directed me in the Plan of the Works that were most probable to defend it. I saw but one danger in Solitude and Retirement, and I saw a thousand in the bustle of the World; I therefore in a moment determin'd for the Countrey, and supposed Loveless and Amanda gone out of town. (I, 210-211).

These urbane and apparently ingenuous comments conceal an ironic appreciation of Cibber's play which in fact damns as it praises. This is surely supported by Vanbrugh's very individual treatment of the basic material. I believe that Vanbrugh's irony has never been fully appreciated, and that recognition of it throws all his works into an entirely new light.

The Relapse contains two main plots: one the sequel to the Loveless-Amanda story, the other an original addition of Vanbrugh. In the first, Amanda and Loveless come to town; Loveless falls for a belle at the playhouse, Berinthea, who coincidentally happens to be a close friend of Amanda; Loveless finally manages to seduce her and

at the same time Loveless' former drinking friend, Worthy, attempts with Berinthea's help, to seduce Amanda, whose virtue get again saves her from falling. In the second plot Young Tom Fashion comes home from abroad, having spent his younger brother's portion, as does Loveless in Cibber's play: he applies to his wealthy elder brother, the newly created Lord Foppington, but fails to get funds from him. Accordingly he masquerades as his brother and with the aid of Coupler, a dissolute arranger of matches, marries Hoyden, the country heiress designed for Lord Foppington. After a very close escape when Foppington arrives in person to claim his bride, and unaware of the clandestine marriage, marries Hoyden himself, the affair is resolved when the Parson who married both brothers to Hoyden is bribed to endorse the first marriage, and Foppington retires defeated. Vanbrugh thus retains four characters from the earlier play: Loveless, the reformed husband; Amanda, the wife, with an exalted sense of conventional virtue; Sir Novelty Fashion, now raised to the peerage as Baron of Foppington; and Worthy, whose contribution to the plot is radically altered. He becomes a gentleman of the town, attempting Amanda, not a benevolent elder brother who now becomes combined with the fop, Sir Novelty Fashion. Worthy is thus transferred to the Amanda-Loveless plot, and Tom Fashion created as the younger brother.

Mueschke and Fleisher[1] were the first to approach The Relapse from these two intelligent points: a) that the reformation of Loveless is quite untrue to previous character, and that Vanbrugh is anticipating in some respects the realism of Strinberg, Ibsen and Shaw, b) that his treatment of the plight of the younger brother draws attention to the actualities of a situation common until well into the eighteenth century. The younger brother was in many cases wholly dependent on his elder relation for economic support, unless he was prepared to degrade himself as a gentleman and work, which usually meant the army[2]. I am indebted to them for many of their comments on these themes, although I disagree with some of their conclusions.

The two main plots can conveniently be referred to as the Loveless-Berinthea, Worthy-Amanda seduction intrigue, and the Young Fashion-

1. Mueschke and Fleisher, "A Re-Evaluation of Vanbrugh", PMLA, 848-889.
2. N.B. Young Fashion and Lory, (I, 24).

Lord Foppington-Hoyden gulling intrigue. Lord Foppington himself acts as a unifying agent: in his acquaintance with all parties concerned, and in his actual physical presence both in London and at Sir Tunbelly Clumsy's country house. The significance of geographical location has never been considered in the plays of Vanbrugh, and I hope to consider this point below. Briefly, he is using situation and character common to Restoration comedy, but in a way peculiarly his own.

The structure and striking juxtaposition of the first two scenes of the play, quite apart from their subject matter, are an indication that Vanbrugh's concern is with something more than "manners". The first scene of any play is obviously of paramount importance in that it leads an audience into the action. As might be expected from a sequel to Cibber's play the scene opens with Loveless, and as befits his newfound domesticity, he is reading - not the diversion of your rake or beau, but of your steadied, reformed character. The reading habits of the fops are immortalized in Lord Foppington's dismay at Amanda's pretence to literary culture in Act II.i:

> ... to my mind the inside of a book, is to entertain oneself with the forc'd Product of another Man's Brain. Now I think a Man of Quality and Breeding may be much diverted by the Natural Sprauts of his own. (I.37).

Worthy has clearly renounced his former life: Vanbrugh uses the book to emphasise the point. Nor is it a light or bawdy story, but a serious work as we gather from the opening lines of the play:

> How true is that Philosophy, which says
> Our Heaven is seated in our minds. (I.19).

Worthy moves from the book to a general assessment of his present condition:

> Here ... in this little soft Retreat,
> My thoughts unbent from all the Cares of Life,
> Content with Fortune,
> Eas'd from the grating Duties of Dependence,
> From Envy free, Ambition underfoot,
> The raging Flame of wild destructive Lust
> Reduc'd to a warm pleasing Fire of lawful Love,
> My Life glides on, and all is well within. (I.19).

This Horatian picture of satisfaction is completed by the entry of Amanda, "the happy Cause of my Content". The dialogue between the two is more heightened declamation than intimate conjugal discourse and is significant for two reasons. First, Worthy's comments on Fortune provide a very nice contrast with those of Tom Fashion[1], their relative positions are thus established and they move in exactly opposite directions: Worthy away from security, from the reality of a secure position to the appearance of excitement that the town affords; Tom Fashion towards at least economic security. Secondly, the mode of speech of the two lovers is reminiscent of Cibber's style quoted above. It serves to emphasise the artificiality of Cibber's ending by parodying the earnest rhetoric of his expression. Loveless' visit to London on "indispensible" business is imminent, and as Amanda says: "I know you are a Man ... and I ... a Wife". (p.21). The reform of Loveless in Love's Last Shift seemed false, as I said above, insofar as a moral ending was imposed on the play. Now we have the first sign that the play will deal ostensibly with the stock situation of faithlessness in marriage so common to Restoration comedy. Vanbrugh's dissatisfaction with Cibber's resolution is indicated clearly by the abundant hyperbole and extravagant figures which both characters use at this point, and which in its woodenness, is totally at odds with the dialogue of the next scene. The very significance given to the town "that uneasie Theatre of Noise", "its false insinuating Pleasures", and to Loveless' protestations of dislike for it, culminating in "This Winter shall be the Fiery-Trial of my Virtue", indicate how precarious his position really is. The metaphor of his past life as "an old cast Mistress" who:

> ... has been so lavish of her Favours,
> She's now grown bankrupt of her Charms, (I.21)

completely sums up the reasons for his reformation. The old profligate life became bankrupt of its charms precisely when Loveless himself became bankrupt and could no longer join in the pleasures of the beau monde. The position of economic dependency is a major theme of

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1. Debrec, The Collected Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, I, 25.

The Relapse, and comes immediately to light in I.ii. Loveless and Amanda symbolically "Exeunt Hand in Hand" at the end of I.i., and we move to Whitehall, where Young Fashion and Lory are dealing with the Waterman.

The most striking contrast with the previous scene lies in the quality of the dialogue. From the studied, formalized speeches of Amanda and Loveless, we come face to face with reality:

> Y. Fash. Come, pay the Waterman, and take the Portmantle.
> Lory Faith, Sir, I think the Waterman had as good take the Portmantle and pay himself.
> Y.F. Why sure there's something left in't!
> L. But a solitary old Waistcoat, upon my Honour, Sir.
> Y.F. Why, what's become of the Blue Coat, Sirrah?
> L. Sir, 'twas eaten at Gravesend, the Reckoning came to Thirty Shillings, and your Privy Purse was worth but two Half-Crowns. (I.23).

Here is the plight of the Younger Brother strikingly portrayed in dramatic terms. Every item of value either sold or in bond, and the only hope of further funds lying in application to the Elder Brother for subsistence or the pursuit of an "honourable" career as an adventurer in the Army.

Young Fashion's unwillingness to approach his brother is born of first-hand knowledge of him, and we are thus prepared when he comes onstage. ("Y.F. My Annuity? 'Sdeath he's such a Dog, he would not give his Powder Puff to redeem my Soul". - where the scale of values of Lord Foppington's world is concisely indicated by the presidence of "Powder-Puff" over "Soul"). But more significant is that Vanbrugh gives Young Fashion a definite character of sturdy independence coupled with a sense of fair play. The situation then becomes one not so much of parasite and victim as we should expect in High Restoration drama, but of the obligations of kinship. Young Fashion may live beyond his means, but such extravagance pales beside the unbounded luxury and petulant self-indulgence of his brother, which we see in the dressing room scene which follows. Two speeches by Young Fashion summarize his predicament:

> Methinks, Sir, a Person of your Experience should have known that the strength of the Conscience proceeds from the weakness of the Purse. (I.24).

This could equally apply to Loveless too.

> 'Sdeath and Furies! Why was that Coxcomb thrust into the World before me? O Fortune - Fortune thou art a Bitch by Gad -. (I.25).

In the first of these speeches is oblique reference to the Loveless plot, and to Cibber's false morality. In the second is a summary of the Younger Brother's position, where it is chance and chance alone which determines the economic status of the individual and shallow buffoons are raised to exalted position by wealth alone. An ordered hierarchical community, itself part of a divinely ordered universe, may be a happy and convenient explanation of society for those who have, but for those who have not - and who have not by chance alone - our heaven cannot be seated in our minds, as Loveless so blithely states at the beginning of the play. Vanbrugh is dealing with basic problems of human life within the social environment of the late seventeenth century. His depiction of Young Fashion is interesting and unusual for the period - perhaps above all because he has our sympathy. And he has our sympathy not simply because he is in an unfortunate position, but because of his treatment of his elder brother. His self-respect makes any approach difficult to him: and his unwillingness to sue for redemption of his annuity is followed after the first rebuff by a second request for support before embarking on the "Fifteen Hundred Pound a year and a great Bag of Money" that goes with marriage to Hoyden. His final speech in Act I gives him a moral stature which stems from Vanbrugh's characterisation and not from an imposed trait:

> Y.F. No, my Conscience shan't starve me neither. But thus far I'll hearken to it; before I execute this Project.
> I'll try my Brother to the Bottom, I'll speak to him with the temper of a Philosopher, my Reasons (tho' they pass him home) shall yet be cloath'd with so much Modesty, not one of all the Truths they urge, shall be so naked to offend his Sight; if he has yet so much Humanity about him, as to assist me, (tho' with a moderate aid) I'll drop my Project at his Feet, and show him how I can - do for him, much more than what I ask, he'd do for me: This one Conclusive Tryal of him I resolve to make -
> Succeed or no, still Victory's my Lot,
> If I subdue his Heart, 'tis well, if not,
> I shall subdue my Conscience to my plot.
> (I.32)

Young Fashion shows that if "the strength of the Conscience proceeds from the weakness of the Purse", in this case it is stark necessity which forces his hand. It has been postulated that the post-Restoration growth of the middle classes with their predominantly merchantile and economic interests and conventionalised morality was perhaps the main reason for the growth of sentimental comedy. Certainly, as George Steiner has said of tragedy, certain realms of experience, including the treatment of "economic" themes, were treated in the novel[1]. Vanbrugh's dramatic treatment of such themes deserves wider recognition. With Young Fashion he deals in the same kind of predicament in many respects as Defoe professes to treat in Moll Flanders; the difference is that like Cibber, Farquhar and Steele, Defoe imposes the moralising upon his basic structure, whereas Vanbrugh - and this to me is one of the strongest points in assessing his stature as a dramatist - makes what moral matter there is in the play grow from the very center of his characters.

Young Fashion seeks to sway his brother "with the temper of a Philosopher", which is to say he hopes to show him the reasoning behind his requests. If Foppington were "reasonable", then he would see the justice of his brother's argument. But he lacks "reason", and on the contrary is wholly involved in the exercise of his "fancy"; in the same way Loveless to Amanda: "The Rock of Reason now supports my love" (p.20) but when he gets to London he too exercises his "fancy" at the playhouse. In both cases there is a breakdown in relationships, and it is this which connects the two plots of the play. Lord Foppington is the most "fanciful" character, so it is only to be expected that his presence should act as the link.

We first see Lord Foppington in Act I.iii; that is to say, directly after the bases have been established for the two main plots of the play. Vanbrugh is not nearly as haphazard in organising his material as his modest disclaimers would imply. At every opportunity

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1. George Steiner, The Death of Tragedy.

he denies thought and method for his work in order to break down the barriers which immediately arise when there is a lesson to be learned. It is a measure of his art that he has for so long been taken at face value. The part of Lord Foppington is the most entertaining of the play, both to actor and audience. Cibber was given the part, continuing his success as Sir Novelty Fashion in his own play, and his interpretation met with universal applause[1]. Young Fashion's final speech in Act I: "'Sdeath and Furies! Why was that Coxcomb thrust into the World before me? O Fortune - Fortune - thou art a Bitch by Gad -", is supported by the scene following, which brilliantly shows Foppington to be everything that his name implies. It is sheer luck that he was born the eldest son and thus heir to the family fortune. And the emphasis on the economic aspects of existence which is a part of Vanbrugh's theme, is given yet again by Foppington's cogitations on the Earldom he has just bought. The values of the beau monde are only economic:

> Well, 'tis an unspeakable pleasure to be a Man of Quality - Strike me dumb - My Lord - Your Lordship - My Lord Foppington - Ah! c'est quelque chose de Beau, que le Diable m'emporte - Why the Ladies were ready to powke at me, whilst I had nothing but Sir Novelty to recommend me to 'em - sure whilst I was but a Knight, I was a very nauseous fellow - Well, 'tis Ten Thausand pound well given - Stap my Vitals - " (I.25)

The fashionable oaths, the affected diction, the "courtly" French phrase, the fop's drawl have a cumulative effect which is as much out of touch with reality as the speeches of Loveless and Amanda at the beginning of the play. Inserting the starker material of scene ii between the artificial material of scenes i and iii serves to put all three into perspective.

Foppington's extravagance and panache are in every way amazing, and we cannot deny that his tremendous style makes him occasionally endearing. However, this should not blind us to the realities of his position. He spends ten thousand pounds on a knighthood which, debased from its original connotations of worth, generosity and honour, has now become a symbol of economic success, and serves predominantly

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1. Dobree, The Collected Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, I, 5.

as a means of approaching women of fashion. His elaborate attention to dress coupled with his petulant attitude to the outfitters around him are not only the perquisites of the man of fashion, the stock Restoration fop. They stand for the utter misuse of riches, and the arrogance which stems from misused position; and are in direct contrast with the apparently honest poverty of Young Fashion. When greeted by his brother after a considerable separation, Foppington is far more concerned with the "nauseous Packet" of his "Lac't Coat" than with his own flesh and blood. There is a complete breakdown in communication between the two brothers which stems not only from Foppington's total disinterest in anything but himself, but also from a social system which encourages a purely economic system of values. If, as Vanbrugh says of Sir John Erute, "... his Business throughout the Play is a visible Burlesque upon his Character" (I.207), then the same holds good for Lord Foppington with the added dimension of satire on a large and "prevailing" section of society. Vanbrugh is attacking the general through the individual.

The distance that the two brothers are apart, or more broadly the distance that misused wealth separates the social strata, becomes obvious in this revealing passage:

> Lord Fop. You'll excuse me brother. (Going
> Young Fash. Shall you be back at Dinner?
> Lord Fop. As Gad shal judge me, I can't tell; for 'tis passible I may dine with some of aur House at Lackets.
> Young Fash. Shall I meet you there? For I must needs talk with you.
> Lord Fop. That I'm afraid mayn't be so praper; far the Lards I commonly eat with, are a people of nice Conversation, and you know, Tam, your Education has been a little at large; but if you'll stay here, you'll find a family Dinner. Hey, Fellow! what is there for Dinner? There's Beef; I suppose my Brother will eat Beef. Dear Tam, I'm glad to see thee in England, stap my Vitals.
> (Exit with his Equipage) (I.28-9).

Supremacy in economic terms is converted to supremacy in everything, birth, education, dress, manners, conversation. Tom Fashion is to dine on beef, traditional solid English fare, whilst his brother is spending mightily at Locketts, where "you are so nicely and delicately served, that, stap my Vitals they shall compose you a Dish, no bigger than a

Saucer, shall come to fifty shillings". (I.37). The contrast between solid worth and meaningless frippery is implicit in Foppington's words: the condescending "I suppose my Brother will eat Beef" quite nullifies the affected expression of joy which follows it. Vanbrugh uses certain symbols to indicate and explain character. I have already noted the significance of the book in Act I.i: and here the difference between the two brothers is concisely indicated by the dishes assigned to them. Lord Foppington is of course remembered for the ostentation of his dress but this should not blind us to other and similar touches. Sir Tunbelly Clumsy is reflected in the description of arms which protect him at his first entry on stage"(Enter Sir Tunbelly with his Servants, Arm'd with Guns, Clubs, Pitchforks, Sythes etc.)"; these are metaphorically blunt instruments for a blunt person and are in direct contrast with the swords of the town gentleman.[1] His comments on Hoyden's dress ("... run away to Nurse, bid her let Miss Hoyden loose again, and if it was not shifting Day, let her put on a Clean Tucker, quick".) (I.58), not only capture the spirit of a country regiment, but indicate an apparent lack of sophistication which is confirmed when we see her. A whole thesis could be written on such devices in Vanbrugh's plays. My purpose here, however, is to point briefly to more than one feature, and try to assess the larger issues.

It is perhaps worth mentioning the significance of La Verole. He is Lord Foppington's steward or right-hand man and stands symbolically as an extension of him. The English meaning of la verole, coupled with the affectation of a French aide, provides still more comment on the beau and beaux in general. Affectation, self-esteem, ill-used riches are accompanied by illness of mind and body. Rottenness begets rottenness. Foppington's "... I'm a dead Man" when superficially wounded by Loveless in Act II.i is mirrored by La Verole at Sir Tunbelly's house "Ah, je suis mort". (The servants all run off). (I.72). Of course there is not the direct vigour of a Jonsonian character here, but perhaps there are elements of it. Sorringe, the doctor, has the same kind of function; his insistence on Foppington being carried to his house for "treatment" - or to be "bubbled" out of his money - is

1. For a more comprehensive account of this kind of symbol see William M. Peterson and Richard Morton, "Mirrors on the Restoration Stage", Notes and Queries, January, 1962, 10-13, February, 1962, 63-67, passim.

symptomatic of the kind of corruption which is parasitic on a pampered and self-indulgent society. Coupler, too, in his general bearing and manipulation of relationships for economic gain is another example. Bull, Sir Tunbelly's chaplain, apart from his role in the outcome of the action, stands for the corruption in the clergy which predominantly economic values have produced. His conscience also follows his purse.

I have concentrated on Act I in some detail in an attempt to indicate the way that Vanbrugh is using what might be called "high" Restoration material. A brief look at the end of the play should demonstrate the final effect he is aiming for.

Passing over the brilliantly theatrical central scenes: at the Clumsy country house with Foppington's amazing sang-froid ("I'Gad if I don't waken quickly, by all that I can see, this is like to prove one of the most impertinent dreams that I ever dreamt in my Life".) (p.73) and Tom Fashion's masquerade as his brother; and Loveless' final success with Berinthea in London (Berinthea. "Help, help, I'm Ravish'd, ruin'd, undone. O Lord, I shall never be able to bear it". Very softly.), we come to the explicatory scene v of the last act where Bull and the Nurse, suitably bribed by Coupler, confess and bear witness to the marriage of Hoyden and Fashion. The masque which precedes this is interesting in that although Hymen has the last word, nonetheless the Chorus reinforces what might at first appear to be the predominant tone of the marital relations plot:

> .....
> Constancy's an empty sound
> Heaven and Earth, and all go round,
> All the Works of Nature move,
> And the Joys of Life and Love
> Are in Variety. (I.69).

Be that as it may, we must take into account the passage between Worthy and Amanda at the end of the previous scene. Here Amanda refuses to succumb to Worthy's importunities, who then breaks into a soliloquy on Virtue in a manner very reminiscent of Loveless in Cibber's play. Again we have the elevated style parodying Cibber's own; and again we are confronted with the unreality of an abstract concept of virtue which

has little to do with the actuality of Loveless' affair with the cynical Berinthea - who Vanbrugh emphatically said "... is brought upon the Stage to Ridicule something that's off on't". (I.202). Of course, Worthy's speech is totally out of character: it is designed to jar on an audience and point the utterly ridiculous nature of the sentimental attitude to life. What in fact Vanbrugh is doing is to deny the perfectibility of human nature; it should not therefore be surprising that he adopts an oblique method. In abstract terms according to Amanda, "... the Sovereignty is in the Mind, whene'er it pleases to exert its Force". (p.93). Worthy exercises that sovereignty in his soliloquy, although in fact he has no choice but to do so insofar as Amanda has rebuffed him. This indeed parallels Foppington's response to the information that Tom is married to Hoyden:

> Now for my Part, I think the wisest thing a Man can do with an aking Heart, is to put on a serene Countenance, for a Philosophical Air is the most becoming thing in the World to the Face of a Person of Quality; I will therefore bear my Disgrace like a Great Man, and let the people see I am above an affront". (I.99).

Worthy's sentiments are in opposition to those of the masque Chorus, but actually have little intrinsic validity. Deeds speak louder than words: the brazen sensuality of the Loveless-Berinthea episode endorses the Chorus where desire for variety in love is by inference as natural as the movement of Heaven and Earth, is an essential part of God's ordered Universe. Amanda's virtue is of little use against Berinthea's obviously animal appeal; although man would like to act rationally, passion is hard to control. A rationally conceived appreciation of a moral exemplum such as the sentimental drama presents will, human nature being what it is, avail little when put to the test of physical circumstances.

Thus although Hoyden escapes from a passionless, economically motivated marriage to Foppington; although she may be more attracted by Tom Fashion who is indeed the "prettier gentleman", I don't think Vanbrugh means us to believe that the marriage of Tom and Hoyden is an ideal one. Indeed he says elsewhere when speaking of Tom Fashion, that "he has help'd him to a Wife who's likely to make his Heart ake". (I.199). The significant feature of the Tom Fashion-Hoyden marriage is that it

relieves him of his penury - in much the same way that Loveless was relieved by coming back to Amanda in Love's Last Shift. Vanbrugh is demonstrating that although the sentimentalists would have us think otherwise, this is how life really is: man is not wholly governed, or governable, by reason - although if he was, much turmoil and unhappiness would be averted. He goes to great lengths in A Short Vindication to emphasise that the most important plot of The Relapse is that dealing with the downfall of Loveless and the temptation of Amanda. (I.210).

Subordinate to this, although by no means unimportant, is the demonstration that where economic dependency takes over from normal personalised relationships it is unlikely that there will be unhappiness. Vanbrugh is practially working in social realist terms; although of course that he is working from what is essentially Restoration comedy material does not allow him either in style or content to reveal fully his direction. Lord Foppington's Epilogue is designed tothrow the emphasis of the whole action onto the "gulling of the beau" theme rather than the potentially dangerous denial of human perfectibility which is the logical conclusion of the main plot.

Mention should be made of Vanbrugh's treatment of Sir Tunbelly Clumsy as he moves away from the predominantly aristocratic circles in his later plays. Although ostensibly the crude, stupid country squire, Sir Tunbelly has a touching humanity which effectively alters the normal stereotype. His insistence on his daughter's good points could perhaps be dismissed as part of a mercenary design to get her married advantageously in social as well as economic terms - thus providing satire on the socially conscious "middle" classes. But if Clumsy is as much a country caricature as Foppington is of the town, at least he shows concern for his daughter's wedding in such a way as to let us know his genuine affection for her. When Tom Fashion is pressing for an immediate marriage in Act III.v, his final appeal is to the father's purse:

Young Fash. (To Sir Tunbelly) Pray, Sir, let it be done without Ceremony, 'twill save Money.

Sir Tun. Money - save Money when Hoyden's to be married? Udswoons I'll give my Wench a Wedding Dinner, tho I go to Grass with the King of Assyria for't: and such a Dinner it shall be, as is not to be Cook'd in the Poaching of an Egg. (p.61).

Sir Tunbelly's reply stems from pure feeling for Hoyden: such a trait of character considerably lessens his presence as a figure of fun to be mocked for his idiosyncracies and apologies at the indignities offered to Foppington.

Hoyden is a spirited girl whose natural exuberance carries her far further into our affection than a Margery Pinchwife, for example. Yet she too is as willing to learn the ways of the world as anyone; Lord Foppington's summary of her character would seem a good indication of what is to be expected after a stay in town: "Dear Tam ... You have married a Woman Beautiful in her Person, Charming in her Ayrs, Prudent in her Canduct, Canstant in her Inclinations, and of a nice Morality, split my Wind-pipe". (p.100). The obvious irony of the last three attributes finds a fitting climax in the reference to Hoyden's morality: she allows herself to be twice married to utter strangers before the play is over. She may be a naive country girl but is very willing to learn.

Vanbrugh seems to show that human nature remains constant whether in town or country; the only real difference being that there is less opportunity for intrigue in the country. Loveless is unfaithful as soon as he has the chance in London; Hoyden, although admittedly less in control of the situation, does the same in the country. But the town/wit, dullness/country dichotomy is far less pronounced than in most other contemporary plays. Vanbrugh is moving away from the more obvious premises of Restoration comedy. His interest in figures and situations which do not belong to the beau monde of the aristocracy will appear as I examine his other plays.

Nearly all Restoration writers seem to have taken for granted that literature, including drama, should teach in some respect. Norman N. Holland shows that in his belief heroic drama was assumed to teach

by means of exaggerated examples while comedy, working in a more sophisticated fashion, taught through laughter.[1] In Hobbes' definition:

> The passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly.[2]

Dryden applied Hobbes' theory to drama and showed how the comic dramatist used this sense of "sudden glory" for quasi-cathartic purposes:

> If he works a cure on folly, and the small imperfections in mankind, by exposing them to public view, that cure is not performed by an immediate operation. For it works first on the ill-nature of the audience; they are moved to laugh by the representation of deformity; and the shame of that laughter teaches us to amend what is ridiculous in our manners.[3]

Vanbrugh supports this view; in answering the charge that the comedies were immoral:

> If therefore I have shewed ... upon the stage, what generally the Thing call'd a Fine Gentleman is off on't, I think I have done what I shou'd do. I have laid open his Vices as well as his Virtues: 'Tis Business of the Audience to observe where his Flaws lessen his Value; and by considering the Deformity of his Blemishes, become sensible how much a Finer Thing he wou'd be without 'em. (I.206-7).

Here are two concise accounts of how comedy was expected to operate. The playwright puts onto the stage a glaring example of the particular evil, as Dryden says, "the representation of deformity". The audience laughs at it, and from their own laughter they infer a right way to "amend what is ridiculous". Holland points out that similarly Vanbrugh shows the flaws and blemishes of Constant in The Relapse so the audience can infer a right way, "how much a Finer Thing he wou'd be without 'em". Vanbrugh, however, introduces another more important element, the stage itself. One of the most demanding and severe theorists of the stage, Rene Rapin, had endorsed the demand that the stage was to be the mirror of life: "Comedy is as it should be when the spectator believes himself really in the company of such persons as he has represented

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1. Holland, The First Modern Comedies.
2. Hobbes, Treatise of Human Nature, English Works, IV, 46.
3. Preface to An Evening's Love or The Mock Astrologer.

(to him), and takes himself to be in a family whilst he is at the theatre".[1] Vanbrugh's method is to compare a gentleman off the stage and on; he makes direct comparison between the stage and the world "or what is actually shown on the stage (a mirror of the world) and what might be shown on the stage if the world were better than it is".[2] Thus:

> The Business of Comedy is to shew people what they should do, by representing them upon the Stage, doing what they shou'd not ... The Stage is a Glass for the World to view itself in; People ought therefore to see themselves as they are; if it makes their Faces too Fair, they won't know they are Dirty, and by consequence will neglect to wash 'em. (I.206).

Obviously the relationship between audience and play is a subtle one, and one which could accordingly be used to elicit a variety of responses. I have already touched briefly on the split between appearance and reality which resulted amongst other things from Cartesian science. (p.7 above). Paralleling such philosophical and social changes are corresponding differences in the physical resources of the theatres between the Elizabethan and Restoration periods. The projecting Elizabethan stage with audience on three sides at least and groundlings below them, reflects in its audience participation the analogical thinking of the time; playwright, play, actors and audience are all in well defined relationships to the whole ordered universe. There was no need for complex scenery, lighting or props; the participation of the audience, the intimacy provided by the physical circumstances of the theatres necessarily pushed the illusion of the action into the mind as well as the eye. The Restoration stage, even allowing for the large apron, divides the action more sharply from the audience. The physical confines of the picture frame Palladian proscenium arch forces the audience to see the play as a play, as "unreality". Mechanical devices, sets and sliding scenes opening to reveal successive parts of the action are all used to give greater "realism"; but in effect serve only to distance the audience yet further from the play.[3] For, as Dr. Johnson says; "The Truth is, that the

1. Rapin, Monsieur Rapin's Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie ... Made English by Mr. Rymer, II, xxv, 131.
2. Holland, The First Modern Comedies, 115.
3. Details of the Restoration playhouses are to be found in Eleanore Boswell, The Restoration Court Stage, passim., and in Nicoll, infra., 25-63.

spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players".[1] The physical nature of the Restoration stage - we might use Vanbrugh's own plan for the Italian Opera House in the Haymarket as a good example, the house/stage division is very obvious[2] - is ideally suited to a treatment of various themes centred around appearance/reality differences. This is especially important in approaching The Provok'd Wife, but is also relevant to Aesop.

It is not obvious whether to treat both parts of this play as one complete entity, or to assume that part II is a later addition. The question is an important one, for the correct answer would be helpful to a consideration of the structure not only of Aesop, but of all the plays by Vanbrugh. Unfortunately the dates of performance of both parts are unavailable. Dobree notes:

> The first part of Aesop was acted at Drury Lane, most probably some time in January 1697, or perhaps as early as December 1696. There is no record of the first performance, and one can only guess back from the publication of the printed play, which was late in January 1697 ..
>
> The second part was added later in the season, and was acted as a portion of the same play. Ward states that, being a fragment, it was never acted, but the title page of the first edition clearly says "as acted at Drury Lane"; besides which Gildon, in his additions to Langbaine, in saying that the play was not very successful except in the scenes that were Vanbrugh's own, goes on to associate with them "the three scenes that were just added" as being all of them "received with universal applause, as indeed they justly merited". That puts the question beyond doubt. (II.7).

Allardyce Nicoll however, dates them as follows: part I, circa. December 1696/7, part II, circa. March 1696/7; both played together 1697.[3] The subject matter of part II is sadly of little help. The first section dealing with the Players could possibly refer to the trouble caused by the actor Verbruggen and his wife illegally leaving Drury Lane in October 1696 against the orders of the Lord Chamberlain.[4]

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1. Samuel Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare.
2. Vide. Whistler, Sir John Vanbrugh, Plate V.
3. Nicoll, A History of Restoration Drama 1660-1900, I, 456.
4. Nicoll, Ibid., 338-339.

This would date it more accurately. But the scene could as easily refer to the more widely known move of Betterton and his company to Lincoln's Inn Fields in April 1694[1]. Under such hazy circumstances I shall, for convenience sake, treat the two parts separately.

As Vanbrugh acknowledges in the Preface, both parts of the play are a loose translation from the French of Boursault with certain additional scenes. Les Fables d'Esope was printed in Paris in 1693, but played under the title Esope à la Ville on 10th January 1690, being represented forty three times. (II.3). It is therefore conceivable that Vanbrugh could have seen it in France before his imprisonment in the summer of 1690, and thus used it for the first part. In part II he resembles Boursault only because that author wrote a sequel, Esope à la Cour; Aesop II bears but flimsy relation to this.

Aesop I and II are dramatic satires involving a series of judgements on current follies, very much in the manner of Lucian, and from the Prologue we learn of Vanbrugh's fears for its success. It is supposedly:

> Barren of all the Graces of the Stage,
> Barren of all that entertains this Age.
> No Hero, no Romance, no Plot, no Show,
> No Rape, no Bawdy, no Intrigue, no Beau:
> There's nothing in't, with which we use to please ye:
> With downright dull Instruction, we're to tease ye,
> The Stage turns Pulpit ... (II.11)

Yet this is a peculiarly mocking Prologue. Such a direct claim to didacticism is linked with a very heavily ironic treatment not only of comedy (and he had just put on the very successful Relapse), but of the audiences and social scene:

> For though with Heavenly Zeal, you all abound,
> As by your Lives and Morals may be found, (II.11)

Surprisingly enough the play is not at all solemn; although it was not a wild box-office sellout, nonetheless there are some amusing scenes.

1. Smith, Plays About the Theatre in England, 1671-1737, 59-64.

Briefly, as in The Relapse, there are two main plots - if one can call the various scenes between Aesop and minor figures a plot. The main action concerns the efforts of Learchus, Governor of Syzicus, to marry his daughter Euphronia, against her will, to Aesop, an eminent sage, close to Croesus to whom Syzicus belongs. Learchus hopes that with Aesop married to his daughter he will remain safe politically: "But my Government, Child, is too delicious a Morsel, not to set many a frail Mouth a watering: Who knows what accusations Envy may produce, but all wou'd be secure, if thou cou'dst touch the Heart of Aesop". (II.15). Euphronia is however in love with Oronces, a young man who comes back from abroad to find his intended about to be joined in holy matrimony with the exceedingly repulsive Aesop. After somewhat excessive scenes of rant and tears when it seems certain that after questioning the lovers, Aesop is still going to marry Euphronia, there is a volte-face at the wedding when Aesop gives the girl Oronces' hand in place of his own, and the play ends with the dutiful daughter begging Aesop to forgive her father. Of course he does, and all live happily ever after. Now this is hardly exciting material: it is significant, however, for several good reasons.

First, thematically, the treatment of marriage has bearing on Vanbrugh's later plays. The selfishness and hypocrisy of Learchus are emphasised above all by the bold commonsense of the nurse, Doris; she continually breaks through the affectation of parental concern and selfless desire for his daughter's marriage with comments which put a clear perspective on the action. To Doris' comparison of Aesop to a babboon (he is admittedly deformed), Learchus replies: "How darest thou liken so incomparable a Man, to so contemptible a Beast". Doris' reply is revealing not only of her own native wisdom, but of basic issues which are important to Vanbrugh:

> Ah, the inconstancy of this world: Out of sight, out of mind. Your little Monkey is scarce cold in his Grave, and you have already forgot what you used to admire: Do but call to Remembrance, Sir, in his Red Coat, New Gloves, Little Hat and Clean Linnen. Discharge your Conscience, utter the truth from your Heart, and tell us whether he was not the prettier Gentleman of the two - By my Virginity, Sir, (though that's but a slippery Oath, you'll say) had they made Love to me together, Aesop should have worn the Willow. (II.14)

The comparison between Aesop and the monkey is obvious, but the application is broader than it appears. The monkey is dressed to represent a man, but is nonetheless a monkey, Learchus affected to make it what it was not; in the same way, although Aesop is apparently unpleasant to the eye and brings to mind a babboon, he is certainly not what he appears. His appearance belies the reality of an astute and humane mind. The appearance/reality split is, as I have said, a major factor and occurs time and again. Learchus gives the appearance of marrying his daughter for her own good, whereas in fact it is to benefit himself. Vanbrugh reveals the falsity of such an appearance. And in the same way the down to earth quality of Doris' words, the unaffected expression is in direct contrast with the occasional flights of Learchus, and later of the two lovers. Learchus' speech extolling the virtues of Aesop is in blank verse as a measure of the insincerity of its sentiments. We have seen the same technique used in The Relapse for similar effect. That Aesop should chide Learchus for his unnecessary hyperbole and drive for power with the fable of the greedy goat is further confirmation of this. In Act II the exaggerated expressions of grief that Oroncos and Euphronia use are countered by Doris and metaphorically cut down to size: she is concerned with the real issues:

> Pray, Madam, will you take the Gentleman by the hand, and lead him into your Chamber; and when you are there, Don't lie Whining and Crying and Sighing and Wishing -
>
> Aside) If he had not been more Modest than Wise, he might have set such a mark upon the Goods before now, that ne'er a Merchant of 'em all, wou'd have bought 'em out of his hands: But young Fellows are always in the wrong: Either so impudent they are nauseous, or so modest they are useless.
>
> Euphronia. But if my Father catch us we are ruin'd.
>
> Doris. By my Conscience, this Love will make us all turn Fools.

We may not agree with her advice but it is well meant as unselfish happiness is her aim. Her final line in this quotation is almost Shakespearean in its ironic understatement.

I am not trying to give this play an importance which it may not have; but it is essential that we should realise that Vanbrugh is

not giving the love plot a serious treatment. He uses Doris to show up the false sentiment in similar romantic plays. And at the same time, by showing Learchus in his true colours, touches on the whole question of forced marriages. Aesop is made to question the lovers closely on the reasons for their mutual affection: Euphronia justifies herself well (II.39-42) and Oronces does likewise, even though he remains the hot-blooded beau. (II.49-52). Indeed Aesop on occasion looks rather foolish himself and there is no indication that he is to be considered a universal yardstick. But although the treatment of marriage is not wholly serious, that does not invalidate points which arise.

Speaking of Aesop, Learthus has this to say of his method:

> ... as 'tis dangerous to be bold with truth,
> He often calls for Fable to his Aid,
> Where under abject Names, of Beasts and Birds,
> Virtue shines out, and Vice is cloath'd in shame:
> And thus by inoffensive Wisdom's Force
> He conquers Folly, wheresoe'er he moves.

This could just as well be applied to Vanbrugh's method. He deals with the marriage theme in a mocking fashion, ridiculing excessive emotionalism, while at the same time commenting on contemporary mores. Vanbrugh's comments on the structure of The Relapse provide a valuable key to all his plays:

> I cou'd however say a great deal against the too exact observance of what's call'd the Rules of the Stage, and the crowding a Comedy with a great deal of Intricate Plot. I believe I cou'd show, that the chief entertainment, as well as the Moral, lies much more in the Characters and the Dialogue, than in the Business and the Event. (I.209).

Thus although the second plot of Aesop where the sage deals with various characters who come to visit him is very disjointed, the value lies in Vanbrugh's treatment of each individual character rather than the meaning that these encounters give to the action as a whole. Aesop himself serves to link these encounters to the main action insofar as he is involved in both, but this could as well be incidental. Aesop's

treatment of Hortentia is important as a reflection of Vanbrugh's own attitude to language. He answers her verbose flights directly, and there is clear satire on the précieuses. Aesop's answer to her is unmistakable: "Pray speak that you may be understood; Language was design'd for it; indeed it was". This is particularly germane to Vanbrugh's pointed juxtapositions of elevated and simple, direct styles. In nearly every encounter he is satirising the middle and lower classes: the two Tradesmen complaining about the Governor, Roger, the country bumpkin who wishes to be a courtier, are put in their place; in the case of Roger it is interesting to note how Vanbrugh seems to be endorsing value of the quiet simplicity of country life. His portrait of the Welsh genialogist later affected his appointment as Clarencieux Herald but is significant in its relation to the social position of Lord Foppington and the whole question of economics and status:

> Wer't not for such vile fawning Things as thou are, young Nobles wou'd not long be what they are: they'd grow asham'd of Luxury and Ease, and rouse up the old Spirit of their Fathers; leave the pursuit of a poor frightened Hare, and make their Foes to tremble in her stead; Furnish their Heads with Sciences and Arts, and fill their Hearts with Honour, Truth and Friendship; be Generous to some, and Just to all; drive home their Creditors with Bags of Gold, instead of Chasing 'em with Swords and Staves; be faithful to their King and Country both, and stab the Offerer of a Bribe from either; blush even at a wandering thought of Vice, and boldly own they durst be friends to Virtue ... (II.34).

This is a strong indictment, the earnestness of which is emphasised by the blank verse form. The hypocrisy beneath the social veneer is rewarded by physical violence. Aminta, the lecherous belle manquée, is another symptom of fashionable life and is held up to strong ridicule. In these two cases Vanbrugh makes his point even clearer in that the main plot does not provide sufficient relief to take the audience's mind from the lesson.

Vanbrugh's zest in caricaturing the country squirearchy is apparent in the scene with Sir Polidorus Hogstye. This is more fine entertainment than moralising as the stage directions indicate: "Enter a Country Gentleman drunk, in a Hunting Dress, with a Huntsman, Groom,

Faulkner, and other servants: one leading a couple of Hounds, another Grey-hounds, a Third a Spaniel, a Fourth a Gun upon his Shoulder, the Faulkner, a Hawk upon his Fist, etc.". The sheer theatricality of this scene assured it to be the most successful of the whole play, and Vanbrugh does not break the pace by inserting a fable. Sir Polidorus' opening words are brilliant:

> Haux, haux, haux, haux, haux; Joular, there Boy, Joular, Joular, Tinker, Pedlar, Miss, Miss, Miss, Miss, Miss, - Blood - Blood and Oons - O there he is; that must be he, I have seen his Picture. (Reeling up to Aesop) - Sir - if your name's Aesop - I'm your humble Servant. (II.45).

It is no wonder that Pinkethman, who played Sir Polidorus, received vast applause for his acting. The emphasis on spectacle in this play should not be underrated, for what may now seem a rather tedious string of events would have been considerably enlivened by the speed with which these events passed across the stage, and the variety of the incidents portrayed. The scenes change very quickly and new characters are continually appearing. This again supports Vanbrugh's emphasis on dialogue and character rather than action and plot. In the final Act the stage directions and action demand a "Troop of Musicians, Dancers, etc."; the musicians comprise trumpets, hautbois, and violins at least. The spectacle is heightened by the appearance of Aesop "in a Gay Foppish Dress, Long Peruke, etc., a Gaudy Equipage of Pages and Footmen, all enter in an Airy Brisk manner".; apart from the obvious reference to Lord Foppington - and Cibber played Aesop at this point in the same wig that he used for Lord Foppington - Vanbrugh is crowding people onstage for the marriage ceremony scene. Immediately after the actual ceremony there is more gratuitous entertainment:

> Aesop leads the Bride to her Place. All being seated, there's a short Consort of Hautboys, Trumpets etc. After which a Dance between an Old Man and a Young Woman, who shuns him still as he comes near her. At last he stops, and begins this dialogue; which they sing together. (II.62).

This dialogue seems to me to be filled with rather obvious sexual innuendo, and ends with the appearance of a youth "who seizes on the Young Woman". This acts as a retrospective and simple summary of the

action.

The Gentlemans Magazine reports a conversation between Pope and Vanbrugh on the translations of the fables in Aesop:

> Speaking with Mr. Pope of the Fables in the comedy of Aesop, the latter said to him (Vanbrugh), Prior is called the English Fontaine for his Tales; nothing is more unlike. But your Fables have the very spirit of this celebrated French Poet. - It may be so, replied Vanbrugh; but I protest to you, I never read Fontaine's Fables.[1]

The fables are not really too important in Aesop; they are extraneous to both plots and interfere with the pace of the action. They are however essential to the part of Aesop, and Bernard Harris notes: "The play is an interesting failure ... if only because of Farquhar's remark in A Discourse Upon Comedy (1702) that Aesop was 'the first and original author' of comedy, and that 'Comdey is no more at present than a well-framed tale handsomely told as an agreable vehicle for council or reproof'.[2] This is an oversimplification if applied to all Vanbrugh's work, and even in Aesop the didacticism would be mellowed by the humour of situation; however, there is some justice to it.

Part II puts Aesop in company with the Players, a Country Gentleman and a "Young Gay Airy Beau". Dane Farnsworth Smith's comments on the scene with the players recognise Vanbrugh's satirical method:

> He represents on the stage the group he does not favour, and puts in their mouths as a defence, everything obvious that tells against them. In other words, dramatically the secessionists are made to advance their own weaknesses as the best arguments on their side of the case; and in putting forth their own foibles as their greatest virtues, they render themselves particularly vulnerable to public opinion. Quite in keeping with this trick of showing them telling their own tale badly, is the conclusion which portrays them as realising their mistake and ready to join the other company.[3]

This technique is used in the same way in each encounter. Aesop is by no stretch of the imagination one of Vanbrugh's best plays; it is, however, only the second that he wrote and had performed, and he would seem to be experimenting with language and character far more than

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1. Gentleman's Magazine, XXXIX, 63.
2. Harris, Sir John Vanbrugh, 29.
3. Smith, Plays about the Theatre in England, 1671 - 1737, 64.

with plot - hence his unconcern with taking the bulk of the action from Boursault.

A measure of Vanbrugh's disappointment at the reception of Aesop shows in his Prologue to The Provok'd Wife, first performed by Betterton's company at Lincoln's Inn Fields in April 1697. The first lines provide a direct statement of the function of the drama:

> Since 'tis the Intent and Business of the Stage,
> To copy out the Follies of the Age;
> To hold to every Man a Faithful Glass,
> And show him of what Species he's an Ass: (I.113).

Vanbrugh addresses the audience with much the same sentiments as he wrote of the stage in A Short Vindication, and speaks through the persona of Belinda, played at the first performance by Mrs. Bracegirdle who was one of the most beautiful and respected, if not most talented, actresses of the period. It is no accident that the Prologue should be given to Belinda: and not only because her attractive presence would serve to divert the oggling, chattering beaux and gallants from the more immediate attractions amongst the audience. The above four lines embody that relationship between play and audience that I have already touched upon; where the audience is shown an exaggerated example of abuse and by laughing at it comes to realise an application to itself, where it is shown affectations and pretence and gradually comes to realise the reality beneath. For The Provok'd Wife is above everything else a demonstration of the reality of the marital relationships between Sir John and Lady Brute which has turned out quite contrary to their respective expectations. The audience is told by each, in the course of the action, how the liaison appeared to them before marriage; it then sees them after marriage in the reality of their situation. In the Prologue the playwright professes to hold up to the audience what is in fact a mirror image of its own conduct, with the implied end that from the example on the stage it will come to know itself.

The directness of the application is reinforced by Vanbrugh's use of what might be termed local colour. In The Relapse Loveless specifically comes to London, the atmosphere of the capital and social centre of England is in part to blame for his fall. In The Provok'd Wife the action is set again in London. St. James Park and the more

seamy Spring Garden[1] are mentioned by name as the meeting places for Constant, Heartfree, Lady Brute and Belinda. Reference is made to an appeal to the Lords, that august body of which Lord Foppington was a member. Foppington himself is made to allude to Lockets, the famous ordinary near Charing Cross; Tom Fashion and Lory disembark at Whitehall, having come up river from Gravesend. The references to Hobbes and the Social Contract mentioned below, to the Bank of England (I.146), to the Treaty of Ryswick, The Act of Toleration and the Penal Laws (I.146), to the New Exchange (I.156) and to Betty Sands perhaps one of the more notorious concubines of Sir John Sands, a famous keeper of this period, (I.131), all point to the attack on contemporary society; the action is fitted closely into an immediately recognisable social context. It is significant that in proportion to the obvious nature of his attacks in Aesop, Vanbrugh uses the thin disguise of Syzicus for London.

Straight didactidism is intolerably tedious, and Vanbrugh's audiences would not be particularly well disposed to serious instruction - even though by the turn of the century the pervasive standards of the new middle classes were affecting the tone of the drama. As I have shown, The Relapse was written to provide a more vital alternative to the sentimental bourgeois trend of Cibber's Love's Last Shift. He moves therefore from the overt didacticism of Aesop to something far more subtle, as the Prologue to The Provok'd Wife indicates. From the direct statement of the first four lines, Vanbrugh moves into an obviously ironic indictment of himself; normally this would be in a vein of polite self-effacement - the modest author begging the tolerance of an all powerful audience. But there are two factors here which indicate a far more serious intention behind both the Prologue and the play. First the strength of the language he uses against himself. The author's "a scribbling fool"; he should be lashed "Till his presumption swam away in Blood". The heavy handed bluntness of advising a "venom'd Priest", or "some Ugly lady" to write satire

1. Vide. Spectator 383 (II.197-9), where Juvenal is quoted (Sat. I,v.75) "Crininibus Debent Hortos", a beauteous garden, but by vice maintained. Addison "could not but look upon this place as a kind of Mahometan paradise", while Sir Roger wished "there were more nightingales and fewer strumpets".

as any small time scribbler of Puritan bourgeois background will be better received than he has been; the reflection of fatuous criticism levelled against him in "Three Plays at once proclaim a face of Brass" are bitter words. Again, the audience has "so much of the old Serpent's sting" that it loves to damn "as Heav'n delights to Save" - here is tremendous scorn, an almost religious fervour as the Biblical references indicate. Vanbrugh's indignation is mirrored in his language as the audience or "society" is to be mirrored in the play. The second factor is the use of Belinda to give the Prologue. She appears as a sweet, innocent young girl, but is endowed with her full share of worldly wisdom as we shall see. Her appearance is that of innocence and virtue: her reality is something quite different. The appearance of Belinda at this point of the proceedings is at odds with the words she delivers. Vanbrugh creates a tension by speaking ambiguously through her character, by using her as a persona. The emphatic final triplet of the Prologue confirms this:

> But 'tis not so, in this good natur'd Town,
> Alls one, an Ox, a Poet, or a Crown,
> Old England's play was always knocking Down. (I.113).

The irony of "good natur'd", the juxtaposition of "Ox", "Poet", "Crown" where society is so insensitive that to kill an Ox, a King or a Play has exactly the same importance, are all turned neatly aside by having the lovely Mrs. Bracegirdle, benefactor of the poor and idol of the mob, deliver the lines. And the final line confirms the ambivalence of the whole with the double-entendre on the word "play". The audience in their appalling ignorance and indiscriminacy may "knock down the play"; but any good English play will equally "knock down" the audience - given the initial premise on the function of drama. And again, following from that initial premise, if they damn the play they damn themselves, for the play is a mirror of their own conduct. Vanbrugh is presenting his satire obliquely, not directly as in Aesop; Mrs. Bracegirdle/Belinda is made to damn the author, but this is the appearance and not the reality.

As I showed in chapter one, too much has been made of Vanbrugh as the good natured and harmless man; his plays have been criticised for their apparent looseness of construction, and damned with the

faint praise of "good theatrical entertainment". But this is as much as to say that Pope's genius lies solely in his manipulation of the heroic couplet. Vanbrugh's purpose in The Provok'd Wife is definitely satirical, it castigates the age as it reflects it; the Prologue is an indication, the play confirms such a judgement.

It opens with Sir John Brute's comments on love, matrimony and his own marriage in particular:

> What cloying Meat is Love - when Matrimony's the Sauce to it! Two Years Marriage has debaucht my five Senses. Everything I see, everything I hear, everything I feel, everything I smell, and everything I taste - methinks has Wife in't. (I.115)

As his name would imply, Sir John's approach to life is purely sensual; the image of love as meat with marriage the sauce to it immediately debases a fundamental human relationship to the animal level. All his senses function on an "irrational", "antisocial" plane; as the play progresses we come to realise that all its basic motivations are similarly founded. The apparent sophistication of society is in reality the very opposite of the civilisation that it should imply. Such words as "cloying", "Debaucht", indicate the excesses and over-indulgence that Vanbrugh is attacking. He opens the play with a picture of appetite; and in Sir John's case the stupidity of such an approach to marriage is emphasised by his grudging description of his wife, "a young Lady, a fine Lady, a Witty Lady, a virtuous Lady". That he pursues such a line of conduct is partially explained in his remarks to Heartfree and Constant in Act II,ii:

> Sir John. Why did I marry her! I married her because I had a mind to lie with her, and she would not let me.
> Heartfree. Why did you not ravish her?
> Sir John. Yes, and so have hedg'd myself into forty Quarrels with her Relations, besides buying my Pardon: But more than all that, you must know, I was afraid of being damned in those days ..... (I.130)

The marriage itself is founded on lust and not love. In addition, Sir John's abject cowardice, admitted by himself and proved by his unwillingness to fight Constant after finding him compromisingly in

his wife's closet, forces him to treat the social and legal obligation of marriage simply as a means of furthering his desires.

Immediately following Sir John's revelations we are shown the other half of the marriage in Lady Brute's soliloquy. Again, as in The Relapse, there is conscious juxtapositioning of scenes to increase dramatic effect. The impression of Vanbrugh as a haphazard writer with no idea of structure is plainly fallacious. Knowing Sir John's disposition, Lady Brute chose marriage because she thought, mistakenly as the event proved, that she had "Charms enough to govern him; and that where there was an Estate, a Woman must needs be happy". (I.116). Thus before we are halfway through the first act, Vanbrugh has given a clear picture of a marriage that is no marriage, based on lust on the one hand and misplaced confidence and desire for economic advantage on the other.

Lady Brute's sophistical use of Hobbes' argument on the Social Contract is a good example of Vanbrugh's satiric method. The Social Contract, that "converted the life of man at one blow from a welter of mutual rapine into a ordered commonwealth"[1], was in fact a symbol of order relying on mutual obligation. Lady Brute needs an authority to support her projected infidelity and adapts Hobbes to meet her purpose:

> The Argument's good between the King and People, why not between Husband and Wife? O, but that Condition was not exprest - No matter, 'twas understood. (I.116).

But insofar as the Social Contract is essential for the security of the country, the marriage vow is essential for the stability of the institution of marriage. As the non-observance of the Social Contract would produce chaos in the body politic, so similarly to ignore the marriage contract produces the kind of localised chaos that the play exhibits. The parallelism of these two ideas gives a far greater significance to the local differences between Sir John and Lady Brute, and puts them squarely in the broader context of society. Mr. Alleman's

1. Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, 103.

enlightening book on matrimonial law and Restoration comedy[1] remarks specifically on this scene and sees the play as in part a "searching analysis" of the plight of a woman seeking separation. There were only two grounds for separation - cruelty and adultery, and of these adultery was most important. Sir John is not pleased when Constant assures him that his wife is virtuous:

> Pox of her Virtue. If I cou'd but catch her Adulterating I might be Divorc'd from her by Law.
> Heartfree. And so pay her a yearly Pension, to be a distinguish'd Cuckold. (I.137).

Yet if a husband does win his case, he is obliged to pay the wife a separate maintenance. And also social convention demanded that a husband must accept adultery or risk his life in a duel:

> Wear a Sword, Sir: - And what of all that, Sir? - He comes to my House; Easts my Meat; Lies with my Wife; Dishonours my Family; Gets a Bastard to Inherit my Estate - and when I ask a Civil Account of all this - Sir, says he, I wear a Sword. (I.168).

Lady Brute plays with the idea of cuckolding her husband. Her position is not, she feels, entirely impossible: "But some comfort still; if one wou'd be reveng'd of him, these are good times; a Woman may have a Gallant, and a separate Maintenance too - " (I.116). Yet her analysis of the moral aspects, should not be considered lightly, even allowing for the essence of marriage which is contract and which Sir John is hardly observing. Though Vanbrugh may be postulating the value of separation under certain circumstances where there are ample grounds, nonetheless his portraits of easy adultery such as the Loveless/ Berinthea liaison in The Relapse clearly show that his main concern is for stable relationships. The significant point is that he is demonstrating that no relationship will remain stable unless built upon firm foundations of mutual respect and love.

A very good case can be made for the Restoration preoccupation with marriage and adultery, the disintegration of legal ties, as a metaphor for the overall breakdown in the social system following the

1. Alleman, Matrimonial Law and the Materials of Restoration Comedy, 120-121, passim.

trial and execution of Charles I. Marriages that are not marriages, love that is not love are aspects of the whole welter of appearances and realities which dominate the philosophical, political, scientific and social issues of the period[1]. Vanbrugh's references to Hobbes are very significant in this respect.

The tight community around which the play revolves is an indication that its themes are confined to those mentioned above and are to have a direct application. The action is not interrupted with digressive scenes of the kind found in Aesop. Apart from the entertaining displays of Sir John's rowdy pleasure at the Blue Posts, in the street and at Covent Garden, and his drunken disruption of the assignation in Spring Garden, there are short scenes with Heartfree and Lady Fancifull in St. James Park and Heartfree and Constant in the former's bedchamber; the main body of the action is indoors - either at Sir John Brute's house or at the house of Lady Fancyfull. Such localisation provides for far more concentration: we are confronted either by Sir John's boorishness, the adulterous machinations between Constant and Lady Brute or the spiteful affectations of Lady Fancyfull.

Vanbrugh's much praised theatre sense is never more obvious than in the tact with which he handles the appearances of Sir John. After his initial introduction he does not appear until the end of the first scene in Act II. There is business with Lady Brute, and then emphasis is taken from that plot and moved to the Lady Fancyfull intrigue. In this way Sir John's uncouth roughness strikes again with renewed force when his aggressively masculine conversation with Constant and Heartfree confirms our first impressions of him, and looks forward to the more detailed exposée with the bullies at the Blue Posts and with the Constable. As might be expected from his opening soliloquy, his interest in women is purely functional:

> ... pray let's Hear no more of my Wife nor your Mistress. Damn 'em both with all my Heart, and everything else that Daggles a Petticoat, except four Generous Whores, with Betty Sands at the Head of 'em, who were drunk with my Lord Rake and I, ten times in a Fortnight. (I.131).

1. Holland, The First Modern Comedies, especially 114-131.

His open distaste for his wife is given physical expression in Act III.i where the stage direction (... rises in a Fury, throws his Pipe at 'em and drives 'em out. I.136) shows his reaction to his wife and Belinda, who mock his sullen pipe smoking after his meal. Obviously his behaviour in any society is wholly offensive; the dining party at the Blue Posts is no exception. He is quarrelsome on no provocation while his deference to Lord Rake robs him of any personal dignity ("My Lord, I respect you, because you are a Man of Quality." I.148). Lord Rake's song, in its wanton disregard for authority and sobreity, displays the same anarchic potential as the adultery theme. The dominant motif of the drinking bout is "Liberty of Conscience", and again Vanbrugh may be using Hobbesian ideas, this time demonstrating the results of his philosophy when pushed to its conclusions. In his discussion of Free Will, Hobbes adopts a quasi-determinist position which, I think, allows for voluntary action though this is motivated by "appetite" and not external compulsion. He develops this in his De Corpore:

> But if by freedom we understand the faculty or power, not of willing, but of doing what they (i.e. men and animals) will, then certainly that liberty is to be allowed to both.[1]

This idea of following the appetites is central to Vanbrugh's theme: the constant cries of "Drink away and be Damned" and "Damn Morality", and Sir John's final words "Liberty and Property and Old England! Huzza" (Exit Sir John, reeling) go towards a picture of drunken, lawless, antisocial behaviour such as would be bound to result in all concerned "jogging away to the Devil"; and is obviously aimed at the Whig nobility.

The bullies' excesses are amply demonstrated in Act IV.i; Sir John is, if possible, more aggressive than the rest and positively evil:

> Lord Rake. Appear, Knight, then; come, you have a good Cause to fight for - there's a man murdered.
> Sir John. Is there? Then let his Ghost be satisfied; for I'll sacrifice a Constable to it presently; and burn his Body upon his wooden Chair. (I.151-152).

1. Hobbes, De Corpore, English Works, I, 409.

To say the least this is extreme language. And the scene is more despicable in that the bullies are hunting in a pack - again the cowardice of Sir John is shown: although his audacity with the Justice redeems him from utter spinelessness.

Until perhaps 1706 the play makes Sir John disguise himself as a Parson when "charging" the Watch, so that "the Scandal may light upon the Church". Collier objected vigorously to this, and Vanbrugh's answer deserves full quotation as it is an honest account of his use of the clergy to point yet again the utter abandon of Sir John:

> ... If a Sir John Brute off the Stage shou'd put on a Gown in his cups, and pass his Lewdness upon the World, for the Extravagances of a Churchman; This I own, would be an abuse, and a Prejudice to the Clergy. But to expose this very man upon the Stage, for putting this Affront upon the Gown; to put the Audience in mind, that there were Laymen so Wicked, they car'd not what they did to bring Religion into Contempt, and were therefore always ready to throw dirt upon the Pilots of it:
> This I believe nobody but a Man of Mr. Collier's heat, cou'd have mistaken so much .... (I.203).

That Vanbrugh was prevailed upon to change the disguise from that of a Parson to "the undress of a woman of quality" simply diverts the satire from Sir John's disrespect for the cloth, and puts it more squarely onto the fashionable ladies. Of this change Colley Cibber says:

> Now the character and profession of a fine lady, not being so indelibly sacred as that of a churchman whatever follies he expos'd, kept him, at least, clear of prophaneness, and were not innocently ridiculous to the spectator.[1]

Cibber's comments, cautious and relieved, are typical of those who would have advanced arguments for the changing of the scenes. He follows Collier in the assumption that the clergy is sacred, although he destroys the validity of this by admitting that Vanbrugh does expose some follies. What he does not appreciate is that Vanbrugh is concerned with basic human nature, between the outward appearance and the inner reality. He makes the Justice refer to Dr. Hyccop: ".. I have known a great many Country Parsons of that Name, especially down

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1. Cibber, Apology for his Life, 290.

in the Fenns". (I.158); and backs this contemporary allusion to tippling clergy in A Short Vindication:

> The Justice does indeed drop a word, which alludes to the Jolly Doings of some Boon Companions in the Fenns; and if I had let him drop a word or two more, I think I had made him a better Justice than I have. (I.203).

He is unmasking hypocrisy, and not afraid to back his claims: a sound clergy need not fear criticisms, but affected piety deserves censure.

Sir John is, as Vanbrugh says, "a visible Burlesque upon his Character" (I.207); but the play is The Provok'd Wife, and it should then follow that the crux is the behaviour of Sir John's wife, given her particular predicament: "for tho' his ill usage of her does not justify her Intrigue, her intriguing upon his ill usage, may be a caution for some" (I.207). We have a similar device in The Relapse, for in that play the biggest theatrical impact is certainly made by Lord Foppington, and this partially diverts the audience from the moral point of the Loveless/Amanda/Berinthea plot. In the same way the energy of Sir John Brute's part diverts from the Lady Brute/Constant plot, the most important strand in the play. Vanbrugh does not attack Lady Brute too severely - she has obvious provocation. Far more important is the cumulative effect of his attack on all the women. I have mentioned his key explanation that "the chief entertainment as well as the Moral, lies much more in the Characters and the Dialogue, than in the Business and the Event". (I.209). What it means is briefly that he allows his characters to damn themselves out of their own mouths. The difference between what they say and what they do, and what they are shown to be to the audience, produces a remarkably effective irony; each individual is treated in this way to a greater or lesser extent. (The difference between Sir John and Heartfree is a good example. Heartfree's basic worth is highlighted by his addiction to quiet wenching, the comment on him is light; whereas Sir John is really mauled - as of course he deserves.

That Lady Brute has ample cause to be unfaithful to her husband is very clear, and Vanbrugh lets her get perilously close to the act, both in Spring Garden and at her own house. However, the two important

factors are (a) that she married for the wrong reasons, and (b) that having married she should stick by her contract. Her comments on virtue in Act I.i are revealing in that they bluntly state an opinion that was widely held by the Restoration lady of fashion:

> Lord, what fine notions of Virtue do we Women take upon the Credit of old foolish Philosophers. Virtue's its own reward, Virtue's this, Virtue's that - Virtue's an Ass, and a Gallant's worth forty on't. (I.117).

This is certainly a cynical attitude towards the Sixth Commandment, and one which is further endorsed by her reply to Belinda's "Ay, but you know, we must return Good for Evil", "That may be a mistake in the Translation" (I.117). And in their further exchange in the same scene, what is most important to each is not that Lady Brute may be cuckolding her husband, but rather as she says "... we have both offended. I in making a Secret, you, in discovering it". (I.118). Thus they skate over the moral considerations; their values become inverted, although Lady Brute is aware of the implications of her conduct: "Sathan, catching at the fair occasion, throws in my way that Vengeance, which of all Vengeance pleases Women best". (I.118). She is not in love with Constant, but merely wishes to be revenged on her husband. Vanbrugh is criticising the flippancy of the women; Belinda is made to say "I am fully convinc'd, no Man has half that pleasure in possessing a Mistress, as a Woman has in jilting a Gallant". (I.119). The whole system of human relationships is put in terms of a game where genuine emotion has no place. The rules of the game, founded in general subterfuge, are so accurately delineated during the course of the action that one might almost say that Vanbrugh is constructing an appearance/reality dialectic. I cannot think that he supports such a dialectic wholeheartedly, his concern for social stability is too great; on the other hand Sir John is far more of a villain than the rumbustious clown that critics have made out. The reoccurring images of drink, tobacco and animal energy render him a particularly obnoxious force, and Lady Brute has little alternative than to escape as best she may.

Of all the ladies involved in the game, perhaps the epitome is Lady Fancyfull. Her petulant dismissal of Cornet for speaking the truth, and her rewarding of the sycophantic Mademoiselle in Act I.ii ("Well, the French have strange obliging ways with 'em; you may take those two

pair of Gloves, Mademoiselle"), are but a symptom of her monstrous affectation. That she has a French, flattering hanger-on puts her in the same category as Lord Foppington with La Verole; and is another example of the pretentious delusions of the belle manquée. That we should be introduced to her directly after the scene with Lady Brute and Belinda is significant for should Lady Brute pursue her designs on Constant, the implication is that she may well become like her. Lady Fancyfull's attitude to love is evident in Act II.i, where she affects to allow herself to be persuaded to meet the anonymous letter sender in St. James Park. Only lengthy quotation can do full justice to this brilliant interchange. Vanbrugh's genius with dialogue is unmatched for subtle comic development, but for convenience I shall select some of the more telling sentences. Her whole purpose in life is summarised in these words: "... 'tis an unutterable pleasure to be ador'd by all the Men, and envy'd by all the Women - Yet I'll swear I'm concern'd at the torture I give 'em. Lard, why was I form'd to make the whole creation uneasy?" (I.122). Her utter amazement when Mademoiselle suggests that she meet the stranger in the Park is masterly: "Rendezvous! What, Rendezvous with a Man!" (I.122), and is followed by the stock arguments against such an encounter which are clearly thrown out simply to be knocked down. She affects virtue, but her affectation is in proportion to her flighty conduct. Mademoiselle and Lady Fancyfull complement each other exactly:

Lady Fancyfull.	O, but my Reputation, Mademoiselle, my Reputation, Ah, ma Chère Réputation.
Mademoiselle.	Madam; - Quand on l'a une fois perdue - On n'est plus embarassée.
Lady Fancyfull.	Fe, Mademoiselle, fe: Reputation is a Jewel.
Mademoiselle.	Qui coute bien chère, Madam.
Lady Fancyfull.	Why sure you wou'd not sacrifice your Honour to your Pleasure?
Mademoiselle.	Je suis Philosophe. (I.123).

In this sort of interchange we have the appearance of woman and the reality of woman summarised. The protestations and modest answers are a front for the light inner core of capricious desire and whimsy. Vanbrugh employs Madam as it were to translate the clichés of Lady

Fancyfull into a readily comprehensible form. The whole field of human communication is obscured by fashionable, oblique language that allows the coquette any action she wishes, no matter what she has said. This is pointed quite clearly in the scene between Heartfree and Lady Fancyfull in the Park. He tells her bluntly, that as she wants him, she must "lay down" her affectation: he follows this by saying that she is 'ungrateful' to Nature, and then warms to his subject:

> Lady Fancyfull. Why, what has Nature done for me?
> Heartfree. What you have undone by Art. It made you hansom; it gave you Beauty to a Miracle, a shape without a fault, Wit enough to make 'em relish, and so turn'd you loose to your own Discretion; which has made such work with you, that you are become the Pity of our Sex, and the Jest of your Own. There is not a feature in your Face, but you have found the way to teach it some affected Convulsion; your Feet, your Hands, your very Finger Ends are directed never to move without some ridiculous Air or other; and your language is a suitable Trumpet to draw people's Eyes upon the Raree-show. (I.126).

The point of this speech is obvious: Lady Fancyfull is betrayed so brilliantly in Vanbrugh's dialogue that no one can mistake her falsity. But the real crux of Heartfree's words lies in the basic recognition of the woman's potential. It is the waste which is so frightening; and there is direct reference to the situation of Lady Brute, for she too is wasting herself. The aside from Mademoiselle which follows Heartfree's speech throws the whole into an ironic light, "Est-ce qu'on fait l'Amour en Angleterre comme ca", precisely because Heartfree is no ordinary lover, he is the exception to the normal gallant: Constant is the better example.

Lady Fancyfull refuses to put aside her affectation (the laboured politeness of the scenes with Lady Brute and Belinda are fine theatrical entertainment) and though she plots to destroy the union of Heartfree and Belinda, is eventually unmasked symbolically when Razor, the manservant, reveals all; the real spiteful person is exposed to the ridicule of all. The use of disguise in the play is important. Norman Holland has shown the significance of disguise in Restoration comedy[1] and there is no need to reiterate his comments. But the whole scene at Spring Garden (and it is interesting that the name of the place belies its true nature) is beautifully manipulated - not only as an entertaining

1. Holland, The First Modern Comedies, 45-64.

spectacle, but for its symbolic properties: its dramatisation of the appearance/reality themes. Lady Brute and Belinda are masked and "poorly dress'd", they are masquerading for Constant and Heartfree and paradoxically will only show their true feelings when disguised. However, the audience, knowing them to be disguised, is doubly in a position to judge their actions and objectively assess the whole muddled chain of events which results from their deception. The ladies interchange with Constant and Heartfree before Sir John's entry confirms Vanbrugh's technique:

> Lady Brute. What, are you afraid of us, Gentlemen?
> Heartfree. Why, truly, I think we may, if Appearance don't lie.
> Belinda. Do you always find Women what they appear to be, Sir?
> Heartfree. No, forsooth; but I seldom find 'em better than they appear to be.
> Belinda. Then the Outside's best, you think?
> Heartfree. 'Tis the honestest. (I.160).

When Sir John enters in his normal state of inebriation, chaos is unloosed: but so it should be, for Lady Brute is engaged in an adulterous escapade. That the ladies are forced to reveal their true identity to the gallants breaks down the pretence, and leaves the way clear for immediate action. As they remove the masks from their faces, so they symbolically strip off their affected standards of virtue to reveal the animal nature beneath - passion takes over. The exchange between Constant and Lady Brute underlines this. Constant's reasonable suasions are accompanied by physical action which culminates in the attempted rape of Lady Brute in a convenient arbour. Lady Fancyfull and Mademoiselle foil this manoeuvre by "bolting out upon them", although they remain unmasked until the end of the action. That this is so would seem to imply that with their unmasking all the pretence of the play is equally stripped away; every character has come to know the truth about the others and this symbolic unmasking is then to be applied to the audience - with a correspondingly beneficial effect, it is to be hoped.

The remarks by Bernard Harris on Sir John Brute[1] have useful application at this point:

1. Harris, Sir John Vanbrugh, 24-25.

> The irony of the play is constantly illustrated in terms of physical experience. Thus, Sir John's own salvation is accomplished by an appropriate crudity of behaviour. Having arrived home drunk, and displayed insulting affection for his wife, he momentarily abandons the warmth of sexual desire for a cup of her cold tea, and opens the cupboard to discover Constant and Heartfree. The anticipated savagery is skilfully dissipated by his very inebriation. "All dirt and bloody" from his previous street scuffle he is soon overcome by fatigue and falls asleep in his chair. He is thus preserved by this surrender to the body's gross appetite from a more despicable attempt to defend a fraudulent honour by provoking a duel which he is too cowardly to fight. The denouement finds him suitably chastened.

What Harris does not realise is the symbolic significance of the opening of the closet. In the same way as masks are stripped to reveal the reality beneath, so the actual opening of the door reveals the reality of his wife's unfaithfulness to him. It is a particularly satisfying theatrical device.

Constant is the typical gallant but with some sense too. His comments to Heartfree in Act II.i are contrasted by Heartfree's more cynical comments on woman (I.128), but he too is really concerned only with the pleasures of the chase. Heartfree acts almost as a touchstone to the other characters, and we are to suppose that he and Belinda marry for love, even though the relationship begins as a cover for Constant and Lady Brute. There is slight mention of the economic considerations involved (Lady Brute. "Ten Thousand Pound, and such a Lass as you are, is no contemptible offer to a younger Brother"), but there is not the emphasis of <u>The Relapse</u>. The last lines of the play indirectly support the contrast for the Sir John/Lady Brute relationship and the Heartfree/Belinda relationship:

> Heartfree. Then lets to Church:
> And if it be our Chance to disagree -
> Belinda. Take heed - the surly Husband's Fate you see. (I.182).

And this refers us back to Act V.iv, where Constant replies to Heartfree's observation that "the Wife seldom rambles, till the Husband shows her the way":

> 'Tis true; a Man of real Worth, scarce ever is a Cuckold but by his own Fault. Women are not naturally lewd; there must be something to urge 'em to it. They'll Cuckold a Churl, out of Revenge; a Fool, because they despise him; a Beast because they loathe him. But once they make bold with a Man

> they once had a well grounded Value for 'tis because they first see themselves neglected by him. (I.175)

Heartfree's later comment, "... to be capable of loving one, doubtless is better than to possess a Thousand" (I.176), is the complement to this. The message is clear.

CHAPTER THREE

> The Stage but echoes back the public Voice.
> The Drama's Laws the Drama's Patrons give,
> For we that live to please, must please to live.[1]

I have attempted a more or less detailed appraisal of Vanbrugh's first three plays in order to show the comic rationale behind his work. A Short Vindication clearly reveals that he is working broadly in terms of "high" Restoration comedy where the relationship between audience and play implied that dramatic action was taken to be a larger than life size mirror image of the world. The audience was to laugh and be entertained by the action; was to realise its faults therefrom; and in this way reform itself. I have shown that Vanbrugh emphasised a dramatic method in which dialogue and characterisation were of greater importance than plot in indicating the moral, and that his concern was to show the difference between the appearance of his characters, what they think themselves to be, and their reality, what in fact they are beneath the social veneer. In addition, Vanbrugh modifies the moral and ethical considerations of a predominantly aristocratic society by demonstrating the economic realities of that society, and by approaching love and marriage in a realistic and sympathetic fashion removed from the more cynical premises of Wycherley and Congreve. Nonetheless, his conclusions do not lead him to see man as a perfectible creature, and for this reason if for none other he can in no way be considered a "sentimental" playwright. His treatment of country characters is an important part of his technique: in Aesop especially where Doris is used not solely to provide comic relief, but to comment on the paternal obligation plot and throw into perspective the exaggerated romantic elements. This is anticipated in The Relapse by the juxtaposition of romantic and realistic scenes. The tension caused by implicit comparison of various levels of dialogue supports the presentation of various appearance/reality themes, and is an essential part of the characterisation. The Prologues especially, show Vanbrugh's concern with his audience, and indicate his annoyance

1. Prologue, spoken by Mr. Garrick, at the opening of the theatre in Drury Lane, 1747. Samuel Johnson: Rassolas Poems and Selected Prose, edited by Bertrand Bronson, 46.

at their critical inability to recognise his moral purpose. When the straight didacticism of Aesop was ill-received he developed a far more sophisticated technique in The Provok'd Wife, and to convey his point moved to what is almost an appearance/reality dialectic. I would suggest that he modifies his technique yet again following the attack of Jeremy Collier which, besides castigating the plays for profanity and moral depravity, cast serious reflection on Vanbrugh's personal morality.

The Provok'd Wife was probably first performed in April, 1697 at Lincoln's Inn Fields. In March of the following year Collier published his inhibiting Short View of the Immorality and Prophaneness of the English Stage. As Professor Spingarn points out, the very title Short View suggests Rhymer's Short View of Tragedy as do the provocative language and the main thought. He is in fact using established critical tenets as a basis for his attack; an astute rhetorician, he realised that to make his appeal on the grounds of ascetic moral piety would alienate all but his fellow divines, who were themselves committed. Thus he attempts to meet the wits on their own ground. But his end purpose was to remove all contemporary comedy and indeed drama of any kind, so he attacks wherever he sees the stage to be vulnerable, whether from the point of view of language or literature or morality. Since he hoped to persuade the literary world as to the value of certain contemporary literary dogmas, he expected to convert to his side many who were concerned with the formal aspects of art but were not as troubled with ethical implications. Thus it is that he criticises The Relapse in that its duration must necessarily have extended beyond the required twenty-four hours and thus broke the unity of time; and also that it has two plots and so breaks the unity of action. Vanbrugh is quite unconcerned with such critical considerations: (I shan't here enter into the Contest, whether it be right to have two distinct Designs in one Play; I'll only say, I think when there are so, if they are both entertaining, then 'tis right; if they are not, then 'tis wrong. I.210). But he is concerned with the moral imputations, and for this reason I feel we should take his comments seriously, especially when we realise the

issues that his plays put forth:

> I may be blind in what relates to myself; 'tis more than possible, for most People are so: But if I judge right, what I have done is in general a Discouragement to Vice and Folly; I am sure I intended it, and I hope I have performed it. Perhaps I have not gone the common Road, nor observed the strictest Prescriptions; But I believe those who know this Town, will agree, That the Rules of a College of Divines will in an Infinity of Cases, fall as short of the Disorders of the Mind, as those of the Physicians do in the Diseases of the Body; and I think a man may vary from 'em both, without being a Quack in either. (I.195).

Here I take Vanbrugh's words to refer to a dramatic technique which is at variance not only with the sentimentalists but with the school of Wycherley and Congreve. He goes on to refute Collier's accusations of immorality and blasphemy point by point[1], and keeps well clear of considerations of style except for words on dialogue and characterisation[2]. There is no good reason why those next comments should not be taken seriously even though they comprise a flirt at the clergy:

> He may shew (if he pleases) That the Contempt of the Clergy proceeds from another kind of Want, that of Power and Revenue: That Piety and Learning, Charity and Humility, with so visible a Neglect of the Things of this Life, that no one can doubt their Expectations from another; is the way to be believ'd in their Doctrine, follow'd in their Precepts, and (by a most infallible Consequence) respected in their Function. Religion is not a Cheat, and therefore has no need of Trappings: Its Beauty is in its Nature, and wants no Dress: an Ambassador who comes with Advantageous Proposals, stands in no need of Equipage to procure him Respect. He who teaches Piety and Morality to the World, is so great a Benefactor to Mankind, he need never doubt their Thanks, if he does not ask too much of their Money.
>
> . . . . . But lest I should be mistaken, and make my self Enemies of Men I am no Enemy to, I must declare, my Thoughts are got to Rome, while I am talking thus of the Clergy; for the Charge is in no measure so heavy at home. The Reformation has reduc'd things to a tolerable Medium; and I believe what Quarrel we have to our Clergy here, points more at the Conduct of some, than the Establishment of the whole. I wish it may never go farther, and I believe it won't, if those who I don't question are still by much the Majority, will to so good an End (as the

1. For an excellent account of this and the whole Collier controversy see J.W. Krutch,

2. See p.33 above.

> curbing their Ambitious Brethren, and reforming their Lewd ones) for once make a League with the Wicked, and agree, that whilst They play their Great Artillery at 'em from the Pulpit, the Poets shall pelt 'em with their Small Shot from the Stage. (I.205).

John Harrington[1] refers to Collier's contentions for drama as an "exemplary" method: satire and realism are to be replaced by the code which implies that comedy should give a picture of human life better than it is, and should recommend high ideals by showing the good rewarded and the bad punished. This is anticipating the Shaftsburian argument for the natural benevolence of man, and of course rejects wholeheartedly any concept of the enduring effects of original sin. Collier's whole work depends heavily on the feeling that "if you aren't with us, then you must be against us". It follows, as I mentioned above, that as Vanbrugh does not support Collier then the implication is that he cannot believe in human perfectibility. The opening sentence of the above quotation seems to support this: Vanbrugh is concerned with temporal issues, and his incidental digs at the clergy would seem to indicate an apprechtion of the split between church and laity which could not but result from the breakdown of the Elizabethan world order, and which is reflected in his interest in the breakdown of the marriage contract as a metaphor for a wider disintegration. He is supporting a type of realism which is far more disturbing than Collier's exemplary mode: for satire by its very methods of exaggeration and distortion must in the first instance be a negative form - it has to clear the ground before society can be built anew. We cannot be surprised that Collier singled out Vanbrugh in particular for his attack: not because his plays were necessarily worse than those of his contemporaries, indeed their moral positive effect is far greater than most; but because he symbolised an attitude to life which to Collier's mind was destructive of the very essence of humanity.

That Vanbrugh was changed by Collier's attack is unlikely. What seems more certain is that due to the implications behind his attack, and the popularity of the subsequent outcry for far reaching reform of the stage, Vanbrugh adopted a more oblique approach to his

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1. Smith, The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy, 224-226.

material. It is my contention that in The Pilgrim and The False Friend he adopts the materials of sentimental, "exemplary" comedy but manipulates them to ironic effect. The attacks remain, but are camouflaged in a particularly interesting way; this is an extension of the appearance/reality technique: simply, the plays belie their initial appearance.

A Short Vindication of The Relapse and The Provok'd Wife from Immorality and Prophaneness was published June 8th 1698. Vanbrugh's next work, The Pilgrim, was first performed in the spring of 1700. It would be an oversimplification to say that this lapse was a result of Collier's attack, although it may well have been in part. The first letter of his that we have at present, dated December 25th 1699, throws some light on his activities:

> I have been this Summer at my Ld. Carlisle's, and Seen most of the great houses in the North, as Ld. Nottings: Duke of Leeds, Chatsworth etc. I stay'd at Chattesworth four or five days the Duke being there. I shew'd him all my Ld. Carlisle's designs, which he said was quite another thing, than what imagin'd from the Character yr Ldship gave him on't;
> . . . . . The Modell is preparing in wood, wch when done, is to travel to Kensington where the King's thoughts upon't are to be had. (IV.4-5).

"Ld. Carlisle's designs" were the plans for Castle Howard, the fine English Baroque house built by Vanbrugh for Charles, third Earl of Carlisle. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to touch on Vanbrugh's architecture, but in assessing his plays it should not be forgotten that besides being in turn soldier, Clarencieux Herald and diplomat (his Knighthood was earned for political service ostensibly - in June, 1706, Vanbrugh with Lord Halifax had presented the Garter to George-Augustus of Brunswick-Luneburg, afterwards George II of England[1]) he was one of the most eminent architects of his day, being responsible for Blenheim Palace and the new Greenwich Hospital, besides Castle Howard and other major houses. In addition he was one of the Patentees of Drury Lane, for a time with Congreve, and designed and built The Italian Opera House in the Haymarket[2]. It is not accurate, therefore,

1. Whistler, Sir John Vanbrugh, Architect and Humanist, 130-135.
2. Colley Cibber, An Apology for his Life, 162-171, has an account of this venture and its shortcomings.

to attribute his absences from the theatre to total disillusion at the state of the drama in London; he had many other interests to occupy him and keep him away from the capital.

There is a certain amount of controversy over the first performance date of The Pilgrim. The play was adapted from the play of the same name by Fletcher; Dryden contributed a prologue, epilogue and Secular Masque, and Mrs. Oldfield, as Alinda, made her first appearance in a part of any consequence. A.C. Sprague[1] has concisely summarised most available material and disagrees with Malone and Genest who support March 25th, 1700; he and Dobree (II.89) who follows him are unanimous in giving April 29th, 1700.

In a letter to Mrs. Steward, dated Thursday, April 11th, 1700, Dryden wrote: "Within this month there will be play'd, for my profit, an old play of Fletcher's, call'd the 'Pilgrim' corrected by my old friend Mr. Vanbrook and to which I have added a new masque; and am to write a prologue and epilogue". That Vanbrugh should have followed The Provok'd Wife with such a completely different kind of play as The Pilgrim seems to me to be of large significance. Either we must say that he is in this case writing an occasional piece, a pot-boiler for Dryden's benefit, and thus adapted the first play that came to hand; or we must agree with Sullen in A Comparison Between the Two Stages[3]: "Mr. Vanbrug is a Man of that able Sense, that he wou'd not run into an absurdity without very great temptation". I believe that as in all his plays, a clue can be found in the Epilogue and Prologue and also in the Secular Masque - even though all three are by Dryden. For Dryden as well as Vanbrugh had been attacked by Collier, and given his comparatively low prestige at the time I cannot see Vanbrugh supporting his sentiments unless he agreed with them. The Prologue begins with a description of the poet baited by the audience as a bear is baited by dogs:

> HOW wretched is the Fate of those who write!
> Brought muzzled to the Stage, for fear they bite.
> Where, like Tom Dove, they stand the Common Foe;
> Lugg'd by the Critique, Baited by the Beau.
> Yet worse, their Brother Poets Damn the Play,
> And Roar the loudest, tho' they never Pay. (II.92).

1. Sprague, Beaumont and Fletcher on the Restoration Stage, 89-93.
2. The Works of John Dryden, ed. Scott & Sainsbury, xvii, 179.
3. Gildon, A Comparison Between the Two Stages, 96.

There then follows very heavy satire, of the kind we find in Absolom and Achitophel, on Sir Richard Blackmore ("Maurus") who had written moral tracts on the immorality of the stage even before Collier. These lines from A Satyr against Witt (1700) indicate his interest in the wit v. sense controversy which was supported by Addison in the Spectator and attacked so violently by Pope in the Dunciad:

> The mob of wit is up to storm the town,
> And pull all virtue and right reason down.
> Quite to subvert religion's sacred fence
> to set up wit, and pull down commonsense.

Through Blackmore Dryden is attacking the whole Collier "exemplary" school; he obviously cannot attack Collier by name. In the same way, Vanbrugh, having been one of Collier's main victims, is able to attack Collier through Dryden; and is able to make the attack in an oblique fashion. In the Epilogue Dryden does in fact answer Collier and I tend to the conclusion that his remarks are meant to be at least partially ironic. I do not see that Frank Harper Moore can substantiate his comments on this Epilogue: "It is unwarranted to assume that in 1671 or 1672, when he wrote Marriage à la Mode, Dryden had the same moral standards that he had in 1700 when, in the Epilogue to The Pilgrim, he implied that he had been a literary prostitute to the lewd Restoration Court".[1] Dryden is notoriously difficult to assess, and emphasising as he does the lewedness of the audiences and the Court, then given the mirror-image reform technique, the plays are apt and just:

> I pass the Pecadillo's of their time:
> Nothing but open Lewedness was a Crime.
> A Monarch's blood was venial to the Nation,
> Compar'd with one foul Act of Fornication.
> Now, they would silence us, and shut the Door
> That let in all the barefac'd Vice before. (II.146).

This seems to me to be irony of the kind Vanbrugh himself uses in the Prologue to The Provok'd Wife, where more concern is shown for the "Crime" of "Lewedness" than the "Pecadillo" of the execution of Charles I. The values of society are seen to be twisted and quite inverted.

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1. Moore, The Nobler Pleasure, 168.

Vanbrugh's plays are meant to redress the balance.

The very beautiful Secular Masque is an allegory of the closing century. Dobree explains: "Diana represents the reign of James I, with whom hunting was a pleasure, and happy vinous evenings a relaxation. Mars stands for the Civil Wars and Venus for the courtly debaucheries of the early Restoration ..." The Queen of Pleasure was "probably the lovely and much-loved Mary of Modena, the wife of James II, in exile with her husband. Dryden would readily introduce her in this masque". (II.255-256). This bald commentary quite obscures Dryden's obvious longing for the old days. Even though the end of the Masque points at the shortcomings of the past age, the strength of the language used to describe that time shows where his sympathies lie. Momus' first speech seems to summarise an attitude which is very much Vanbrugh's own:

> Ha! ha! ha! Ha! ha! ha! well hast thou done
> To lay down thy Pack,
> And lighten thy Back,
> The World was a Fool, o'er since it begun,
> And since neither Janus, nor Chronos, nor I,
> Can hinder the Crimes,
> Or mend the Bad Times,
> 'Tis better to Laugh than to Cry. (II.143).

And the ending merely endorses the prevalent theme that human nature remains constant in all ages - very anti-Collier sentiment. That Chronos refers to the world metaphorically as "light" in the Restoration period, and as a "pond'rous Orb" since then, does nothing to support the final Chorus:

> All, all, of a piece throughout;
> Thy Chase had a Beast in View;
> Thy Wars brought nothing about;
> Thy Lovers were all untrue.
> 'Tis well an Old Age is out,
> And time to begin anew. (II.145).

The implication is that change is desirable perhaps, but not the kind of change that has occurred since the Restoration. Perhaps it is worthwhile to point out that the cry for change is noted in Vanbrugh's work; he modifies his style to suit the new conditions.

According to Cibber, Vanbrugh had "given some light touches of his pen"[1] to The Pilgrim: this is an understatement. That Vanbrugh should have chosen a play by Fletcher is in itself very revealing. I have shown his concern is with language and character and not with plot; Fletcher, it is fair to say, works in exactly the opposite way. Thus we have Una Ellis-Fermor writing on the technique of Fletcher: "... we have an impression that the motives have been supplied after the situations and emotional crises have been decided upon; they have been thought out carefully and articulated delicately, but nevertheless, they are only part of the apparatus of illusion, made to conceal the real springs of the machine which are situation and action".[2] (My emphasis). Or, as the same critic continues: "The salt of common sense that meets us on every page of Ben Jonson, and that stayed by the major Jacobean dramatists at all but their wildest moments, has vanished from the fairyland of Beaumont and Fletcher".[3] Referring especially to Fletcher she says that his contribution to tragi-comedy (The Pilgrim was tragi-comedy to Fletcher and comedy to Vanbrugh) is the importance of mood: "somewhere between the light-heartedness of unshadowed comedy and the apprehension of mystery and shock which attend a final catastrophe".[4] Vanbrugh takes as his model a romantic story written in blank verse, a story where love's first blooms are rewarded; that his treatment of this is in part ironic becomes clear for a number of reasons.

Elizabeth Mignon indicates the right direction in her remarks on the play, in demonstrating how Vanbrugh's adaptation changes the original to stress a particular relationship between "crabbed age and youth".

> In The Pilgrim ..... Alphonso, 'an Old Angry gentleman', is an unreasonable, tyrannical father. It is significant for a study of old age that Vanbrugh coarsens and vulgarises Alphonso's cruelty and willingness to sacrifice his daughter. This change is made in two ways, by dropping the level of the language from verse to prose and by greater realism in

1. Cibber, An Apology for his Life, 140.
2. Una Ellis-Fermor, The Jacobean Drama, 207.
3. Ellis-Fermor, The Jacobean Drama, 209.
4. Ellis-Fermor, The Jacobean Drama, 204-205.

characterisation . . . . . At a friend's suggestion of his lack of parental insight, the Fletcher Alphonso says,

> Enough, enough, enough, Sir;
> She is malleable . . . . . .

Vanbrugh's old man cries out; 'Tough, Tough, Tough as the Devil; you see I can't break her.' Alphonso's first meeting with his daughter is strong evidence for the distinction in character treatment. Fletcher allows Alinda to speak first:

> I shall obey ye,
> But noble Sir.
>
> Alph. Come, come, away with your flatteries,
> And your fine phrases.
> . . . . . .
> I know 'em; and know your feats; if you will find me
> Noble and loving, seek me in your duty,
> You know that I am too indulgent.

Vanbrugh's Alphonso roars,

> O, are you there Mistress? Well, how goes Disobedience today? - That's a base down Look - Ah you sturdy young Jade.
> . . . . . .
> Pray be quiet; I know best how to deal with her: and I will make her obey, or I will make her - (all above II.95-96).[1]

In similar fashion to Learchus in Aesop, Alphonso is seeking personal power by sacrificing his daughter, Alinda, to Roderigo, an outlaw captain; she unfortunately is in love with Pedro, an enemy of her Father, who, disguised as a pilgrim and "urg'd with secret discontent", pursues a mendicant existence around Segovia. Alinda finally follows him, is followed in turn by Juletta, the maidservant, both disguised as boys, and are themselves followed by Alphonso who Juletta manages to have admitted to a lunatic asylum. All of the characters' paths cross, and there is the usual bevy of mistaken identities which end in Pedro's conversion of Roderigo and his marriage to Alinda. The play is by any standard tedious and I am certainly not suggesting that this is one of Vanbrugh's better works even though The Pilgrim original, according to Coleridge, "holds the first place in Beaumont and Fletcher's romantic entertainments".[2] A.C. Sprague has produced a useful summary of Vanbrugh's main differences from the original, and he too notes the emphasis placed on Alphonso:

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1. Mignon, Crabbed Age and Youth, 150-151.
2. Coleridge, Literary Remains, 315.

> Yet it must not be supposed that Vanbrugh's treatment was radical. Old Alphonso, to be sure, has been made more choleric. Perhaps the reviser felt this was necessary in view of the severe punishment meted out to him in the concluding scenes. But it is only with regret that one sees him deprived of his remark on the supposed fool ("'Tis pity this pretty thing should want understanding"), or of his bearish acceptance of things, at the end of the play:
>
> > Well, well, since wedding will come after wooing
> > Give me some rosemary, and let's be going -
>
> a closing on just the right note. I may add that his soliloquy in the third act, when he is terrified by Juletta's drum, has been given a new and uncalled-for touch of brutality not to be forgiven on any score: "But hark: hark, I say, ay; here they come. That I had but the strumpet (Alinda) here now, to find 'em a little Play while I made my escape".[1]

Sprague is an obvious devotee of Fletcher and his indignation at Vanbrugh's changes are an indication of how far Vanbrugh has moved from the spirit of the original in the character of Alphonso. This can only be deliberate. H.T. Eyck Perry has noticed the same thing:

> It is curious that again and again he should choose a romantic play on which to exercise his talents: Aesop, The Pilgrim, The False Friend and The Mistake are all taken from dramas (most of them in verse) filled with noble emotions and even nobler sentiments. Perhaps Vanbrugh kept on good terms with his conscience by devoting his energies to such elevated material and then pleased himself by the prosaic and ribald way in which he treated it. At any rate, each time that he had any real success with his second-hand work, it was in the coarser passages, where he could stick to mundane concerns and did not need to soar with his original into the higher levels of romantic fancy. Such passages are generally those where the servants are concerned, and in every case Vanbrugh has added to and developed their roles. Doris in Aesop, Jacinta, Lopez and Galinda in The False Friend, Lopez and Sancho in The Mistake, but more especially Flippanta and Brass in The Confederacy have mere shadows as their prototypes.[2]

It is precisely because Vanbrugh wishes to demonstrate the escapist quality to romantic and "exemplary" drama that he sticks to mundane

1. Sprague, Beaumont and Fletcher on the Restoration Stage, 246-247.
2. Perry, The Comic Spirit in Restoration Drama, 103-104.

concerns within his adaptations; he is preoccupied with the unreality of "the higher levels of romantic fancy". As Perry realises, servants and "lowclass" figures predominantly are, in the later plays, heavily emphasised; this to my mind can only be to put the other characters into ironic relief. As Vanbrugh uses contrasted speech patterns in The Relapse and Aesop, and in The Relapse contrasted scenes, so in the later plays he concentrates on the ironic juxtaposition of characters.

Alphonso works in just this way. Miss Mignon has shown Vanbrugh's treatment of him at the beginning of the play and he continues in this vein right to the end of the action. There is the almost symbolic motif of Juletta's harrying of him:

> Juletta . . . . . .
> I have made him Swear and Curse, and Pray, and Curse again: I have made him lose his horse too, whistled him through thick and thin. Down in a Ditch I had him; there he lay blaspheming, till I called him out to guide his Nose pop into a Fuz bush. Ten thousand Tricks I have play'd him, and ten thousand will I add to them before I have done with him. I'll teach his to plague poor Women. (II.112).

She tricks him into captivity in the lunatic asylum (Act IV.ii) and yet he still keeps his choleric temper. His remarks in the final scenes stand in very sharp contrast with the courtly politenesses of the Governor, Pedro and the now reformed Roderigo. All are gathered symbolically around an altar and Alinda and Juletta enter "like Shepherdesses":

> Juletta. Here they all are, Madam, but fear nothing: the Place protects you. My old Bilboa Master, o'my Conscience. How in the name of mischief got he out? but they have pepper'd him I see. That's some Comfort.
> Alinda. Hail to the sacred Place (Going to the altar
> Seberto. 'Tis she, sure
> Curio. 'Tis, certainly.
> Pedro. Is it a Vision? or is it She?
> Roderigo. 'Tis she, and what you were foretold is now at hand. Rejoice, my Friend, for Happiness attends you.
> Governor. (Aside) What is't these Strangers seem so much surprised at?
> Alphonso. I had a Daughter once with just such a young whorish Leer as that: A Filly too, that waited on her; much such a Slut as t'other. Are they come to keeping of Goats: 'tis very well. (II.139).

The language of Alphonso's remarks and indeed those of Juletta, rather than aiding the "mood" which Miss Ellis-Fermor speaks of in Fletcher's plays, serves to destroy it by its contrast to the repeated rhetoric of "'Tis she". This exchange has a similar effect of breaking down the forced benevolence of the apparently merited match between Pedro and Alinda:

> Pedro. In spite of all my Griefs, Life still prevails: Fate seems to have some further business for me; if 'tis to wander on with fruitless Care, and buffet still with Disappointments, let Manhood be my aid. But if the sullen cloud that long has hung about my head, be destin'd to withdraw, 'tis the warm Influence of your blessing, Sir, that must disperse it.
>
> (Kneels to Alphonso
>
> Alph. I bless thee! -- ha, ha: --- Damn thee.
> Gov. Sir, 'tho' I am a Stranger both to you, and the Request the Noble Pedro makes you, his merit's so well known to me, that I must be his second in his suit, and tell you nothing can er'e be in your Power to grant, but his desert may claim. -
> Alph. I don't know what his desert may claim, Governor: But if he claims anything but a Gallows, he's a very impudent Fellow.
> Rod. Perhaps I being a Mediator, Sir, may change your thoughts of him ---
> Alph. Roderigo?
> Rod. Roderigo, Sir, becomes a supplicant for Pedro, that you wou'd bless yourself in blessing him, and bless the fair Alinda.
> Alph. (Aside) I believe you may. Let me see: he has a mind to be rid of her, why shou'd not I? Pedro's a Dog, and if I cou'd hang him, I wou'd. But since I can't, I'll be revenged another way: He shall marry the Whore. (II.140).

There is simply no comparison between this and Fletcher's chastened and redeemed Alphonso.

The conversion of Roderigo would seem to support my thesis. Being surprised by four peasants while sleeping, he is saved from death by the tediously beneficent Pedro and refuses to fight the man he has wronged:

> Rod. . . . . If thou wilt have me fight, give me an Enemy, for thou art none.

Pedro. I'm more, for I'm thy Rival.
Rod. That is not in thy power, for I no more am thine. No, Pedro; the wrongs I've done myself and thee, let that fair Saint attone for: there's nothing more I or the world can give, and nothing less can expiate my Crimes, or recompence thy Virtue.
Pedro. Is it possible thou canst be such a Penitent!
Rod. I am most truly such; and lest I shou'd relapse again to Hell, forget the Debt I owe to thee and Heav'n, this sacred Habit I have so prophan'd shall hencoforth be my faithful Monitor.
Pedro. Noble Roderigo, how glorious is this Change! Let me embrace thee.
Rod. Thou great Example of Humanity, dost thou forgive me?
Pedro. I do; with Joy I do.
Rod. Then I am happy - All I have more to ask, is, leave to attend you in your present difficulties; that by such service as I have power to render, I may confirm you I am what I seem.
Pedro. There needs no further proof. However, in hopes I doubly may return those services, I'll not refuse them. (Exeunt

This anaemic passage with its glib and unconvincing dialogue is followed in the next scene by Alphonso entertaining himself by watching the lunatics, and Vanbrugh here exercises his great faculty for effective colloquial speech. The contrast between the two scenes is very much the kind of effect that he likes, for it puts the preceding scene into sharp perspective, with the immediacy of its language and staging. The Pedro-Roderigo interchange is thus shown in its full affectation.

Mention could here be made of Vanbrugh's insertion of the stuttering Cook (played by Cibber) scene, which breaks down the false sentiment of the preceding scene where Alinda recognises Pedro and decides to follow him.

The use of disguise in the play is widespread and of course already existed in Fletcher's version. It is in part responsible for Roderigo's reformation: Pedro is not really a pilgrim and uses the disguise to conceal his grief which, as one would expect in an ostensibly "exemplary" play, does not stop him from doing universal good - a sentiment that Vanbrugh would anyway agree with. There is

no need to dwell on Fletcher's use of what is after all a common convention, which would appeal to Vanbrugh's interest in the appearance/reality themes. However, there is the instance in the asylum where the mad scholar, apparently sane, suddenly shows his insanity much to the concern of the gentlemen sent to procure his release. The speed of his change of humour displays the difference between appearance and reality in most immediate terms, and is an epitome of this particular aspect of Vanbrugh's dramatic technique.

As with The Pilgrim, the Prologue to The False Friend (probably first performed at Drury Lane in late January/early February 1702) (II.154), puts into perspective what is to follow:

> To gain your Favour, we your Rules Obey,
> And Treat you with a Moral Piece to Day;
> So Moral, we're afraid 'twill Damn the Play.
> . . . . . .
> Change then your Scheme, if you'll your Foe annoy,
> And the infernal Bajazet destroy:
> Our aid accept,
> W'ave gentler Stratagems, which may succeed;
> We'll tickle 'em where you wou'd make 'em Bleed;
> In sounds less harsh, we'll teach 'em to Obey;
> In softer Strains, the Evil Spirit lay,
> And steal their Immorality away. (II.157).

This seems to be an ironical demand to the Collier party to modify their reforming zeal in the theatre, in that the obviously exemplary, didactic mode destroys not only entertainment but art too. Vanbrugh claims to be following the Rules, pretends therefore to bow to critical authority, although he makes it plain - as he does in A Short Vindication - that he sees no future in this kind of drama. As he invites them to "Change then your Scheme, if you'll your Foe annoy", so too does he change his scheme in that he uses for his adaptations plays with a high moral tone. The False Friend is taken from a ballon d'essai by Le Sage, Le Traitre Puni, itself a translation considerably altered from the La Traicion busca el castigo by Francisco de Rojas Zorilla, (II.151), a verse play in three acts. Like The Pilgrim the scene is Spanish and therefore sufficiently exotic to remove social criticism away from obvious relevance to London. As in the earlier adaptations, it deals with forced marriage, and whilst lacking the immediacy of the more vital works set in England, it touches on a theme which plainly interests Vanbrugh. Don Felix, father of Leonora, marries his daughter against her will to a suitor from

outside Valencia, Don Pedro. Immediately after the forced ceremony, Pedro hears that his father is dying and leaves his new bride in the care of Don John who, as his name might imply, has a particularly conscienceless attitude to women and honour amongst friends, and attempts to rape her. He is surprised by Don Guzman who, filled with pompous and full blown concepts of honour, is beloved by Leonora. Pedro returns to find both men in his new bride's bedchamber, and each accuses the other of the attempt. As Pedro's best friend, John persuades him finally that Guzman is the guilty party; both plan to stab Guzman but in the dark of Guzman's appartment Pedro mistakenly stabs John, who then confesses his guilt. Everything is then explained, the guilty are punished, and the virtuous rewarded: Pedro's honour entitles him to the still unwilling, but nonetheless admiring Leonora.

Vanbrugh's attitude to the pretentious honour and virtue themes of the original play is apparent from the first scene. Don John comes on stage beating Lopez, his servant, who has apparently been admonishing him for his conduct with women. The whole question of morality is thus immediately raised, and John's attitude towards it made clear. The place of Lopez as an ironic commentator on the action is also established in the manner that by now we can see is typical to Vanbrugh. John's line "Go, go, moralise in the Market-Place:" (II.159) could as well be Vanbrugh's own bored comment on "exemplary" drama. He changes the original, and gives John's speech on his own erotic technique to Lopez (II.160) thus confirming Lopez's position as a commentator. When Guzman enters to challenge John for courting Leonora we can see that tension between styles that Vanbrugh favours to throw ironic light on what he considers false dramatic themes: Guzman admits that he has had conversation with Leonora "through a small Breach I have made in a thin Partition that divides our Lodgings" and continues:

> .....I trust you, Don John, with this important Secret;
> Friend or Enemy, you are Noble, therefore keep it,
> I charge your Honour with it.
>
> Lopez. You cou'd not put it in better hands. (Aside
>
> Guzman. But more; my Passion for this Lady is not hid; all
> Valencia is acquainted with my Wishes, and approves
> my Choice. You alone, Don John de Alvarda, seeming
> ignorant of my Vows, dare traverse my Amour.
>
> John. Go on.

Lopez. These words import War; lie close, Lopez. (Aside
Guzman. You are the Argus of our Street, and the Spy of Leonora; whether Diana, by her borrow'd Light supplies the Absence of the Astre of Day, or that the shades of Night cover the Earth with impenetrable Darkness; you still attend till Aurora's return, under the Balcony of that adorable Beauty.
John. So.
Guzman. Wherever she moves, you still follow as her Shadow, at Church, at Plays; be her business with Heaven or Earth, your Importunity is such, you'l share it.
Lopez. He is a forward Fellow, that's the truth on't. (Aside
Guzman. But what's still further, you take the Liberty to Copy me; my Words, my Actions, every motion's no sooner mine, but your's. In short, you ape me, Don, and to that point, I once design'd to stab myself, and try if you wou'd follow me in that too.
Lopez. No, there the Monkey wou'd have left you. (II.162).

Guzman's florid style betokens the unreality of all that he stands for. In sharp contrast are the energetic remarks of John:

> . . . . .I hate him enough, to love every Woman that belongs to him; and the Fool has so provok'd me by his threat'ning, that I believe I shall have a Stroke at his Mother, before I think myself even with him.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> A Son of a Whore! s'death, I did not care sixpence for the Slut before, but now I'll have her Maidenhead in a Week; for fear the Rogue shou'd Marry her in Ten Days. (II.163).

The whole scene between Guzman and Jacinta is Vanbrugh's own, and similarly appears to have been inserted to throw the action into perspective:

Guzman. Still trifling?
Jacinta. No by my Troth not I.
Guzman. The turn thy Thoughts to ease me in my Torment, and be my faithful Witness to her, that Heaven and Hell and all their Wrath I Impricate, if ever Once I knew One Fleeting Thought, that durst propose to me, so Impious an attempt. No, Jacinta; I love her well; but Love with that Humility, whatever Misery I feel, my Torture ne'er shall urge me on to Seize, more than her Bounty gives me leave to take.
Jacinta. And the Murrain take such a Lover, and his Humility both say I. Why sure, Sir, you are not in earnest in this Story, are you?

Jacinta cannot believe that anyone who claims to be an ardent Lover

would not make every attempt to get at the object of their affection. This is a very close parallel with Doris' comments of Oronce's slowness in approaching Euphronia in Aesop. These conventionalities of the exemplary comedies display emotion which is hardly human; they are divorced from life and are as much affectation as the social idiosyncracies of Lord Foppington. Vanbrugh examines the appearance of virtue and honour in The False Friend and finds it to be unreal. The pretentiousness of the plot is summarised in the final words of Lopez looking upon his dead master. The "Bonus Nocius", simple yet profound, demonstrates not only the servant's distaste for a wholly unprincipled man, but on another level dismisses the whole stupid premise of the plot. It is contrived, stilted, as removed from the realities of life as all sentimental comedy must be. That John gets killed as he does, of course satisfies the moralists; but the amazingly obvious way that this happens, with mistaken identity in the dark and traditional deathbed repentance, is such insensitive stagecraft, so far removed from Vanbrugh's normal polished ingenuity, that I feel it can only have been allowed to remain to underline the utterly ridiculous nature of the plot. The last speeches of the play might almost be a parody of themselves:

> Guzman. What has produc'd this Bloody scene?
> Pedro. 'Tis I have been the Actor in't, my Poignard, Guzman, I intended in your Heart: I thought your Crime deserved it, but I did you wrong, and my Hand in searching the Innocent, has by Heaven's Justice been directed to the Guilty. Don John, with his last breath, confesst himself the Offender. Thus my Revenge is satisfied, and you are clear'd.
> Guzman. Good Heaven, how equitable are thy Judgements!
> Pedro. (To Leonora) Come, Madam, my Honour is now satisfied, and you are clear'd.
> Leonora. If it is not so
> You to your self alone, shall owe your smart,
> For where I've given my hand, I'll give my heart.

Bearing in mind Leonora's previous protestations of undying affection for Guzman this must come as some surprise even to the most inattentive critic: however, Vanbrugh's attitude to the whole affair is summed up in the refreshingly honest Epilogue, spoken again by the ravishing Mrs. Oldfield, as Jacinta:

> What say you, Sirs, d'ye think my Lady'll 'scape,
> 'Tis dev'lish hard to stand a Fav'rite's Rape?
> Shou'd Guzman, like Don John, break in upon her,
> For all her Vertue, Heaven! have Mercy on her;
> Her strength, I doubt, 's in his Irresolution,
> There's wondrous Charms in Vig'rous Execution. (II.204).

This would appear to contradict every conclusion of the basic plot of the play, and its breezy colloquial diction provides a fine contrast with the stuffy histrionics of the ending. Vanbrugh's "gentler Stratagems" of oblique satirical comment do not seem to be quite as gentle as they were in The Pilgrim. The melodramatic ending with John's incredibly artificial confession is as unconvincing in its stage craft as it is in its character change, and the Epilogue supports Vanbrugh's consciousness of this. His attitude to the forced marriage then becomes clear. For though the moral original shows the virtue of acquiescence to paternal authority, the adaptation clearly says that personal preference alone can be the foundation of an enduring marriage. Tedious Don Pedro would soon find himself cuckolded were it not for the spinelessness of Guzman. As Falstaff says, "Honour is a mere scutcheon"[1]; the sentimental heroes are bombastic, humourless shells, only the servants have any humanity.

1. Shakespeare, King Henry IV, Part I, Act V.i.

CHAPTER FOUR

I have shown how Vanbrugh deliberately took romantic material in The Pilgrim and The False Friend and by emphasising certain roles was able in part to ridicule the increasingly popular "exemplary" drama. I have also suggested that although Collier's attack appeared to affect him enough to elicit a sincere reply, nonetheless his faith in his own particular technique remained strong. This is confirmed by his remaining plays.

There seems to be some confusion as to the performance date of The Country House. Dobree says clearly "That excellent and lively farce The Country House was first acted at Drury Lane on 23rd January, 1703, 'At the Desire of Several Persons of Quality', being advertised in the Daily Courant of the 21st with 'A Consort of Musick by the Best Masters, wherein the famous Signora . . . . etc.: with several New Entertainments of Dancing by Monsieur Du-Ruell, lately arrived from the Opera in Paris . . . . None are to be admitted but printed Tickets, not above four hundred in number, at Five Shillings a Ticket'".[1] Whistler agrees with this.[2] However, Perry says "date unknown"[3], while Leo Hughes in his study of farce between 1660 and 1760 refers to Hotson who reproduces a record indicating a performance on 18th January, 1698[4]. Hughes has shown how farce and after-pieces were traditional in the French theatre[5], and it is therefore no surprise that Vanbrugh is again adapting from the French, in this case the La Maison de Campagne of Florent-Carton Dancourt, first played at the Comedie Francaise on 27th January, 1688. As with Aesop, it is conceivable that Vanbrugh could have seen it while in France. Although Hughes says that Professor Lancaster quite accurately labels this piece as "comedy of manners"[6], there is little in it sufficiently outstanding to warrant an accurate date essential to this thesis, and I shall therefore follow Dobree. In any case, Vanbrugh's interest in The Country House is obviously centred around what might conveniently be called "bourgeois" characters; Mr.

1. Dobree, The Collected Works of Sir John Vanbrugh, II,209.
2. Whistler, Sir John Vanbrugh, Architect and Humanist, 96.
3. Perry, The Comic Spirit in Restoration Drama, 85.
4. Hughes, A Century of English Farce, 244, note 9.
5. Hughes, A Century of English Farce, 60-94.

Barnard is "an old Lawyer in the Country, who had got an Estate by ruining honest People in Town". (II.225), and such an interest would seem to look forward to the basic situation in The Confederacy of 1705 and the rather dubious Squire Trelooby which may have been written by the triumvirate of Vanbrugh, Congreve and Walsh in 1704, (first performed according to Dobree 30th March). (I.xxxv.).

(I shall not include Squire Trelooby in this treatment of Vanbrugh's plays. Congreve has this to say of it in a letter to Joseph Keally:

> The translation you speak of is not altogether mine; for Vanbrugh and Walsh had a part in it. Each did an act of a French farce. (Monsieur de Pourceaugnac by Molière). Mine, and I believe theirs, was done in two mornings; so there can be no great matter in it. It was a compliment made to the people of quality at their subscription music, without any design to have it acted or printed farther.[1]

In addition, as Nicoll mentions[2], another adaptation of the same French play as Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, or, Squire Trelooby, appeared the same year; and Congreve's Preface[3] of April 19th, 1704 says clearly that the performance of the Vanbrugh/Congreve/Walsh adaptation was "prevented by a Translation of the same Play, done by other Hands, and presented at the New Play-house the 30th of last Month". As this is the date that both Nicoll and Dobree give for the Vanbrugh/Congreve/Walsh adaptation, there is patently confusion as to which adaptation belongs to which author or authors. And that apart, it is still impossible to ascertain the exact contribution which each person made).

The Country House is significant above all for its energetic dialogue and rural setting. The cumulation of hungry guests descending on Mr. Barnard's house and his turning of it into an inn are of course Dancourt's own, but Vanbrugh's adaptation seems to give added life to what is already a brilliantly funny situation. The meeting between the Marquis and the Baron de Messy with its wealth of exquisite plaisanteries is handled as adroitly as the scene between the boy, Charley, and Mariane and Lisett where Charley describes Erast's passion for Mariane

1. Congreve, Letters and Documents, 29.
2. Nicoll, A History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama, 152.
3. The Complete Works of William Congreve, ed. Montague Summers, Vol. III, 115.

("And then he talk'd to me of you, and said you had the charmingest Bubbies, and every time he named 'em, Ha! says he, as if he had been supping hot Milk Tea.") (II.227). Even though the simple pleasures of country life are given a somewhat cynical treatment and country affairs are shown to be utterly trivial:

> Dorant. Now, Sir, we have an Opportunity of making all the Gentlemen in the Country our Friends.
> Mr. Barnard. I'm glad on't with all my Heart, pray how so?
> Dorant. There's an old Quarrel to be made up between two Families, and all the Company are to meet at our House.
> Mr. Barnard. Ay, with all my Heart; but pray what is the Quarrel?
> Dorant. O Sir, a very Ancient Quarrel; It happened between their Great Grandfathers about a Duck.
> Mr. Barnard. A quarrel of Consequence truly. (II.228).

nonetheless Mr. Barnard comes off best in the end, and there is not that totally unsympathetic treatment of the bourgeoisie that is to be found in high Restoration comedy. Mr. Barnard's attitude to his situation shows clear commonsense:

> Madam Barnard. What is the meaning of this, Husband? Are not you ashamed to turn your House into an Inn - and is this a Dress for my Spouse, and a man of your Character?
> Mr. Barnard. I'd rather wear this Dress than be ruin'd. (II.231).

and his final solution to the problem of a witless, overgenerous wife looks forward in part to the conclusion reached on the same subject by Lord Loverule in the fragment A Journey to London (III.154). If The Relapse shows incidentally that human nature remains the same in both town and country insofar as each has its foibles and affectations, then the same may be said of The Country House. The bias always comes down slightly in favour of the town, but Vanbrugh's use of characters who are not members of fashionable society indicates the diminishing significance of that body both as audience and dominant social stratum. John Loftis seems to be correct when he says that Vanbrugh's squires are:

> . . . . . are among (his) most notable achievements . . . town and country in fact are frequently opposed in contrasting characters in such a way that the country represents dull virtue and London attractive sin. Fielding, who later saw the antithesis in much the same terms, preferred dull virtue. Not Vanbrugh: he satirises both extremes, but his sympathies rest firmly with the Town.[1]

although I think he fails, with nearly all the critics, to appreciate the full scope of Vanbrugh's work. The use of servants to provide ironic commentary on the actions of their superiors would seem to imply a recognition of that change in the social milieu of which Collier's attack on the stage was but one manifestation. Vanbrugh obviously belongs to the beau monde, but his satire of it and his interest in characters from outside it would seem to indicate an awareness of its increasingly precarious position. And after all, he was himself from the middle classes, his father being a sugar-baker and staunch anti-Catholic low churchman.[2]

The Confederacy, first acted on Tuesday, 30th October, 1705, at the Haymarket, a theatre designed and owned by Vanbrugh, is also a translation from Dancourt, Les Bourgeoises à la Mode, 1682.[3] Unlike The Country House, Vanbrugh changes the scene, taking it from Paris to London, and anglicises the names clearly indicating that it has a specific application to London society. The Prologue, spoken by "a Shabby Poet", is significant mainly in its appeal for money; there is none of the earlier more pertinent comment on satire and the function of drama. This new play is "To Sooth the Town" (III.11), although there is the brief reference "But he'll go on, and set your Fancy out," (III.11) which touches the mirror image function whilst punning on the audience's own preferences in entertainment.

The first scene is Vanbrugh's own addition to Dancourt's play which opens with Brass' comments on his master, now the second scene. It is set in Covent Garden and the conversation between Mrs. Amlet (a Seller of all Sorts of private Affairs to the Ladies) and her

1. Loftis, Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding, 71.
2. Whistler, Sir John Vanbrugh, Architect and Humanist, 13-22.
3. (IV.3,7).

neighbour Mrs. Cloggit sets the scene for the ensuing action. Again there are two main plots, the confederacy between the two scriveners wives, Clarissa and Araminta, to dun their husbands Cripe and Money-trap; and the attempt of Mrs. Amlet's son, Dick, to pass himself off as a gentleman and marry Corinna, "Daughter to Cripe by a former Wife". Both are immediately introduced:

> Clog. . . . . But now you talk of Conscience, Mrs. Amlet, how do you speed amongst your City Customers?
>
> Aml. My City Customers! Now by my truth, Neighbour, between the City and the Court (with Reverence be it spoken) there's not a ----- to choose. My Ladies in the City, in Times past, were as full of Gold as they were of Religion, and as punctual in their Payments as they were in their Prayers; but since they have set their Minds upon Quality, adieu one, adieu t'other, their Money and their Consciences are gone, Heav'n knows where. There is not a Goldsmith's Wife to be found in Town, but's as hardhearted as an Ancient Judge, and as poor as a towering Dutchess.
>
> Clog. But what the murrain have they to do with Quality, why don't their Husbands make 'em mind their Shops?
>
> Aml. Their Husbands! their husbands, say'st thou, woman? Alack, alack, they mind their Husbands, Neighbour, no more than they do a Sermon.
>
> Clog. Good lack a Day, that Women born of sober Parents, should be prone to follow ill Examples: But now we talk of Quality, when did you hear of your son, Richard, Mrs. Amlet? My daughter Flip says she met him t'other day in a lac'd Coat, with three fine Ladies, his Footman at his Heels, and as gay as a Bridegroom.
>
> Aml. Is it possible? Ah the Rogue! well Neighbour, all's well that ends well; but Dick will be hang'd. (III.14)

The most significant feature here is Vanbrugh's interest in bourgeois characters after the predominantly aristocratic plots of his earlier plays. This would seem to be an extension of his satirical technique insofar as the affectations and economic problems which were treated earlier are now shown to have permeated through into every class of society. John Loftis says:

> With its central situation of City women aping the gentry, the play resembles many written by earlier dramatists: in its socio-economic values it is not far removed from Jonson and Massinger. Always in the background of the intrigues, determining

> the direction they take, is the jealousy and envy felt by characters of the merchant class for the nobility and gentry. The City wives desire money for the social opportunities it brings; love and lust for them are but secondary motivations. Court-City rivalry appears steadily, in the incidental conversation as well as in the absurd situations to which the two wives, Clarissa and Araminta, are driven by their social ambitions; Vanbrugh's judgement, delivered through satire, is emphatically that citizens should keep their places.[1]

This is very fair summary although Loftis' preoccupation with the more specific class issues in the play leads him to miss the important point that while the bourgeois are being satirised, the manners that they are aping themselves need reform; the satire is directed more at the upper classes, but in Vanbrugh's usual fashion it is oblique. The City ladies were formally "as full of Gold as they were of Religion" but "since they have set their minds on Quality""their money and their Consciences are gone, Heav'n knows where"; the correlation of religion and money is common in Vanbrugh to denote the inverted scales of values. Dick Amlet seeks economic stability by marrying Corrina in much the same way as Young Fashion in The Relapse marries Hoyden. That he should be impersonating a gentleman of quality supports this; although his undoubted singlemindedness and generally unscrupulous behaviour robs him of Young Fashion's more sympathetic appeal. Loftis exaggerates only slightly when he says that The Confederacy "has a vivacity that saves it from mere sordidness; but the world of vice it portrays precludes lightness of tone".[2] Dick's impersonation of a gentleman brings us once more to the appearance/realith dichotomy that is so important in Vanbrugh's plays. He obviously stands for something that he is not, but the disguise has a larger relevance than might at first appear:

> Brass. Are not you a great Rogue?
> Dick. Or Ishould wear worse Cloathes. (III.15)

There is comment here on the system of economic values where outward show is taken to indicate value: Dick's social success stems from his

1. Loftis, Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding, 51.
2. Loftis, Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding, 51.

appeal to a section of the community which prizes appearance as a symbol of worth and economic sufficiency. But in addition this reflects on the class that he is assumed to be from - fine clothes betoken "a great Rogue", the mores of the Quality are as pervasive as they are rotten. Although the theatres were being patronised more and more by the merchantile classes[1] it is fair to assume that the greatest number of the audience was still aristocratic, so what reforming intention there is in the play would be directed at them; I cannot believe that the audiences changed so drastically between 1696 and 1705 that Vanbrugh should move from treatment of the upper classes to treatment of the lower and middle classes, unless the latter was to represent the deficiencies of the former.

The intrigue of Clarissa and Araminta in which each was to allow the advances of the other's husband also depends for its success on the appearance/reality idea. Firstly they pretend to an affection which they do not have: indeed it is their lack of any real emotion apart from enthusiasm for material gain and outward show which allows them to manipulate not only their husbands, but Mrs. Amlet who comes seeking her money. Clarissa's conversation on jealousy with Flippanta clearly shows this:

> Clarissa. . . Thou knowest I'm not much tortur'd with Jealousie.
> Flippanta. Nay, you are much in the right on't, Madam, for Jealousie's a City Passion; 'tis a Thing unknown among People of Quality.
> Clarissa. Fey: A Woman must indeed be of a mechanick Mold, who is either troubled or pleased with anything her Husband can do to her. Prithee mention him no more; 'tis the dullest Theme. (III.19).

This constant appeal to the People of Quality as the arbiters of false taste and affectation seems to me an effective way of satirising them. It would be unfair to draw too close a parallel between this method and that of Swift in Gulliver's Travels but there are certain similarities. The basic technique is to ridicule affected man by putting him in an environment which puts his so-called civilisation into an unusual light. Gulliver in Lilliput or Brobdingnag is subjected to mental and physical hardship and the reader responds both to Gulliver and the pressures which work on him with a resulting appreciation of

1. Nicholl, A History of English Drama, 1660 - 1700, 8-25 passim.

the vices and virtues of mankind. Vanbrugh's purpose is of course far more limited than Swift's and his attack is on a smaller section of the community and is far less acerbic. But he too gains a comparable effect by transferring the vices and affectations of fashionable society into a City setting. They are made to appear even more ridiculous and destructive than in The Relapse or The Provok'd Wife simply because they are distanced sufficiently from the audience to be considered as it were in a vacuum. And at the same time, assuming there to be a proportion of City people in the audiences, the moral becomes clear to them by seeing themselves reproduced on the stage. The City wives are attempting to copy their alleged betters (Clarissa. "Alas, I have more Subjects for Spleen than One; Is it not a most horrible Thing that I should be but a Scrivener's Wife? -- Come -- don't flatter me, don't you think Nature design'd me for something, plus elevée?") (IV.19), but they copy the very worst parts and are in reality petulant, lazy and utterly vapid women. The more their outward appearance is made to resemble their aristocratic counterparts, the more their reality is shown to be rotten. Like Madam Barnard in The Country House they attempt to live outside their social position, and in a manner which does not become them. Admittedly there is emphasis thrown on the stinginess of their husbands and this is no doubt the normal type of criticism of the merchantile classes. I am not for a moment suggesting that Vanbrugh is anti-aristocracy and pro-bourgeoisie; his plays concentrate on the lower levels of the beau monde and demonstrate the economic limitations of that particular stratum. But the meanness of the husbands is part of Vanbrugh's particular treatment of matrimonial problems, and I shall deal with this below. The real nature of the wives' assumed affection for each other's husbands is dramatically shown in another of the few scenes that Vanbrugh added to Dancourt, the second scene of Act V, which opens on "Araminta, Corinna, Gripe and Moneytrap at a Teatable, very gay and laughing. Clarissa comes in to 'em". The matrimonial discord produced by mean husbands and extravagant pleasure loving wives is quite changed now that the wives have tricked their husbands out of their

money, and the husbands in their adulterous glee feel assured of carrying their affairs to a logical conclusion. Each group is confident that the other is unaware of the true nature of things. That harmony should come only out of deceit is a fine comment on the marriages and is emphasised by the theatrical business of the husbands, where Moneytrap and Gripe "Lear" and ogle the ladies, their remarks filled with obvious double-entendre; and by the asides of the wives (IV.66); it is the arrival of Mr. Clip, the goldsmith, with the diamond necklace pawned by Clarissa that starts the chain of events which culminates in the exposure of all; although the women triumph with their usual brazen audacity. Their final words to the outraged husbands "B'ye Dearies" show that while the husbands are put wise to the trick played on them, and while the audience sees them in all their incorrigible impudence, nonetheless they are not, nor ever will be, reformed. The Prologue, provokingly delivered by Mrs. Barry as Clarissa, calls for a duplication of the wives' conspiracy throughout the land:

> What only Two united can produce
> You've seen to Night, a Sample for your Use;
> Single, we found we nothing could obtain;
> We join our Force - and we subdu'd our Men.
> Believe me, (my dear Sex) they are not Brave;
> Try each your Man, you'll quickly find your Slave. (III.74).

This is rather heavy-handed irony in view of what has just been shown, but it supports the impression of confirmed self interest that prevails throughout the action.

It is always difficult when dealing with what is above all a translation, such as The Confederacy (rather than an adaptation like The Pilgrim), to assess to what extent the basic situations are to be taken as essential parts of the total oeuvre of a writer, or whether he is simply practising with language or producing a work quickly to meet a certain need. We know that The Confederacy was written especially for Vanbrugh's own theatre in the Haymarket which had recently been completed. Cibber tells us that:

> Immediately, upon the failure of this opera (the Triumph of Love) Sir John Vanbrugh produced his comedy call'd the Confederacy, taken (but greatly improv'd) from the bourgeois à la mode of Dancour. Though the face of this play was something better, yet I thought it was not equal to its merit: for it is written with an uncommon vein of wit and humour; which confirms me in my former observation, that the difficulty of hearing distinctly in that, then wide theatre, was no small impediment to the applause that might have followed the same actors in it, upon every other stage; and indeed every play acted there, before the house was alter'd, seemed to suffer from the same inconvenience.[1]

It would seem that Vanbrugh's profession of entertaining the audience which is given in the Prologue is an accurate one. He would be less likely to present a play which might give offence on this particular occasion, and thus he treats the bourgeoisie and not the aristocracy. The physical location of the Haymarket, itself one of the factors said to contribute to the theatre's failure, would preclude the attendance of all those who did not have transport and this would include most of the cits. even if they were now attending the more central London playhouses. However, I cannot believe that in this one play Vanbrugh should suspend his quasi-satirical approach simply for the sake of good publicity, and therefore my comments should be justified.

I have shown how Vanbrugh uses servants as commentators on his plays, and The Confederacy is no exception. Perry has noted the important part alt Brass plays. Not only is he a brilliantly delineated figure (as are most in this play) but he is a prime example of the appearance/reality technique:

> The French original is merely a servant; in Vanbrugh he is Dick Amlet's companion, who "passes for his Valet de Chambre". This rise in the social scale gives a chance for an extended amplification of the blackmailing scene and further points out the difference between what a man is and what he appears to be. Brass appears to be Dick's servant when he is really his equal; he appears to be a rogue, but the inner

1. Cibber, An Apology for his Life, 165-166.

> reality is something quite otherwise. At least, such an interpretation seems to fit in with Vanbrugh's conception of comedy as the absurd and petty modifications which the real, i.e. the ideal, has to undergo in the course of earthly existence.

Brass summarises his position near the end of Act III:

> In short, look smooth, and be a good Prince, I am your Valet, 'tis true: Your Footman sometimes, which I'm enrag'd at; but you have always had the ascendant, I confess; when we were School-Fellows, you made me carry your Books, make your Exercise, own your Rogueries, and sometimes take a Whipping for you: When we were Fellow-Prentices, tho' I was your Senior, you made me open the Shop, clean my Master's shoes, cut last at Dinner, and eat all the Crust. In our Sins too, I must own you still kept me under; you soar'd up to Adultery with our Mistress, while I was at humble Fornication with the Maid. Nay, in our Punishments, you still made good your Post; for when once upon a time I was sentenced to be Whipp'd, I cannot deny that you were condemn'd to be Hang'd. So that in all times, I must confess, your Inclinations have been greater and nobler than mine. However, I cannot consent that you shou'd at once fix Fortune for Life, and I dwell in my Humilities for the rest of my Days. (III.49).

The final sentence in Perry's summary is a little obscure, but the rest is sound criticism. Brass not only puts Dick into his true perspective, but the energy and attractive liveliness of all his dealings, especially with Gripe over the note for two hundred and fifty pounds and the subsequent quarrel over the diamond necklace, show that he has an inner integrity which is lacking in all but Flippanta. Dick really is a rogue; and this is confirmed paradoxically by his final good fortune. For once more it is economic considerations which determine the marriage. Mrs. Amlet is the doting and proud mother, and it is she who comes to the rescue after having betrayed his identity to all:

> Mrs. Amlet. Good lack a day, good lack a day, there's no need to be so smart upon him neither; If he is not a Gentleman, he's a Gentleman's fellow. Come hither, Dick, they shan't run thee down neither, Cock up thy Hat Dick, and Tell 'em, tho' Mrs. Amlet is thy Mother, she can make

1. Perry, The Comic Spirit in Restoration Drama, 104.

> thee amends, with 10,000 good Pounds to buy thee some Lands, and build thee a House in the midst on't. (III.72).

This is more ironic comment on the economic factors which are the real determinant of social position. Once Dick has purchased some lands he automatically becomes a member of the landed gentry; birth is immaterial, it is money that counts. Brass may not do as well as Dick, but he has a far more valuable character: we remember Brass, but we dismiss Dick for the unscrupulous fellow that he is.

As I have mentioned, the two husbands, Gripe and Moneytrap, are as mean and unpleasant as their names would imply. They are also lacking in any emotional depth; their greed for each other's wife would seem to be exactly the counterpart of their greed for money. The drive for sexual fulfillment is similar to that of Sir John Brute in The Provok'd Wife; it is animal and whilst it possesses animal cunning it is nonetheless sheer lust. The main significance of this is that instead of attempting to reform things at home (assuming this to be possible with the self-willed Clarissa and Araminta) they are content to indulge in the unadventurous pursuit of their neighbour's wife; the whole picture is one of narrow sordid parochialism. That they are prepared to lose money in order to achieve their end is an indication not only of their desire, but of their stupidity. The way that each is so patently exploited by Brass and Flippanta respectively clearly shows this. Flippanta acts a s a commentator on the action: time and again a scene is ended by her direct soliloquy to the audience, emphasising the faults of the men, and showing how singularly ill-equipped they are to deal with the wife's profligacy:

> What a miserable Devil is a Husband! Insupportable to himself, and a Plague to everything about them. Their Wives do by them, as Children do by Dogs, teaze and provoke 'em, till they make 'em so curs'd, they snarl and bite at everything that comes in their reach. This Wretch here (Gripe) is grown perverse to that degree, he's for his Wife's keeping home, and making Hell of his House, so he may be the Devil in it, to torment her. How niggardly soever he is, of all things he possesses, he is willing to purchase her Misery at the expense of his own Peace. (III.37).

Of course she is supporting her mistress but this does not invalidate the basic premise underlying her words, that the men are to blame because they do not treat their wives as human beings; the whole marriage contract has become part of business. The bourgeois standards of social behaviour do not allow for the dissolution of the contract (as is contemplated in the infinitely better Journey to London) and the marriages exist only in name. However, as Bernard Harris so rightly points out:

> . . . . though the play fully deserves Hazlitt's commendation as 'a comedy of infinite contrivance and intrigue, with a matchless spirit of impudence' and as 'a fine, careless exposé of heartless want of principle', it has the stricter virtues of French realistic comedy rather than the broader capacities of Vanbrugh's original plays. The play is necessarily more concerned with avariciom than with amourous gratification, and there is a correspondingly reduced sense of that competition of the ideal with the materialistic, the ignorant with the sophisticated, that gives a fuller life to The Relapse and The Provok'd Wife.

Mention should be made of the pert sixteen-year old Corinna, whose genesis lies in Hoyden of The Relapse and who is brought to perfection in the irrepressible Miss Betty of A Journey to London. Courted by Dick Amlet she is as coquettish as any society belle and secure in the knowledge that her father cannot touch a Groat of her portion (IV.29). She refuses Dick's letter until she knows who it is from, and her perusal of it is in the best vein of Vanbrugh comic exposition:

> Let me read it, let me read it, let me read it, let me read it, I say. Um, um, um, Cupid's um, um, um, Darts, um, um, um, Beauty, um, Charms, um, um, um, Angel, um, Goddess, - (Kissing the Letter) - um, um, um, Truest Lover, hum, um, Eternal Constancy, um, um, um, Cruel, um, um, um, Racks, um, um, Tortures, um, um, fifty Daggers, um, um, bleeding Heart, um, um, dead Man.
> Very well, a mighty civil letter, I promise you; not one smutty Word in it: I'll go lock it up in my Comb-box. (IV.31).

The high flown extravagances of the ardent lover are superbly ridiculed, and the usual flippant attitude towards lovers manifested by the sex comes over when Dick threatens to stab himself if she will not consent to marriage:

1. Harris, Sir John Vanbrugh.

> Corinna. The wondrous Deeds of Love! - Pray, Sir, let me have no more of these rash doings tho'; perhaps I mayn't be always in the saving Humour - I'm sure if I had let him stick himself, I shou'd have been envy'd by all the Great Ladies in the Town. (Aside) (III.52).

At the end of the play she is outspoken in her eagerness to catch Dick and thus escape from her books:

> Look you, Flippanta, I can hold no longer, and I hate to see the young Man abus'd. And so, Sir, if you please, I'm your Friend and Servant, and what's mine is yours, and when our Estates are put together, I don't doubt but we shall do as well as the best of 'em. (III.72).

Perhaps there is incidentally some hope for the future in these two; Dick's "We'll get her a Score of Grand-children, and a merry House we'll make her". (III.72) puts the emphasis on humanity and not money or social pleasure. However, from her past conduct and with her mother's example fresh in her mind, no doubt Dick will have to be firm to keep her.

The Mistake was first played 27 December of 1705, roughly two months after The Confederacy, and at the same theatre. It too was not popular at the time - probably for the same reason of bad acoustics. It is a very close adaptation of Molière's Le Dépit Amoureux (first acted 1654); both Dobree[1] and John Wilcox[2] show that this is perhaps Vanbrugh's closest translation:

> Vanbrugh gives Molière's play a scene-by-scene and incident-by-incident reproduction; he pays the compliment of a closer rendering than he has given any previous translation. On the whole, Molière's gaiety is reproduced by the masterly paraphrasing of the sense of each speech into the colloquial prose of which Vanbrugh had a ready command. The dignity imposed upon Molière by his rhymed hexameter verse prevented him from using the low-comedy incidents he employed freely enough in prose farces. Vanbrugh's version is not so hampered and his injection of low-comedy additions, like his realistic style, is more natural to the original plot than Molière's.[3]

Wilcox goes on to demonstrate how Vanbrugh uses concrete imagery to replace vague generalisations, and shows how in Act IV.iv the scene

1. III, 77-80.
2. Wilcox, The Relation of Molière to Restoration Comedy,
3. Wilcox, The Relation of Molière to Restoration Comedy, 169-170.

between Don Carlos and Leonora is extended to include the servants taking a far more active part than in Molière.[1] This is a technique that I have shown in his other works and there is little point in elaborating on Wilcox. Much work needs to be done on close and systematic analysis of Vanbrugh's translations and adaptations, but sadly this is beyond the scope of these notes.

Apart from The Cuckold in Conceit (from the "Cocu imaginaire"[1] of Molière), performed at the Haymarket March 22, 1707, of which no copy is known, The Mistake was the last play by Vanbrugh to be performed in his lifetime. The Prologue to The Mistake by Richard Steele complains bitterly about the bad audiences and abuses of theatre produced by importing French dancers and all the mechanical devices of the operas. Whether Vanbrugh no longer wrote for the theatre because he was disenchanted by it (he sold his interests in the Haymarket and relinquished nearly all his dramatic contacts to concentrate on architecture, especially Blenheim Palace) or because his architectural duties no longer allowed him sufficient time is not very important here. A biographical approach to criticism of the plays would be of little value, and in any case I am forced to pass more briefly over his later plays. However, there is one play remaining which, had it been completed, might easily have been as good or better than The Relapse or The Provok'd Wife, namely the unfinished fragment A Journey to London, which was adapted by Colley Cibber and acted at Drury Lane in 1728 as The Provok'd Husband.

In this play the basic situation of matrimonial unhappiness which occurs in The Provok'd Wife is reversed in the Loverule underplot. As Sir John is essentially far more strongly delineated than his wife, so here Lady Arabella is the stronger characterisation: her faults are exaggerated to show the unhappy situation of her husband. She first appears in the second act, and only prolonged quotation can do justice to Vanbrugh's energetic dialogue which exactly reveals her whole character:

1. Wilcox, The Relation of Molière to Restoration Comedy, 170-174.

Lady Arabella. Well, look you, my Lord, I can bear it no longer; nothing still but about my Faults, my Faults! An agreable Subject truly!

Lord Loverule. But Madam, if you won't hear of your Faults, how is it likely you shou'd ever mend 'em?

Lady Arabella. Why I don't intend to mend 'em. I can't mend 'em, I have told you so a hundred times; you know I have tried to do it, over and over, and it hurts me so, I can't bear it. Why, don't you Know, my Lord, that whenever 'just to please you only' I have gone about to wean myself from a Fault 'one of my Faults I mean that I love dearly' han't it put me so out of Humour, you cou'd scarce endure the House with me?

Lord Loverule. Look you, my dear, it is very true, that in weaning ones self from -

Lady Arabella. Weaning? Why ay, don't you see, that ev'n in weaning small Children from the Nurse, it's almost the Death of 'em? and don't you see your true Religious People, when they go about to wean themselves, and have solemn Days of Fasting and Praying, on purpose to help 'em; are they not as cross as the Devil? and then they don't do the Business neither; for next Day their Faults are just where they were the Day before.

Lord Loverule. But Madam, can you think it a Reasonable thing, to be abroad till Two a Clock in the Morning, when you know I go to Bed at Eleven?

Lady Arabella. And can you think it a Wise thing (to talk you own way now) to go to Bed at Eleven, when you know I am likely to disturb you by coming there at Three?

Lord Loverule. Well, the Manner of Women's living of late is insupportable, and some way or other -

Lady Arabella. It's to be mended, I suppose -- Pray, my Lord, one Word of fair Argument: You complain of late Hours; I of your early ones; so far as we are even, you will allow: but which gives us the better Figure in the Eye of the polite World? my Two a Clock speaks Life, Activity, Spirit, and Vigour; your Eleven has a Dull Drowsy, Stupid, good-for-nothing Sound withit. It savours much of a Mechanick, who must get to bed betimes, that he may rise early to open his Shop. Faugh!

Lord Loverule. I thought to go to Bed early and rise so, was ever esteemed a right Practice for all People.

Lady Arabella. Beasts do it. (III.147).

In this dialogue she rarely lets her husband make his point and counters reasonable argument with the manoeuvres of a spoilt child. At the same time she has a certain peevish attraction as her account to Clarinda of the above quarrel shows:

> This very Day now for Example, my Lord and I, after a pretty cheerful tete a tete Dinner, sat down by the Fire-side, in an idle, indolent, pick-tooth Way for a while, as if we had not thought of one another's being in the Room. At last (stretching himself, and yawning twice) My Dear, says he, you came home very late last Night. 'Twas but Two in the Morning, says I. I was in Bed (yawning) by Eleven, says he. So you are every Night, says I. Well, says he, I am amazed, how you can sit up so late. How can you be amazed, says I, at a Thing that happens so often? Upon which, we entered into Conversation. And tho' this is a Point that has entertained us above fifty times already, we always find so many pretty new Things to say upon't, that I believe in my Soul it will last as long as we live. (III.148-149).

This utter misrepresentation is more than witty understatement; it shows completely the distance that the two are apart. And Lady Arabella is bound to her husband economically in much the same way as Lady Brute, she cannot escape:

> Then you shall never come home again, Madam.
> Lady A. There he has knocked me down: My Father upon our marriage said, Wives were come to that pass, he did not think it fit they shou'd be trusted with Pin-money, and so wou'd not let this Man settle one Penny upon his poor Wife, to serve her at a dead Lift for separate Maintenance. (III.148).

She summarises her pleasures to Clarinda and exhibits the petty values of the self-willed belle:

> Why, to be serious, Clarinda, what wou'd you have a Woman do in my Case? There is no one Thing he can do in the World to please me - Except giving me Money; and that he is grown weary of; and I at the same time (partly by Nature, and partly perhaps by keeping the best Company) do with my Soul love almost every Thing that he hates; I doat upon Assemblies, adore Masquerades, my Heart bounds at a Ball; I love Play to Distraction, Cards enchant me, and Dice - put me out of my little Wits - Dear, dear Hazard, what Music there is in the Rattle of the Dice, compared to a sleepy Opera! (III.149).

The opera being considered frivolous entertainment, the pleasures of Hazard are shown to even less worthwhile. In Act IV the grubby reality of Lady Arabella is amply demonstrated by her generally

slovenly appearance, and her treatment of the creditors; when Captain Toupee enters to play her for yet more gain, his remarks on her unwashed face, still scuffed with the previous night's make-up, and his generally intimate tone betray an aspect of the freedom of the card table which Clarinda indicates in Act II. ("it's very masculine, and has too much of a Rake") (III.149). In his appearance/reality tension Vanbrugh is here concerned with a direct portrayal of the reality of the women of Quality.

And this is further emphasised by his portrayal of Clarinda. Her outline of an ideal scheme of life with its balance between town and country and its insistence on what is almost a Golden Mean of behaviour might well be what Vanbrugh himself would advocate; although the repeated "soberly" is designed to alleviate any obvious didacticism:

> I cou'd in Summer, pass my Time very agreeably, in riding soberly, in walking soberly, in sitting under a Tree soberly, in Gardening soberly, in reading soberly, in hearing a little Music soberly, in conversing with some agreable Friends soberly, in working soberly, in managing my Family and Children (if I had any) soberly, and possibly by these means I might induce my husband to be as sober as myself. (III.150).

The element of example to a husband is important here as a solution to matrimonial dissension. Again, when in town:

> I would entertain myself in observing the new Fashions soberly, I would please myself in new Cloaths soberly, I would divert myself with agreable Friends at Home and Abroad soberly; I would play at Quadrille soberly, I would go to Court soberly, I would go to some Plays soberly, I would go to Operas soberly, and I think I cou'd go once, or, if I lik'd my Company, twice to a Masquerade soberly. (III.150).

Whereas in the earlier plays the reality of stupid or affected characters was shown obliquely to the audience for the most part, in this play Vanbrugh deals in straight comparison, Arabella against Clarinda.

In the scene between Loverule and his drinking friend Sir Charles, Vanbrugh anatomises woman and, whilst showing the difference

between their outward potential and their usual profligacy, postulates what virtues are needed for a wife, and at the same time produces the answer to an impossible marriage:

Sir Charles. . . . . I know at least, I still have so much of my early Folly left, to think, there's yet one Woman fit to make a Wife of; How far such a one can answer the Charms of a Mistress; marry'd Men are silent on, so pass - for that, I'd take my Chance; but cou'd she make a Home easy to her Partner, by letting him find there a cheerful Companion, an agreeable Intimate, a useful Assistant, a faithful Friend, and (in its Time perhaps) a tender Mother, such change of life, from what I lead, seems not unwise to think of.

Lord Loverule. Not unwise to purchase, if to be had for Millions; but -

Sir Charles. But what?

Lord Loverule. If the reverse of this shou'd chance to be the bitter Disappointment, what wou'd the Life be then?

Sir Charles. A damn'd one.

Lord Loverule. And what Relief?

Sir Charles. A short one; leave it, and return to that you left, if you can't find a better.

Lord Loverule. He says right - that's the Remedy, and a just one - for if I sell my Liberty for Gold, and I am fouly paid in Brass, shall I be held to keep the Bargain? (Aside

Sir Charles. What are you thinking of?

Lord Loverule. Of what you have said.

Sir Charles. And was it well said?

Lord Loverule. I begin to think it might.

Sir Charles. Think on, 'twill give you Ease - the Man who has courage enough to part with a Wife, need not much dread the having one; and he that has not ought to tremble at being a Husband - But perhaps I have said too much; you'll pardon however the Freedom of an old Friend, because you know that I am so; so your Servant. (Exit

Lord Loverule. Charles, farewell, I can take nothing as ill meant that comes from you.

Nor ought my Wife to think I mean amiss to her; if I convince her I'll endure no longer that she should thus expose herself and me: No doubt 'twill grieve her sorely. Physick's a loathesome Thing, till we find it gives us Health, and then we are thankful to those who made us take it. Perhaps she may do so by me, if she does 'tis well; if not, and she resolves to make the House ring with Reprisals; I believe (tho' the Misfortune's great) he'll make a better Figure in the World, who keeps an ill Wife out of Doors, than he that keeps her within. (III.153-154).

Cibber provides the only clue to Vanbrugh's resolution of the play:

> All I could gather from him of what he intended in the Catastrophe, was, that the Conduct of his Imaginary Fine Lady had so provok'd him that he designed actually to have made her Husband turn her out of Doors.[1]

Had this been the case, the realism of the treatment of incompatible marriage would have been amazingly before its time, and might well have revitalised the already anaemic English drama. But sadly the forces of sentimentalism prevailed, and Cibber provided a suitably comfortable and happy ending.

Space does not permit a detailed analysis of the main plot of this play. Simply, the disintegrating social relationships of the town, themselves symptomatic of a broader social disintegration, are now shown to be affecting the country. Just as in The Confederacy the bourgeoisie are aping the Quality, so the kind of country picture that Clarinda outlines is destroyed by the movement from the country into the towns - a theme popular later in the eighteenth century, vide Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson. The play opens with Uncle Richard awaiting the arrival of his nephew, Sir Francis Headpiece to take the town by storm:

> Forty years, and two is the Age of him; in which it is computed by his Butler, his own person has drunk two and thirty Ton of Ale. The rest of his Time has been employ'd in persecuting all the poor four-legg'd Creatures round, that wou'd but run away fast enough from him, to give him the high-mettled pleasure of running after them. (III.135).

This typically foolish squire, married to "a profuse young Housewife for Love, with never a Penny of Money" and finding that "Children and Interest-Money make such a bawling about his Ears", has set off for London to be a "Parliament Man", and his wife "to play off a Hundred Pounds at Dice with Ladies of Quality, before Breakfast". (III.135-136). Of course the ladies, Lady Headpiece and port Miss Betty, her daughter, are embroiled in the Lady Loverule gaming circle and it would be interesting to know what Vanbrugh intended to do with this plot. That he includes country personages to this extent makes him very close to Farquhar, but without the latter's annoying sentimental streak which successfully mars his best plays. Affectation

1. Cibber, Colley, To The Reader, III.179.

and profligacy are now part of the country scene. The Headpieces are initiated into the vices of the city symbolically by the theft of their goose pie, but both Lady Headpiece and Betty are only too well prepared to enjoy all that the town can offer. Vanbrugh cunningly shows the ludicrous spectacle of country stupidity at large in the beau monde, but this in turn provides subtle comment on the mores of the town.

A Journey to London was left unfinished. More information on the date of writing might help to illuminate what is at present an annoying puzzle. The fragment shows some promise of synthesising Vanbrugh's earlier treatments of economic and social themes, but it is not my intention to speculate on how the play would have ended, or indeed why it was never completed. Suffice it to say that Sir John Vanbrugh died in April, 1726 at the age of sixty two.

CONCLUSION

This assessment of the plays of Sir John Vanbrugh was not intended as a final or comprehensive study. Rather I sought to indicate and suggest the development and modification of certain key ideas to which the playwright gave special dramatic expression, and to show that there is an overall structure to the total oeuvre which hitherto has substantially escaped the critics. Vanbrugh took the basic materials of Restoration Comedy, "comedy of manners", and within the framework evolved a quasi-satirical technique incorporating realistic handling of social situation with an ironic adaptation of existing dramatic forms. He emphasised the importance of dialogue and characterisation rather than plot to indicate his moral posture which was itself based on a sceptical disbelief in the perfectibility of mankind. Standing at a turning point in English history when power in society was moving out of the hands of the feudal aristocracy and into those of the wealthy bourgeoisie, Vanbrugh combatted the forces of sentimentalism as realistically and hard-headedly as the social climate would allow. If I have shown but a fraction of his sophistication and originality perhaps it will in part atone for the critical neglect which has for so long attended his work.

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