

12

TEXTOS Y
COMENTARIOS

The Marriage-Hater Matched

A comedy by Thomas Durfey

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SCENE III. *Enter Sir Philip and Lovewcl.*

Sings. Did you not promise me, &c.

Love. Can you revoke your Promise then, can you be so ungrateful

Sir Phil. Prithee, my dear, no more, that I will always love thee, sure thy self.

Love. Love me, and keep me like a Slave dishonour'd thus, 'tis most, if you'd have me believe you have the least Compassion for me : promise, and take me for your Wife.

Sir Phil. My wife, then I should never love thee more.

Love. Have I not purchas'd thee with Toyl and Study, paid with industrious Wit, a Ransom for repeal of my Dishonour, nay, brought fortune too beyond your hopes, the best Inducement to a Marriage, ye forget me ? fye, Sir, indeed you must not, you know y'are mine

Sir Phil. And will perform it to thee the best way, by a free, voluntary love, nay, if I fail thee, Child, then I were ungrateful indeed.

Love. You never can perform, unless you marry me.

Sir Phil. Oh, I warrant thee, Child, I warrant thee.

Love. You know I love you much beyond my Life ; you know what I have done for you : and tho' my tender years, and too fond I



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Introduction

1. Thomas Durfey and his time

Not much is known about the private life of Thomas Durfey: there are no extant records of his birth, he never married and had no children. The scarce information available must be gleaned from his own writings and the testimony of other men of letters who befriended, criticised and, on occasion, sponsored him. Durfey was born around 1653 in Exeter. His father was a French Huguenot who fled the Catholic siege of La Rochelle in 1628; his mother came from a well-established English family of Huntingdonshire. Just as uncertain is Durfey's education: he may never have gone to university, although Langbaine notes that he was intended for the law (179). Since there is no record of his admission in the Inns of Court, biographers conjecture that he might have been a scrivener's apprentice for a while (McVeagh 3; ODNB).

When Durfey reached his early thirties, he styled himself "Thomas D'Urfey, Gent", claiming an aristocratic French origin and trying to pass for a gentleman amongst his influential acquaintances at the court of Charles II.¹ However, later in life he notoriously removed the apostrophe from his name in order to avoid paying a poll tax imposed on the

1. Although most biographers point to 1683 as the date when Durfey first added the apostrophe to his name, he had previously signed his works as "T.D. Gent." See for instance the title-page of *Zelinda*, a translation of a romance by De Scudéry published in 1676.

gentry to subsidise war against France.² His pretentiousness also made him favour the unfounded rumour that he was a descendant of Honoré D'Urfé, the author of the cult romance *Astrée* (1607-1627). On the occasion of a benefit performance in which Durfey himself was to present his own comedy, Steele provides a tongue-in-cheek account of his connections, mildly mocking the playwright's pride in his ancestry by presenting it as a subject of high interest:

Monsieur Menage reports, that the d'Urfeys descended from the Emperors of Constantinople on the Father's side, and the Viceroy of Naples on the Mother's ... It is recommended to all the fine Spirits, and beautiful Ladies, to possess themselves of Mr. d'Urfey's Tickets, least a further Account, which we shall shortly give of his Family and Merit, may make the Generality Purchase them, and exclude those whom he most desires for his Audience. (*The Lover*, 27 May 1714)

Durfey's career was something of a curate's egg, peppered with both resounding successes and disappointing failures. At the age of 23, he moved to London to start a dramatic career. He soon began to work as a playwright meeting—sometimes almost simultaneously—the demands of the two existing theatre companies. He made a strong start, having three plays staged in 1676: the unsuccessful heroic tragedy *The Siege of Memphis* and two comedies, *Madam Fickle* and *The Fool Turned Critic*. Among the members of the audience of *Madam Fickle* were James Butler, duke of Ormond, who was Durfey's patron, and King Charles II. When Ormond introduced the playwright to the monarch, Durfey's stammer prevented him from uttering a word. However, the playwright eventually made his way into the king's circle of acquaintances, so much so that he could later boast of an occasion when he sang the famous "Advice to the City" rubbing shoulders with Charles and reading from the same sheet of paper.³ Throughout his

2. On Durfey's dropping of the apostrophe and the satirical comments it sparked, see Biswanger xxxiv.

3. The complete title to this song reads: "Advice to the City, a famous Song, set to a Tune of

career, Durfey retained the ability to please each successive monarch and could pride himself on having been applauded and commended by Charles II, James II, William and Mary, Anne, and George I (*Wit and Mirth* 1: A3), a feat that must have taken considerable manoeuvring as the political climate in England changed once and again in a relatively short period of time.

Durfey had a long and productive career, with a sizeable production encompassing twenty-three comedies, five tragedies, one tragicomedy, three operas and one burlesque opera. He became one of the most prolific English playwrights in the late 1670s, when plays like *A Fond Husband* (1677), which Charles II attended three of the first five days, established him as one of the main figures in the Restoration dramatic panorama. However, it was his skill as composer and song lyricist that made him one of the most sought-after authors of the time. He collaborated with nearly forty composers including Henry Purcell, John Eccles and Samuel Ackroyde, writing songs either for his own plays or as independent pieces, and sometimes even performing them himself with his pleasant baritone voice. However, this popularity was not meant to last. The playwright's dramatic production dwindled in the 1680s, after the two theatre companies united, and he turned to writing panegyrics, odes, elegies and satires with a marked topical content, particularly in the aftermath of the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis (1678-1681).

In his political affiliations, Durfey showed the same adaptability and capacity for self-fashioning that characterised his public persona. In the early 1680s, he took sides with the Tories, writing savage satires on the Whigs in plays like *Sir Barnaby Whigg* (1681) or the Preface to *The Royalist* (1682). Understandably, his career reached an impasse after the Glorious Revolution (1688). As the financial support available from his Tory patrons decreased, Durfey took a job as a singing-teacher at Josias Priest's boarding-school for girls in Chelsea in the summer of 1689 (Biswanger xxvi), an experience that must have inspired his

Signior Opdar, so remarkable, that I had the Honour to Sing it with King Charles at Windsor; He holding one part of the Paper with Me" (*Wit and Mirth* 1: 246).

comedy *Love for Money, or, The Boarding School* (1691). Under William and Mary, Dufey was prompt to change sides and appear as a staunch Whig supporter, dedicating plays like *Bussy D'Ambois* (1691), *Love for Money* (1691) and *The Campaigners* (1698) to prominent Whigs. He also wrote panegyrics and songs for the new monarchs, and satirised the Jacobites in a series of poems published anonymously. It was at this time that he wrote his most successful comedies, popular for their plots based on sexual intrigue and for their vastly admired musical interludes.

Dufey was frequently the target of personal and professional abuse. He was often accused of plagiarism on account of his adaptation of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays.⁴ Gerard Langbaine called him a “Cuckow” sucking “other Birds Eggs” and claimed that those who valued his works were not acquainted with the sources (179). Besides, his light-hearted comedy frequently attracted critical censure. Shadwell, for instance, caricatured Dufey as Poet Maggot in *A True Widow* (1678) and parodied his play *A Fond Husband*.⁵ In 1691, after the staging of *Love for Money*, Tom Brown lampooned him in *Wit for Money; or, Poet Stutter*. Another satire, the anonymous *Poeta Infamis; or a Poet Not Worth Hanging* (1692), attacked *The Marriage-Hater Matched* and ridiculed the author, mocking his stammer and denouncing his practice of copying from his own work, which made “one sorry Jest serve for two or three Plays” (12).⁶

Of more serious consequences was the attack launched by Jeremy Collier's *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698), which targeted Dufey together with Otway, Dryden,

4. Like many contemporary authors, Dufey often drew on old plays for his plots. He adapted Fletcher's *Monsieur Thomas* as *Trick for Trick* (1678), *The Sea-Voyage* as *A Commonwealth of Women* (1685; 1686) and *The Noble Gentleman* as *A Fool's Preferment* (1688). He turned Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* into *The Injured Princess* (1682) and Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* into a play of the same title (1691). He also borrowed from Cervantes for his successful *Don Quixote* trilogy (1694-96).

5. On Shadwell's parody, see Hughes 221. Shadwell was very likely the author of another satirical work that pilloried Dufey, *The Tory-Poets: A Satyr* (1682).

6. The anonymous author points, for instance, to the similarity between Sir Lawrence, Solon, and Bias and the characters Captain Tilbury, Zekiel and Toby in *Madam Fickle*.

Wycherley, Congreve and Vanbrugh. Collier criticised the lack of modesty, the immorality, profanity, and abuse of the clergy in the first two parts of Durfey's *Don Quixote*.⁷ The playwright responded in the Preface to his next comedy, *The Campaigners* (1698), arguing that Collier "never heard of the *Royalist*, the *Boarding School*, the *Marriage-Hater Match'd*, the *Richmond Heiress*, the *Virtuous Wife*, and others, all whose whole Plots and designs I dare affirm, tend to that principal instance, which he proposes, and which we allow, viz. the depression of Vice and encouragement of Virtue" (3). Nonetheless, as Joseph Wood Krutch contends, neither Durfey nor those targeted by Collier seized the opportunity to engage in a serious defence of comedy and simply attacked the reverend personally (1948: 2-3). Durfey ended up being indicted on the grounds of obscenity alongside Congreve and the publisher Jacob Tonson. He probably never went to trial, but certainly lost momentum with audiences, whose taste was becoming more gentrified and who now frowned at saucy arguments.

Critical displeasure and a progressive reformation of manners in drama relegated Durfey to scorn or mere oblivion in his final years. Although he had always been quick to accommodate to political changes, this never translated directly into financial support from the crown—excepting the celebrated fifty guineas that the playwright received from Queen Anne on account of his song mocking fat Sophia of Hannover, the heir to the British throne. By the time Sophia's son George became king, Durfey was in financial need. He had to accept the help of friends who, although critical of his literary achievements, were fond of him personally; chief among them, Addison and Steele gathered public support and organised benefit nights for the ageing author in 1709 and 1713.

In his final years, in an attempt to profit from his enormously popular songs, Durfey compiled the lyrics which had brought him such success in the theatre; they appeared in the first two volumes of Henry

7. William Carpenter contends that Collier chose *Don Quixote* for its popularity rather than for its alleged profanity, it being "less salacious than many plays of the period that he overlooked" (4).

Playford and John Young's *Wit and Mirth, or, Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1719-20). Despite Dufey's pomposity, his talent as an entertainer and his affable character gained him the esteem of a wide variety of audiences. Even the usually patronising Addison, when advertising a performance of *The Plotting Sisters* for the 1713 benefit, admits that "Many an honest Gentleman has got a reputation in his country, by pretending to have been in the company with Tom d'Urfey" (*The Guardian*, 28 May 1713). Indeed, although not always a high profile figure, Dufey remained very dear to the most influential London circles until his demise: when he died on 26 February, he was buried at the earl of Dorset's expense in St James's, Piccadilly, the most fashionable church in London at the time.

Dufey's reputation as a hack playwright did not mend much after his death. As Knowles and Armistead note, over the last three centuries critical response has been "predominantly, though not entirely, negative" (72). A. W. Ward marked a peak in the late 19th century when he described Dufey as "the literary nadir of Restoration comedy" (3: 454). The tide began to turn in 1916-17, with the publication of the first book-length study of his dramatic production by Robert S. Forsythe.⁸ Appreciation, however, has been slow to consolidate and John McVeagh could still refer to Dufey in 2000 as "a neglected writer". In spite of the success he achieved in his own time, very few of his comedies are available to the modern reader. Only *Madam Fickle*, *A Fond Husband*, *The Virtuous Wife* and *The Richmond Heiress* are extant in critical editions.⁹

8. Forsythe, nevertheless, still pronounces Dufey "a distinctly third-rate writer" (Preface) and values him chiefly as a forerunner of sentimental comedy.

9. *Madam Fickle* and *A Fond Husband* were edited by Jack A. Vaughn (1976); *Madam Fickle* was also included in Norman Jeffares' *Restoration Comedy* (1974) and *A Fond Husband* in Deborah Payne Fisk's *Four Restoration Libertine Plays* (2005). *The Richmond Heiress* was edited by Adam Biswanger (1987), *The Virtuous Wife* by William Carpenter (1987) and *The Injured Princess* by Barbara A. Murray in her collection *Shakespeare Adaptations from the Restoration* (2005). *Wonders in the Sun* appeared in a facsimile edition, with an introduction by William W. Appleton (1964) and another two plays have been edited in unpublished PhD dissertations: *Love for Money* by Donald W. Sanville (1950) and *The Famous History of the Rise and Fall of Masaniello* by Nancy Grayson Holmes (1981).

The present edition of *The Marriage-Hater Matched* will hopefully contribute to a reappraisal of his work.

2. Restoration comedy and 'The Marriage-Hater Matched'

2.1 *The modes of Restoration comedy: Wit and humours*

The restoration of the Stuart monarchy brought with it the restoration of professional drama. Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant were granted patents to operate theatres in London and established their companies under the patronage of the king and his brother, the duke of York, respectively.¹⁰ After the initial difficulties to find appropriate subjects and plots, and to incorporate women to the acting profession, a steady flow of new plays appeared which developed dramatic formulas suited to the taste of the fashionable society that now frequented the theatres.¹¹ By 1668, Etherege's *She Would if She Could* and Shadwell's *The Sullen Lovers* already displayed most features commonly associated with Restoration comedy: a text in prose with a blend of colloquial and fashionable expressions, a story set in recognisable London locations, a time span limited to one or two days (following Neo-classical precepts), and a plot interweaving several love intrigues in which only the young characters succeed.

But in spite of their similarities, these two plays illustrate two different types of comedy: wit or manners versus humours. The first type, strongly influenced by the Jacobean romantic comedies of Fletcher and Shirley, and by the fashionable French models, placed the emphasis on refinement in conversation. The second drew on Jonson's instructional

10. The warrants for their licenses were granted on 21 Aug 1660, and their patents on 25 Aug 1662.

11. In his *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration*, J. W. Krutch discerned some continuity between pre-Commonwealth dramatic models and the first repertoire after the opening of the theatres, as plays from the late Caroline period already tried to represent "the spirit of a polished society" and introduced "elements of cynicism" (1924: 13).

satire and his theory of humours, i.e. the use of characters dominated by one particular personality trait that makes them ridiculous.¹² The promoters of each mode defended their views in the prefaces, prologues and epilogues to their plays. In the Prologue to *Secret Love* (1667; 1668) Dryden advocated the superiority of wit, arguing that Restoration audiences demanded a more sophisticated model in which Jonsonian comedy would be refined by an infusion of French elegance:

I

He who writ this, not without pains and thought
From French and English Theaters has brought
Th'exactest Rules by which a Play is wrought:

II

The Unities of Action, Place, and Time;
The Scenes unbroken; and a mingled chime
Of Johnsons humour, with Corneilles rhyme. (9: 119)

The protagonists in the new comedy of wit were gentlemen and ladies of quality who engaged in repartee and created a kind of bond against those who were unwilling to participate in their verbal games or incapable of doing so. In the London playhouses, the bond was extended to those members of the audience who saw themselves reflected in the witty characters—namely, the aristocratic courtiers who prided themselves on being the arbiters of fashion; and also to those who admired and perhaps wished to partake of what the court could offer. Beyond that, the playwrights expressed no commitment to any system of values or, if anything, showed a preference for the libertine views held by such notorious rakes as Rochester or Sedley in their promotion of freer sexual relations and their abhorrence of the institution of mar-

12. In the Epilogue to *The Humorists* (1671), Shadwell defines “humour” in the following terms: “A Humor is the Byas of the Mind, / By which with violence ‘tis one way inclin’d: / It makes our Actions lean on one side still, / And in all Changes that way bends the Will” (1: 254).

riage. Shadwell complained of this new trend in the Epilogue to *Epsom Wells* (1672; 1673):

‘Tis a fine way they write;
They please the wicked Wenchers of the Age,
And scoff at civil Husbands on the Stage:
To th’ great decay of Children in the Nation,
They laugh poor Matrimony out of Fashion. (2: 182)

Dryden, however, denied the moral responsibility of the playwright. In the Preface to *An Evening’s Love* (1668; 1671), he wrote:

‘Tis charg’d upon me that I make debauch’d persons ... my Protagonists ... and that I make them happy in the conclusion of my Play; against the Law of Comedy, which is to reward virtue and punish vice. I answer first, that I know no such law to have been constantly observ’d in Comedy, either by the Ancient or Modern Poets ... the chief end of it [comedy] is diversion and delight ... for the business of the Poet is to make you laugh. (10: 208-09)

This cynical approach to the genre, which did not shrink from rewarding vice—as long as it was presented as genteel and modish—was endorsed by the success of such plays as Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (1675) and Etherege’s *The Man of Mode* (1676). Thus, by the mid-1670s, the playwrights had reached some kind of tacit compromise to blend the comic force of the humour characters with the witty dialogues and the libertine outlook of the comedy of manners.

The political upheavals of the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis made a deep impact on the stage, and in 1682 the virtual ruin of Killigrew’s troupe led to the merging of the two patent companies.¹³ The final years of Charles II and the brief reign of his brother James were thus marked by the lack of competition between two playhouses, which

13. For a lengthy, but entertaining account of the process that led to the merging of the two patent companies, see Wilson (1964), 33-81.

resulted in a dearth of new plays and the repetition of old models. This theatrical panorama would be shaken in the late 1680s by the radical disruption of the political status quo introduced by the Glorious Revolution. William and Mary advocated a moral reformation which challenged the spirit of the comedy of wit; besides, the fact that the new monarchs, unlike their predecessors, were not particularly interested in drama resulted in a substantial loss of financial support for the theatre. Thus, in the 1690s, straight plays lost ground to music and musical drama, which was more to the taste of the sovereigns. Comedies continued to build on the model established in the 1670s, but the political constraints and the change of fashions favoured a redefinition of the genre.

2.2 Exemplary comedy and *'The Marriage-Hater Matched'*¹⁴

If marriage and its inadequacies had been one of the central topics of the comedy of wit, in the years immediately following the Revolution, playwrights began to feel the pressure to present a more positive view of matrimony, and to reward virtue rather than vice.¹⁵ The new monarchs presented themselves as the leaders of a “Godly Revolution” that would put an end to the corruption and debauchery associated with the courts of Charles II and James II, and would restore the country to God’s favour.¹⁶ As early as February 1689, William of Orange stressed

14. The discussion in this section builds on Mora and Gómez-Lara (2010).

15. This idea of a “change in comedy” has been widely debated and provoked much controversy; see for instance John H. Smith, “Shadwell, the Ladies, and the Change in Comedy”, *Modern Philology*, 46 (1948), 22-33; A. Scouten, “Notes toward a History of Restoration Comedy”, *Philological Quarterly* 45 (1966), 62-70; Robert D. Hume, “‘The Change in Comedy’: Cynical versus Exemplary Comedy on the London Stage, 1678-1693”, *Essays in Theatre* 1 (1983), 101-18; and Kirk Combe, “Rakes, Wives and Merchants: Shifts from the Satirical to the Sentimental”, in *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, ed. by Susan J. Owen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 291-308.

16. For an analysis of the campaign to legitimate the new monarchs on the grounds of their providential mission, see Tony Claydon’s *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

the necessity of a moral reform in a letter addressed to the Bishop of London:

We most earnestly desire and shall endeavour a General Reformation of the Lives and Manners of all Our Subjects, as being that which must Establish Our Throne, and Secure to Our People their Religion, Happiness and Peace; all which seem to be in great Danger at this time, by reason of that overflowing of Vice, which is too notorious in this as well as other Neighbouring Nations. (*His Majesties Letter* 4)

This particular concern with adultery and debauchery was echoed in a large number of tracts and pamphlets that discussed the decay of marriage and the family as a sign of the degeneration of the times. Thus, the anonymous treatise *Marriage Promoted* (1690) saw in the defence of this institution the key to the welfare of the nation: “Marriage will reform the Mischiefs of the Debauch’d, and bring these Nations to a regular and quiet Temper: For a Family is the Epitome of a Kingdom, and it naturally resolves into a Government, which cannot subsist without Rules and Order” (46).

The stage responded to the new climate adapting the dramatic practices that had proved successful over the last three decades to give shape to a model of exemplary comedy that placed the emphasis on the capacity of their rakish protagonists to reform. Shadwell’s last plays—*The Squire of Alsatia* (1688), *The Scowrers* (1690), or the posthumous *The Volunteers* (1692)—, Carlile’s *The Fortune-Hunters* (1689) or Durfey’s *Love for Money* (1691) opened the way to a positive satire that exposed vice chiefly by reforming the libertine rake and making him embrace marriage (Marshall 142). The Epilogue to *The Volunteers* outlined the principles of exemplary comedy: “To expose the Follies of the Age: / To whip prevailing Vices, and unite / Mirth with Instruction, Profit with Delight” (5: 161).¹⁷ Shadwell, Durfey and, after them, Cib-

17. This was certainly not a conceptual novelty; as early as 1665, John Wilson had asserted in the Epilogue to *The Projectors*: “Plays, are but Morals, [and] the Stage / Then does its Work, when it

ber, Vanbrugh or Farquhar made use of this comic mode that exploits the appeal of the libertine rake, but brings him to a moral recantation in the fifth act to endorse the ideals of the new regime.

The Marriage-Hater Matched (1692) is written in this new mode. It is a play supposedly in favour of matrimony as an institution sanctioned by both God and men, but it is also a satire on marriage. Sir Philip Freewit's reluctance to marry is central to the plot: he had formerly been engaged to Lady Subtle, but when she discovered he had had an affair with young Phoebe and had made her pregnant, she jilted him and married his friend Sir Solomon Subtle; after this, Freewit professed himself a marriage-hater. As the play begins, Sir Solomon has died and has bequeathed his fortune to Sir Philip, on condition that he marries his widow. Sir Philip, however, plans to secure the estate without marrying, and Phoebe—who appears always in male clothes under the name of Lovewell—assists him in his designs; she expects him to honour his promise and wed her as soon as he gets rid of the widow.¹⁸ But other characters also covet Lady Subtle's fortune: a Flemish coxcomb called Van Grin and Sir Lawrence Limber, who wants his son Bias to marry her. Secondary characters include Lady Subtle's sister, Berenice, and her suitor Captain Darewell; Sir Lawrence's other children, the coxcomb Solon and a young girl, Margery, whom her father keeps locked at home for fear she might marry and force him to pay her portion; Margery's suitor, Callow; and, finally, the affected La Pupsie and her foppish admirer, Lord Brainless.

Sir Philip's views in the play echo the traditional discourse of the rake-hero modelled on the libertine wits at Charles II's court. Thus, when Phoebe presses him to make her his wife, he declares that love and matrimony are incompatible: "My wife! Then I should never

reforms the Age" (1-8); but the number of authors ready to comply with these principles was now conspicuously larger.

18. Forsythe finds possible sources for the Sir Philip-Lovewell-Lady Subtle plot in Middleton's *More Dissemblers besides Women* (ca. 1615; 1657) and Brome's *Northern Lass* (1629; 1632). He notes that Brome's play had been revived in 1684 (86). Middleton's comedy had been adapted on the Restoration stage by John Leanerd as *The Rambling Justice* (1678).

love thee more” (3.3.9). His aversion to marriage springs from a cynical acceptance that self-interest, self-indulgence and pleasure rule human behaviour, and from his contempt for social institutions that impose unnatural constraints on the individual’s desires.¹⁹ Like his brother rakes before him, Sir Philip defends free love; he offers to come to his mistress “wanton and brisk, and airy as a bird ... then fly away, soon after come again, pruning myself in welcome liberty”; should he surrender this freedom, he complains, he would “be confined to moult in a cage and batten in the excrement of marriage” (3.3.32-33). The rest of the characters do not present much of a counterpoint to Sir Philip’s anti-matrimonial invective. Phoebe attempts to balance his “catalogue of marriage evils” (5.1.49) with a summary of its blessings, but the most significant words are put in the mouth of Lady Subtle when, enraged at Sir Philip’s disdain, she rails at his depravity. She praises marriage as a divinely ordained institution which imposes order upon the chaos of instinct, and thus differentiates men from beasts:

Oh wretched tribe, that dare that law dispute
Which does their race distinguish from the brute!
Lust was a chaos, till the great Creator
Confined to bounds the wilds of human nature;
But this foul beast as if of bounds ashamed,
Defying marriage, chooses to be damned. (4.2.211-16)

A defence of marriage seems also to be ingrained in the design of the play, since the action leads to a record number of seven weddings. In the case of the rake, moreover, the resolution seems to confirm that there is, indeed, a divine will enforcing the universal law invoked by Lady Subtle: Sir Philip is no penitent rake who reforms and embraces marriage; he finds himself married against his will, as he is, by accident, caught in his own trap. He had instructed his valet to play the par-

19. For a discussion of the “Hobbesian libertine-rake”, see Weber 53-69.

son in a sham wedding to deceive Phoebe, but the valet (an Irishman), fearing he might blunder, brought a real priest for the ceremony. Not surprisingly, Phoebe sees this as “a special act of Providence” (5.3.402), and even Sir Philip is finally brought round to this opinion: “I am convinced this moment that marriages, the bliss or plagues of life, are, as thou sayst, all th’ effects of Providence” (5.3.406-08).

Yet, considering the “marriage masquerade” (5.3.107) that closes the play, the overall image of matrimony is not quite so positive. Almost all the matches involve different degrees of deception and a cursory view is sufficient to show that none of the couples embrace the married state with much optimism: Van Grin ends up marrying the widow, but finds out that she had deceived him in her fortune and foretells that he will soon be made a cuckold as well (5.3.360); Lord Brainless weds La Pupsie, but discovers that she was formerly an actress and confesses that he “begin[s] to be ashamed of her already” (5.3.328); Bias and Solon are tricked into marrying chamber-maids, who immediately demand alimony to be separated from them (5.3.238); Margery marries Callow, but her father finds an excuse to deny them her portion (5.3.254-55). Even the more positive characters, Berenice and Darewell, look on their life together with some scepticism; thus Darewell concludes: “For my part I’ll wear my yoke, if it chance to be a yoke, with all the patience imaginable; and when the marriage courtship is a little over, to sea again” (5.3.394-96). Thus, rather than offering a defence of marriage, the playwright seems concerned to show that libertine attitudes will no longer be condoned and, as the Prologue announces, “he punishes the marriage-hater”. The comedy’s concession to the new moral crusade finally comes down to this: that lack of virtue at least is not rewarded.

2.3 Wit and humours in ‘*The Marriage-Hater Matched*’

Like the most representative comedies of the 1670s, *The Marriage-Hater Matched* is set in London. In this case, however, the action

moves westwards from the typical locations of Covent Garden and St James to Kensington, where the new court now resided. London provides the standard for polished manners, in contrast with the simple, rude customs of country characters (Sir Lawrence's family, who constantly refer to their native Shrewsbury). Events last just over one day (in fact, 30 hours, as specifically indicated in the play-text). The plot also displays a series of characteristic features of the comic genre, such as the occurrence of love-triangles which complicate the action: the relationship between Sir Philip, Phoebe/Lovewell and Lady Subtle makes it more difficult for Phoebe to marry Sir Philip, while Solon's courtship poses an obstacle in Darewell's attempt at conquering Berenice. And like so many earlier Restoration comedies, it is written entirely in prose, even if the leading characters tend to use rhyming verse to mark their exit, the end of an act or a proverbial saying; see, for instance, 1.1.116-17, 1.1.499-500, 2.2.115-17, 3.1.283-85, 3.1.298-99, 3.3.72-77, 4.2.109-12, 4.2.211-16, 5.2.38-39, 5.3.398-99, 5.3.404-05 and 5.3.417-18. Rhymed verse (couplets) is employed in both Prologue and Epilogue too.

If the great debate in the comedies of the 1670s had been that between humours and wit, in *The Marriage-Hater Matched* the prevalence of humours over wit is overwhelming. There is little in the way of witty repartee in this work, apart from several exchanges between Sir Philip and Phoebe, Lady Subtle and Sir Philip, and Darewell and Berenice. The only rakish character seems to be Sir Philip, although the fact that he ends up marrying the girl he had debauched and got with child introduces a very significant departure from most previous Restoration rakes and from the moral values underlying the comedy of wit. The two female leads are rather unconventional for this model of comedy too: a widow and an unmarried mother. Both show their wit in their schemes to overreach Sir Philip, but the peculiarities of their situation occasionally make them prey to Sir Philip's mockery. Yet, Lady Subtle is not the typical lusty widow who is often subjected to ridicule, but a high-spirited young woman, aware of her personal appeal and her value in the marriage-market. And Phoebe, though she conforms to the

type of the fallen woman, is presented as a modest, virtuous girl who thoroughly deserves to have her wrongs righted at the end of the play. As she says to Sir Philip: “you might have, sir, to indulge your life / A newer bride, but not a better wife” (5.3.404-05).

Most characters, however, display some sort of ridiculous personal trait that brings them close to humours. Even Sir Philip shows a consistent, exaggerated aversion to matrimony which dictates all his actions and brings him eventually to fall into his own trap. The second gallant, Darewell, a brave sea captain and the only character that may be regarded as a true lover, also shows traces of humour, noticeable mainly in his serious, sometimes sombre mood and his use of nautical terms in his courtship of Berenice. As he complains of her disdainful attitude, he remarks: “I’ll make her mind her business between-decks. She shall lower her topsail, I warrant her” (2.1.606-08). He refers to her bad temper in similar terms: “So, now shall I be tossed by the tempest of her tongue worse that ever I was by a storm in the Bay of Biscay” (3.2.71-72). Moreover, at the end, he announces that he has married her stating: “as this can witness, I have laid her aboard myself” (5.3.223-24). Berenice, though apparently in love with Darewell from the beginning, enjoys teasing him and mocks his nautical speech. Thus, she complains: “he lies at anchor still and expects daily when he shall grapple me” (2.1.72-73); and when he asks to have a word with her, she replies: “About what, the deck, forecastle, and gun-room?” (2.1.438). She also torments him pretending to make love to Solon, until she eventually makes up her mind and accepts Darewell’s proposal of matrimony.

Ridiculous whims or peculiar traits, especially their manner of speech, identify most other characters. Both Lord Brainless and La Pupsie are marked by their affectation, and pride themselves on their knowledge of French customs and fashions. La Pupsie employs all sort of learned and often incomprehensible terms in her speech and, moreover, pretends to converse with her own lap-dog throughout the play. Van Grin, a “clownish fat Flanderkin”, can hardly stop grinning and laughing regardless of the situation, and peppers his speech with a profusion of onomatopoetic “ha ha ha”. Lady Bumfiddle, a gluttonous

bulky matchmaker, is always asking about food and constantly ends her lines with the tag “as I’m a Protestant”. Her brother Sir Lawrence and his family add a colourful set of coxcombs to the plot: Sir Lawrence is an old-fashioned courtier who constantly swears “by the parliament”; he embodies the traditional blocking parent, as he tries to marry his two foolish sons—Bias and Solon, ironically named after Greek philosophers—to Lady Subtle and Berenice. Solon’s recurrent tag is “as a man may say”, whereas his brother Bias keeps referring to a “crickety minute” whose significance he cannot fully fathom. Sir Lawrence’s only daughter, Margery, a seemingly naïve, lisping, young country girl, has just arrived in London; she is amazed at what she sees and ready to take advantage of what she considers an atmosphere of great sexual freedom.²⁰ Her suitor Callow is described as “a rascally lieutenant, disaffected to the government”; his lack of principles is underlined in his speech by a constant use of curses such as “rot me”, “burn me” or “sink me”.

The farcical aspect of most characters makes it possible to liken them to the stereotypes found in the Italian *Commedia dell’Arte*: Lovewell/Phoebe deceives both Sir Philip and Lady Subtle, plays tricks on them and makes them serve her own interests in a clear impersonation of *Arlechino* or *Brighella*, the Plautine “crafty servant”. Sir Lawrence, on the other hand, resembles *Pantalone* in his search of financially advantageous matches for his children, all of which turn out to be disastrous, and also in the way other characters make fun on him (see stage directions for 1.1.288 and 3.1.98). One of the officers in the comedy, Callow, may be compared to the famous *Capitano*; like his Italian predecessor, he flees as soon as he considers himself to be at risk; thus, he prefers to run away in 4.1.135-36 rather than confront Sir Lawrence, very much in the manner of the celebrated Plautine *miles*

20. Margery may have been drawn on Margery Pinchwife, the leading female character in Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (1675), which had been reprinted in 1688 and had very likely been revived in London in the season 1688-89 (LS 368). Forsythe (86) finds a precedent for her lisp in the character of Amoretta, in Ford’s *The Lady’s Trial* (1638; 1639).

gloriosus. Finally, both Sir Philip disguised as a lawyer (2.2) and Splutter are shown in a light not unlike that of the famous Italian *Dottore*.

The play therefore appeals to an audience willing to engage in the farcical intrigues of a set of humour characters whose eccentricities provide numerous comic situations. Durfey's enemies were quick to point out that some of his plays, like *The Marriage-Hater Matched*, were "more fit for Bartholomew Fair, than the Theatre" (*Poeta Infamis* 12). However, the text also abounds in amusing dialogues, particularly when Sir Lawrence, Lady Bumfiddle, Solon, Bias, Margery and La Pupsie are onstage; the fact that Margery has a lisp and that La Pupsie offers a "running translation" of what her lap-dog supposedly says, is an endless source of mirth for other characters as well as for the audience. Callow's courtship of Margery (2.1, 3.2 and 4.1), the successive "performances" of La Pupsie's dog (2.1, 3.2 and Epilogue), the tricks played by Lovewell/Phoebe on Sir Philip and Lady Subtle (especially those of 4.2), or Van Grin's description of his own accident (5.2), stand out among the best humorous situations ever designed for Restoration comedies.

3. *The play and the Restoration stage*

The title page of *The Marriage-Hater Matched* states that it was "Acted at the Theatre Royal by Their Majesties' Servants", i.e. the United Company. The première date is not known, but *The London Stage* suggests that since the play was entered in the *Term Catalogues* in February 1692, and mentioned in *The Gentleman's Journal* for the same month, it must have been first produced in January 1692 (404).²¹ In the Dedication to the duke of Ormond, Durfey acknowledges that the play's

21. In "Dating Play Premières from Publication Data, 1660-1700", Milhous and Hume observe that there was in the 1690s an "abrupt reduction of the standard time lapse to publication, which falls to about one month". As they explain, the Licensing Act of 1662 was not being enforced after the Revolution, and therefore "both authors and printers had excellent reason to hasten a work into print" (395).

“imperfect action and, worse of all, the faulty length . . . rendered it little diversion the first day”, but protests that in the end it “acquitted itself” well on the stage (54-57). His claim is endorsed by an observation in *The Gentleman’s Journal* that the comedy “met with very good success, having been plaid six days together” (LS 405).

3.1. *The cast*

The success of the play was possibly due in good measure to the strong cast given it by the company. As McVeagh notes, Dufey knew how to suit his characters to the talents of the actors and play with the audience’s expectations of them based on their previous roles (24-25).²² The choice of William Mountfort for the marriage-hater is a good case in point, for he would have made a very attractive libertine rake. Colley Cibber describes Mountfort as a handsome actor, who “gave truest Life to what we call the Fine Gentleman”: he had a melodious voice, a pleasing manner, and a natural talent for delivering repartee (74-75).²³ Moreover, he had recently acted a number of rakes who, like Sir Philip, reform by the end of the play. As Belfond Jr. in Shadwell’s *The Squire of Alsatia* (1688), Mountfort had appeared on stage to utter a full recantation of his rakish ways:

Farewell, forever, all the vices of the age!
There is no peace but in a virtuous life,
No lasting joy, but in a tender wife. (4: 5.1, p.281).

22. McVeagh’s argument draws substantially on Holland (1979).

23. Discussing a revival of Behn’s *The Rover* (1690), Cibber observes that Mountfort made an irresistible rake: “The agreeable was so natural to him, that even in that dissolute Character of the Rover he seem’d to wash off the Guilt from Vice, and gave it Charms and Merit” (74-75). Mountfort’s charm is attested to by Queen Mary’s reaction to his performance: “When this Comedy was acted at Whitehall, King William’s Queen Mary was pleas’d to make in favour of Monfort, notwithstanding her Disapprobation of the Play” (Cibber 75).