

# The Witty Company: Wycherley's *The Country Wife*

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**S**EVENTEENTH-CENTURY critics of the English language sought standards, models and rules where they found only an anarchic maze of dialects. It was an age in which even God spoke in tongues: Laudian "beauty of holiness" or Puritan "plainness for profit." Ciceronian periods jostled plain style. In the absence of a tribunal, some writers turned for authority to the language of gentlemen: "If any ask me whence it is that our conversation is so much refined, I must freely, and without flattery, ascribe it to the Court; and, in it, particularly to the King, whose example gives a law to it."<sup>1</sup> Refined conversation implied a "law" for writing as well: "propriety of thoughts and words; or, in other terms, thoughts and words elegantly adapted to the subject" (I, 207). Propriety sought, in Dryden's phrase, "the most easy language" (I, 40), a mean between Sprat's "primitive purity" and Ciceronian rococo. Wycherley concurred: "Few words are best, whether Men speak well or ill, or are in the right or wrong; since good Sense is best understood, and bad less tedious for being short" (Maxim XLVII).<sup>2</sup> Urbanity dictates restraint ("Sense, like our Food, may be too high season'd": Maxim LVIII) and demands judgment (Maxim XCIII). Rather than strain or force wit a gentleman will observe silence, "the best Proof of our Sense" (Maxim CLV). To preen only exposes folly:

Then Wit's a Contradiction to Good Sense,  
Against its own self, the best Evidence;  
Which, against Reason, and Example, does  
Fancy, to sure Experience, most oppose;

. . . . .

Light sudden Thought, to wise Deliberation,  
 To sober cool Sense, hot and hasty Passion;  
 Thwarting the public Vogue, with private Sense,  
 Which proves Wit, want of right Intelligence;<sup>3</sup>

Wit is unobtrusive, unlike the pretender's "private Sense," so easy and natural as to be lost on the insensitive. As Rochester argues, wit which seeks matter savory to the million is contemptible:

Scorn all applause the vile rout can bestow  
 And be content to please those few who know.  
 Canst thou be such a vain, mistaken thing  
 To wish thy works might make a playhouse ring  
 With the unthinking laughter and poor praise  
 Of fops and ladies, factious for thy plays?<sup>4</sup>

Restoration prologues and epilogues echo Rochester: gentlemen never cater, but write to "those few who know."

*The Country Wife* is a typically elitist view of Hobbesian social conflict.<sup>5</sup> Words are weapons, used more or less skillfully as a character perceives more or less clearly. Wit provides thesis and justification for manipulating others. Verbal dexterity, as the wits — and Horner in particular — prove, determines influence and power; verbal obtuseness isolates and debases. Wycherley amplifies a familiar Restoration theme: linguistic awareness argues social perception; linguistic delusion dictates social blindness. The wit would strain to bolster a place he never has; the wit's poise affirms his place. Sir Jaspar and Sparkish, for example, presume to mock Horner's impotence; but their wit is fatuous, insipid. They prop their egos with claims to be "Whisperers of *Whitehal*." Sir Jaspar, a latter-day Sir Politic Would-be, hints of "advancing a certain Project to his Majesty" (311).<sup>6</sup> Sparkish claims to have "left at *Whitehal* an Earl to dine with [the wits]" (267). Pinchwife, "one that knew the Town so much, and Women so well" (269), eschews such transparent puffing only to gore himself with jealousy.

The dupes reveal their "innocent, literal understanding" (the phrase is Horner's) in taking "signs" as accurate images of inner truth.<sup>7</sup> Sparkish loves "a Man with a title

better, than a Suit with a French trimming to't" (267). Sir Jasper sees what others tell him to see. Pinchwife, more wary, declines to mask his wife since "a Woman mask'd, like a cover'd Dish, gives a man curiosity, and appetite, when, it may be, uncover'd, 'twould turn his stomach" (293). Instead he dresses Margery as her brother and then suffers Horner's flirtation with "this pretty young Gentleman" in a paroxysm of uncertainty (305-11).

In one particularly deft stroke, Wycherley links the dupes' literal understanding and the tendency of both wits and dupes to employ code phrases and tags (as in "Whisperers of *Whitehal*").<sup>8</sup> The wits' code is incomprehensible, or only partly comprehensible, to the dupes; urbanity, a tissue of understated metaphor, often leaves the dupe bemused or puzzled. At other times, he appreciates a limited degree of connotation, but is insensitive to areas of verbal significance which amuse the wits at his expense. At still others, he launches his own connotative sallies into the company of wits only to be spurned. Wycherley's true wits typically use *double-entendre* to mask and separate themselves from pretenders. Language becomes the subtlest guise, taken by the fool as the wits intend while communicating other worlds of meaning to the *au courant*.

Code language is exemplified in the separation of characters into discrete groups. In the play's opening moments, for example, Harcourt and Dorilant remark that Horner's fame as a rake will make difficult his attainment of a new place among "Women of Honour":

*Dorilant.* Nay, I dare swear, they won't admit you to play at Cards with them, go to Plays with'em, or do the little duties which other Shadows of men, are wont to do for'em.

*Horner.* Who do you call Shadows of Men?

*Dorilant.* Half Men.

*Horner.* What Boyes?

*Dorilant.* Ay your old Boyes, old *beaux Garçons*, who like superannuated Stallions are suffer'd to run, feed, and whinney with the Mares as long as they live, though they can do nothing else. (263-4)

"Shadows of Men" include, as I have suggested, Sir Jaspar and Sparkish (though they are not "superannuated Stallions"), in whom intellectual and sexual impotence are equated.<sup>9</sup> They are contrasted with the company of men or wits (the terms are synonymous for Wycherley), whose pleasures are "lasting, rational and manly," and less directly with "Women of scandalous reputations" (274), who see themselves as "Women of Honour" and one another as "ensorious, and detracting" (325).

In fact, his companions soon discover, Horner the half man is openly courted. Sir Jaspar takes pleasure to "play the wag with him," and presses Horner on his lady (260-2), not only to exult at Horner's misfortune, but also to free himself for the political arena. "Business must be preferred always before Love and Ceremony with the wise," he crows. "And the Impotent Sir *Jaspar*," Horner responds, in what Sir Jaspar interprets as self-deprecation. Horner caps the skirmish of words with implication beyond Sir Jaspar's grasp. Inclined to run rampant among the town wives, Horner is abetted by Sir Jaspar (285) when he turns Lady Fidget over to Horner because "I have business at *Whitehal*, and cannot go to the play with you." She at first disdains this "stinking mortify'd rotten French Weather" (287); Horner better knows her nature:

Why, these are pretenders to honour, as criticks to wit, only by censuring others; and as every raw peevish, out-of-humour'd, affected, dull, Tea-drinking, Arithmetical Fop sets up for a wit, by railing at men of sence, so these for honour, by railing at the Court, and Ladies of as great honour, as quality. (285)

Within minutes he has struck the scales from Lady Fidget's eyes, underscoring the irony of Sir Jaspar's sexual innuendo that Horner is "an ill Gamester, and consequently loves play" (287). She can scarcely credit, in this Hobbesian, competitive world, anyone being "so truly a Man of honour, as for the sakes of us women of honour, to cause yourself to be reported no Man" (289), but Horner coolly replies "I desire to be try'd only, Madam." His "trial," the

"China" scene, is one of Wycherley's dramatically most daring, not only for its extended sexual innuendo, but also because its principal actors are offstage while we are placed in their deluded "audience." We and the onstage audience see the action in our imaginations and thus, like them, are tested. Our relish (or disgust) at Lady Fidget's "toying and moyling" is intensified by such obtuse remarks as Lady Squeamish's that Horner is "as pretty harmless company for a Lady, as a Snake without his teeth" (328). Once again, insensitivity turns smugness into self-ridicule.

Horner's witty antithesis of love and wine (264-5) sets his fellow wits on the same false scent as the dupes. Dorilant and Harcourt grant the contrary pleasures of love and wine; then Harcourt asserts that "Love will still be uppermost." But Horner responds that "for my part I will have only those glorious, manly pleasures of being very drunk, and very slovenly" (knowing glances all around!). When the wits later return to the pleasures of wine (294-5), Horner shares privileged information: "Women of honour" indulge in this manly pleasure, "and I shall have the pleasure at least of laying 'em flat with a Bottle; and bring as much scandal that way upon'em, as formerly t'other" (295). In the masquerade (349-53), Wycherley shows the justice of Horner's revelation; the women salute wine which "mak'st our Husbands short sighted," and then, led by Lady Fidget, strip off their masks of reputation:

Our Reputation, Lord! Why should you not think, that we women make use of our Reputation, as you men of yours, only to deceive the world with less suspicion; our virtue is like the State-man's Religion, the Quakers Word, the Gamesters Oath, and the Great Man's Honour, but to cheat those that trust us. (351)

It is a short step to the ladies' mutual acknowledgement that Horner is their lover, which provokes Horner to comment "let us e'en pardon one another, for all the difference I find betwixt we men, and you women, we forswear ourselves at the beginning of an Amour, you, as long as it lasts" (353). Wits and ladies unite; lovers and tipplers form a company of sexual self-interest.

This compact excludes pretenders either to love or wit. Unlike Horner, who would gather all women under the sign of the eunuch, Sparkish would gather all admirers to his sign as a wit. As Sir Jaspas presses Horner to escort Lady Fidget, Sparkish presses Harcourt to try Alithea, in whose reflected glory he presumes to bask (278). Harcourt takes his opportunity to argue that Sparkish "wants . . . jealousy, the only infallible sign of [love]":

Marrying you, is no more sign of his love, than bribing your Woman, that he may marry you, is a sign of his generosity: Marriage is rather a sign of interest than love; and he that marries a fortune, covets a Mistress, not loves her: But if you take Marriage for a sign of love, take it from me immediately. (279)

We cannot fail to reflect that Sparkish's banter about Horner the "sign of a Man" had earlier provoked the wits' contempt and Horner's retort, "the Divel take me, if thine be the sign of a jest" (267). And in Act 3, Wycherley manages a nice touch with Sparkish's smug "I go to a Play as to a Country-treat, I carry my own wine to one, and my own wit to t'other, or else I'm sure I shou'd not be merry at either" (296). Sparkish's ludicrous estimate of his wit and discernment blinds him to ironic connotation in his own remarks as well as those of his antagonists. Again, he obtusely remarks "I think wit as necessary at dinner as a glass of good wine, and that's the reason I never have any stomach when I eat alone" (268); we sense, from his frequently repeated "where do we dine," that he often eats witlessly alone. Horner assures Harcourt that such fools are easily "bubled" (*i.e.*, cheated or gulled) of money or a mistress. Sparkish, who hears only the last part of Horner's remark, is anxious to help cheat the "buble"; Horner protests he cannot believe Sparkish has ever had a "buble" (the clear implication being that Sparkish is himself one). Sparkish retorts that "we were some of us beforehand with you today at the Play: the Wits were something bold with you, Sir." But in the next breath, Sparkish reveals insecurity, reproaching dramatists who "make a wise and

witty Man in the World, a Fool upon the Stage you know not how; and 'tis therefore I hate'em too, for I know not but it may be my own case" (296-97). Like Sir Jaspar, his lady's best advocate in her pursuit of "China," Sparkish proves Harcourt's most willing "bubble." These verbal emblems characterize the two dupes.

Unlike his fellow's, Pinchwife immediately interprets his emblem. When Margery bears to him her hatful of oranges and dried fruit (symbolizing Margery and Pinchwife, respectively), he mutters bitterly that Horner has "squeez'd my Orange, I suppose, and given it me again; yet I must have a City-patience" (310). The orange is more allusive than Sir Jaspar's china and Sparkish's bubble: orange women were proverbially whores and procuresses. Horner implies the analogy between bearing oranges and promiscuity earlier, when he groups "the Orange Wenches at the Playhouses, the City Husbands, and old Fumbling Keepers of this end of the Town" (258) among those pleased to hear and eager to spread news of his impotence. Dorilant characterizes Horner's "Theatrical impudence," when he is rallied at the playhouse for his supposed misfortune, as greater "than the Orange-wenches shew there, or a drunken vizard Mask, or a great belly'd Actress" (263). Horner, at still another point, objects to Sir Jaspar that squiring Lady Fidget "would be nibbling at . . . forbidden fruit" (326). Pinchwife's own "dried fruit," aside from its graphic sexual implications, suggests that he is no longer *au courant*. More devastating still is the implication made by Margery's bearing the oranges and dried fruit to Pinchwife that he has procured his own cuckolding by his cruel jealousy as well as by his harping on London's evils.

A second emblem of Pinchwife's sexual inadequacy is the penknife with which he threatens Margery (320). Later it becomes the sword with which he asserts "there will be danger in making me a Cuckold" (332), and which he draws on Margery when he finds her composing a second letter to Horner (337). Sparkish clinches the sword's implication:

"What drawn upon your Wife? you shou'd never do that but at night in the dark when you can't hurt her." The sword in fact links Pinchwife and Sparkish since earlier, when Alithea reports Harcourt's attack on his wit ("did he disparage my parts?"), Sparkish offers to draw on Harcourt. At the play's close, Pinchwife threatens Horner with his sword unless Horner agrees to marry Alithea ("a woman's injur'd Honour, no more than a man's, can be repair'd or satisfied by any, but him that first wrong'd it": 356). Pinchwife's impotence is once more linked to the brandished sword, both because he cannot enforce his will and because he is oblivious to the irony in his statement: he, not Alithea, suffers "injur'd Honour."

Horner the eunuch paradoxically becomes the doctor to his world of cuckolds, fools, and sexually deprived wives. This paradox is introduced by Horner's opening comment that "A Quack is as fit for a Pimp, as a Midwife for a Bawd" (258), and extended in his instructions to the quack, which serve as a sort of prescription for sexual success. Horner spurns, for example, the exaggerated claims which the quack has often spread for others: "there are Quacks in love, as well as Physick, who get but fewer and worse Patients, for their boasting" (259). He begins his proof that feigned impotence affords the best access to the ladies; but the quack remarks, after the Fidgets' call, that Horner's ruse may rid him of bothersome old acquaintances, but is hardly likely to help him to new ones. Horner retorts that "thou wilt never make a good Chymist, thou art so incredulous and impatient." The quack allows that "your Process is so new, that we do not know but it may succeed," and wishes Horner "luck and many Patients whil'st I go to mine" (262-3). Horner readily prescribes for Lady Fidget, since Sir Jaspas is so solicitous. Margery's case proves more difficult, though Margery proves, through metaphors of illness, her desire for the doctor's services (292). After meeting Horner at the New Exchange, Margery admits to herself that



I have got the *London* disease, they call Love, I am sick of my Husband, and for my Gallant; I have heard this distemper, call'd a Feaver, but methinks 'tis liker an Ague, for when I think of my Husband, I tremble and am in a cold sweat, and have inclinations to vomit, but when I think of my Gallant, dear Mr. *Horner*, my hot fit comes, and I am all in a Feaver, indeed, & as in other Feavers, my own Chamber is tedious to me, and I would fain be remov'd to his, and then methinks I shou'd be well . . . . (336)

Pinchwife discovers Margery's love-sickness and threatens her, but Sparkish warns "that Cuckolding like the small Pox comes with a fear, and you may keep your Wife as much as you will out of danger of infection, but if her constitution incline her to't, she'l have it sooner or later." Pinchwife retorts Sparkish is the likelier cuckold, for "How'sere the kind Wife's Belly comes to swell,/The husband breeds for her, and first is ill" (338).

Not only do the wits label, mock and manipulate; they also state or imply, through verbal equations, common bonds between dupes. Horner, for example, describing Sparkish as "one of those nauseous offerers at wit," elicits Harcourt's agreement: "by being in the Company of Men of sense [he] wo'd pass for one." Horner adds, "his Company is as troublesome to us, as a Cuckolds, when you have a mind to his Wife's" (265), yoking Sparkish's failure as a wit to Sir Jaspar's and Pinchwife's as husbands to suggest that both inadequacies offer the wits pleasure mingled with pain. The analogy gains force when Sparkish proves sexually inept while his fellows fail in the contest of wits.

Horner draws a second analogy: Lady Fidget and her companions are "pretenders to honour, as criticks to wit" (285). Fops and critics (one thinks of Sparkish) set up for wit "by railing at men of sense, so these for honour, by railing at the Court, and Ladies of as great honour, as quality." These ladies, who flatter themselves that the wits value them as highly as they do themselves, prove no less contemptible to the wits than their foppish husbands. This and Horner's other insights concerning the "Women of honour" enrich the irony of the ladies' "unmasking" in

Act 5 where, in response to Horner's mock-incredulity, Lady Fidget, bolstered by drink, admits feigning honor "for the same reason you men pretend business often, to avoid ill company, to enjoy the better, and more privately those you love" (351).

This telling analogy reverberates through the play. We observed earlier Sir Jaspar's excuse that "business must be preferr'd always before Love and Ceremony," and Horner's riposte that this was so with the impotent (261). Soon after, the quack remarks that Horner has "done [his] business with the Women" (ended his hopes with his sham impotence); Horner is instead confident of future "business" (262-63). Pinchwife, provoked to learn that Horner has observed his wife at the playhouse, declines Horner's dinner invitation since he has "business at home." Harcourt jests that it is "To beat his Wife, he's as jealous of her, as a *Cheapside* Husband of a *Covent-garden* Wife" (272). Metaphorically, Pinchwife and Horner are business rivals. So, too, are Sir Jaspar and Horner, though Sir Jaspar is interested only in "business at *Whitehal*" (285) and, deriding Horner's hope that the ladies will "afford me better employment" than they afford other "Half Men," mocks "'tis fit you know your work before you come into your place" (288). Sir Jaspar then exits teasing: "get you gone to your business together; go, go, to your business, I say, pleasure, whilst I go to my pleasure, business." Horner, of course, shares Lady Fidget's gloating "Who for his business, from his Wife will run;/Takes the best care, to have her bus'ness done" (290).

This implicit link between Sir Jaspar and Pinchwife as Horner's business competitors is strengthened at the New Exchange when Pinchwife sourly echoes Sir Jaspar: "I have business, Sir, and must mind it; your business is pleasure, therefore you and I must go different wayes." The wits are amenable to Pinchwife's departure, but would detain Margery, Alithea, and Lucy, Alithea's maid, on the grounds that "their business is the same with ours, plea-

sure" (305). When Horner steals off with Margery, Lucy spurs Pinchwife's agitation: "Their business will be done presently sure, an't please your Worship, it can't be long in doing I'm sure on't" (310). Seconds later, Margery runs in with her hatful of oranges and dried fruit. The Sir Jaspar/Pinchwife pairing extends through the "China" scene (where Pinchwife's arrival provokes the quack's "What's here another Cuckold — he looks like one, and none else sure have any business with him") and Pinchwife's self-betrayal where, like Sir Jaspar (though unwittingly), he hands over his disguised wife, thinking her Alithea, to Horner (343-44). "Business" proves the most widely used code word (except "honour") in the play; unlike most other code words, however, it is universally understood — when applied to Horner — to refer to sexual pleasure. Here divergence of understanding relates to the dupes' failure to unmask Horner and their ironic promotion of their own cuckolding. By analogy, Sparkish is blind to Harcourt's "business" and promotes his rival's flirtation. Again subtly and the full dimension of the language code (though in this case the basic duality is understood by the dupes) is under the wits' exclusive control.

So, too, is more direct word-play (punning), which consists almost exclusively in sexual *double-entendre*. For example, when Lady Fidget calls Horner a "rude fellow" (260), her implication is that he is "rued" by her due to his impotence. Dainty chimes in to ask "Who, by his breeding, wou'd think, he had ever been in France," the play again striking on sexual "breeding," since it is in France that Horner claims his unfortunate loss occurred. Horner later complains of the difficulty of distinguishing love from "good breeding" (262) among London's "civil" ladies, and the pun itself breeds and multiplies (269, 283, 338, 351). Another recurring (some might also argue, obligatory) sexual quibble is on "thing" and "nothing" (= "no thing"), as in Horner's insistence (260), when she believes him a eunuch, that he has "nothing that [Lady

Fidget] came for." The passage in the New Exchange is a tissue of such references, concluding with Margery's promise to Pinchwife (concerning Horner's gift of fruit), "you shall have part of the fine Gentlemans good things, or treat as you call it, when we come home," and Pinchwife's rejoinder, "Indeed I deserve it, since I furnish'd the best part of it" (308-11). Other instances occur in the "China" scene (326, 330). A more unusual word-play occurs when Lady Fidget objects that Sir Jaspas would leave the ladies "with a filthy Man alone" (261), where "alone" suggests "only" and "filthy Man" means "eunuch." This play is inverted at the New Exchange (309) when Pinchwife demands where his wife and Horner have stolen and Alithea replies to "the next walk only." His jealousy alert to Alithea's implication, Pinchwife echoes desperately "Only, only; where, where?"

A proverbial *double-entendre* relates "play" as gambling and as sexual activity (287, 288, 333). Less common but equally transparent is Harcourt's remark that "a Rival is the best cloak to steal to a Mistress under" (299), reinforced visually by Pinchwife's unwitting delivery of his cloaked wife to Horner later in the play (340-44). Such blatant sexual puns as those on "pulpit" (314), "die" (316) and "charm" (324) need no clarification. On the other hand, the ladies' references to Horner as "Toad" (325, 326, 327, 329, 330, 348) will seem innocent familiarity unless we are aware that symbolically the toad is the inverse of the frog, which images fecundity; hence "Toad" refers jocularly or demeaningly, depending on a lady's current estimate or understanding, to Horner's sexuality.

The "China" scene (324-30) understandably exploits *double-entendre* most fully, culminating in Lady Fidget's self-congratulatory comments on "toyling and moyling," Squeamish's petulant demands for "China," and the uncomprehending amusement of Sir Jaspas and Lady Squeamish ("Poor Gentleman I pitty you"). In two short speeches (327), Horner manages puns on "things," "rifling,"

"back way," "rifle" (again), and "ferret . . . out." One's tolerance for word-play and sexual directness are simultaneously tested.

There follow Pinchwife's reaction to Horner's vow of friendship "in love, or battle," that "I believe so you wou'd be my second now indeed" (331), and Horner's riposte to Lady Fidget's accusation of falsehood: "You have found me a true man I'm sure" (349). But Wycherley saves one of his best illustrations of the connection between verbal perception and social power for the play's final scene. Certain he has been cuckolded, Pinchwife attempts to draw first on Margery, then on Pinchwife. The Fidget entourage sweeps in, Sir Jaspar demanding "pray what's the matter Sir, I beseech you communicate Sir." Exasperated, Pinchwife rages: "my Wife has communicated Sir, as your Wife may have done too Sir, if she knows him Sir" (357). The wit is less in the word-play than in what it triggers: Sir Jaspar laughs at Pinchwife's ignorant simplicity and he, his desperate ladies, the bribed quack and Lucy, even "innocent" Margery, assure Pinchwife that the evidence of his eyes is not so. Yet their earnestness reveals that some, at least, are of Pinchwife's persuasion: "For my own sake fain I wou'd all believe./Cuckolds like Lovers shou'd themselves deceive." Self-interest conquers truth where credulity cannot conquer suspicion.

An earlier moment in the play suggests how important this truth is to the wits' success. Lady Fidget smugly seconds Horner's assurance that he has no "China" left for Squeamish. Horner, however, promises to satisfy Squeamish another time. Lady Fidget is instantly jealous, but Horner airily responds that Squeamish "has an innocent, literal understanding" (329). Clearly, Squeamish's understanding of "China" is that of Horner and Lady Fidget, but Lady Fidget must be satisfied with Horner's argument lest she betray herself to Sir Jaspar and old Lady Squeamish. Horner and his fellows depend on such interlocking self-interests (Squeamish must be content, for the same reasons

as Lady Fidget) to gain and hold power over others. Indeed, it is just this web of self-interest which saves Horner from disaster in the final scene. Thus while language forges a code of power by revealing levels of understanding, in the final analysis the company of wits depends on the control it enforces on its aspirants, lovers and would-be wits. The compact forged requires all, however "innocent" or "literal" their understanding, to play the game as the wits dictate.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Of *Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays*, ed. George Watson (New York: Dutton, 1962), I, 181. Further citations from Dryden appear in the text, with reference to this edition by volume and page.
- <sup>2</sup>*The Complete Works of William Wycherley*, ed. Montague Summers (New York: Russell and Russell, 1924). The maxims, cited by number in the text, appear in volume 4.
- <sup>3</sup>*Works*, 3, 144.
- <sup>4</sup>*The Complete Poems of . . . Rochester*, ed. David M. Vieth (New Haven: Yale, 1968), p. 125.
- <sup>5</sup>Charles A. Hallett, "The Hobbesian Substructure of *The Country Wife*," *PLL*, 9 (1973), 380-96 argues that "Wycherley attacks the Hobbist society from which . . . hypocrisy stems."
- <sup>6</sup>*The Complete Plays of William Wycherley*, ed. Gerald Weales (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966). Citations from this edition appear in the text, with reference to page.
- <sup>7</sup>See David M. Vieth, "Wycherley's *The Country Wife*: An Anatomy of Masculinity," *PLL*, 2 (1966), 335-50.
- <sup>8</sup>Peter Malekin, "Wycherley's Dramatic Skills and the Interpretation of *The Country Wife*," *Durham U. Journal*, 31 (1969), 32-40 discusses catch-phrases and the characteristic tags of the dupes.
- <sup>9</sup>See William Freedman, "Impotence and Self-Destruction in *The Country Wife*," *English Studies*, 53 (1972), 421-31.