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NEW MERMAIDS

GEORGE
FARQUHAR
**THE BEAUX'
STRATAGEM**

EDITED BY ANN BLAKE



B L O O M S B U R Y

NEW MERMAIDS

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The interior of a Restoration theatre
drawn by C. Walter Hodges

NEW MERMAIDS

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| All for Love | The Provoked Wife |
| Arden of Faversham | The Recruiting Officer |
| Bartholmew Fair | The Relapse |
| The Beaux' Stratagem | The Revenger's Tragedy |
| The Changeling | The Rivals |
| A Chaste Maid in Cheapside | The Roaring Girl |
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| Dr Faustus | She Stoops to Conquer |
| The Duchess of Malfi | The Shoemaker's Holiday |
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| The Malcontent | A Woman Killed with Kindness |
| The Man of Mode | A Woman of No Importance |
| Marriage A-la-Mode | Women Beware Women |
| The Old Wife's Tale | |

NEW MERMAIDS

GEORGE FARQUHAR

THE BEAUX'
STRATAGEM

edited by Ann Blake
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La Trobe University, Melbourne

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Bloomsbury Methuen Drama
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

50 Bedford Square
London
WC1B 3DP
UK

1385 Broadway
New York
NY 10018
USA

www.bloomsbury.com

Bloomsbury is a registered trade mark of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

Second edition 2006 first published by A&C Black Publishers Ltd

First edition 1988

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: PB: 978-0-7136-7000-4

ePDF: 978-1-4081-4427-5

ePUB: 978-1-4081-4428-2

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In preparing this edition my principal debts are to the previous New Mermaid editor, Michael Cordner, and to Shirley Strum Kenny, editor of the standard edition of Farquhar's works. Other editors to whose work I am indebted, along with the writers of biographical and critical studies of Farquhar, I have endeavoured to acknowledge in the footnotes and in the Further Reading. I am grateful to the Bodleian Library, the University of Oxford, for permission to use as copy text a copy of the first edition (Mal. 138(7)), and to reproduce its title page. William Hodges and the library staff were always helpful with my long distance enquiries, and on my visits. I owe particular thanks to Charles Edelman for replying so promptly to a request for advice, to Anne Margaret Daniel at Princeton for drawing my attention to *The Belle's Stratagem*, and to my old friends Jo and George Watson for conversations about Ireland and Irish writers. Jenny Ridout and Katie Taylor at A & C Black have been unfailingly helpful at all stages of the production of this edition. Thanks finally to Sue Gibbons, my copy editor, for her careful work, to Brian Gibbons, the series' General Editor, for his amiable guidance, and to Derick Marsh, for his constant support, advice and criticism. Any remaining errors are my own.

Melbourne, 2005

A. B.

INTRODUCTION

The Author

George Farquhar was born in 1677 or 1678 in Derry, in the north of Ireland, the son of 'an eminent divine of y^e Church of England'. As such the Reverend Farquhar was a target for Catholic resentment and attack, and he is reported to have been 'plundered and burnt out of all that he had . . . and after dy'd with greif'.¹ Conflict between Protestant and Catholic came close to Farquhar again in 1689 when Derry stood out against James II's army, and endured siege and starvation. A year later Farquhar was, it is claimed, a volunteer at the Battle of the Boyne,² and in an early poem he commemorated the death of the Protestant commander of this victory over Catholic forces. Farquhar entered Trinity College Dublin on 17 July 1694, aged seventeen, as a sizar – a student performing menial duties in return for an allowance. In 1695 he was awarded a scholarship worth four pounds a year but lost it through bad behaviour. By 1696, according to accounts of his life published in eighteenth-century editions of his plays,³ he had left college, rejecting what he was to call 'the rigidness of teachers, and pedantry of schools',⁴ and taken up acting at the Smock Alley theatre in Dublin, beginning, surprisingly, with *Othello*. As an actor, it is reported, he had no voice, though 'a very good person', and besides, luck was against him: in a performance of Dryden's *The Indian Emperor*, he accidentally wounded a fellow actor and vowed to give up acting for ever. In 1698, probably at the suggestion of the Irish actor Robert Wilks, who had already performed in London, he moved to London, and began to write for the stage. In the years between 1698 and his early death in 1707 he produced seven comedies, three of them not well received, but three others, *The Constant Couple* (1699) and his last two, *The Recruiting Officer* and *The Beaux' Stratagem*, all immediate successes and among the most popular plays of the century, as was his one afterpiece, *The Stage-Coach*. He also published *Love and Business*, a collection of poems, letters, and a prose

- 1 According to Farquhar's widow, in a petition for a pension to Queen Anne, 1709; see James R. Sutherland, 'New Light on George Farquhar', *TLS*, 6 March 1937, p. 171.
- 2 Again, according to Margaret Farquhar's petition.
- 3 The first by W. R. Chetwood, assisted by Robert Wilks, appeared in 1728; Thomas Wilkes compiled a lengthier version for *The Works of George Farquhar* (Dublin 1775).
- 4 *The Constant Couple*, I.i.131–3; Vizard is speaking in praise of the hero, Sir Harry Wildair: 'has had a genteel and easy Education, free from the rigidness', etc.

piece responding to Jeremy Collier's recent attack on the indecency of the stage, and contributed to three other miscellanies of this kind. For the theatre he produced prologues and epilogues, including one for the return of Wilks to the London stage (1699), but, as Kenny notes, this Irish playwright was never a member of any theatrical group, or literary circle.

After his lack of stage success, Farquhar became a soldier. He had a wife and family to provide for. He married Margaret Pemell, probably in 1703, a widow with three children. The early Lives tell a romantic, but possibly unreliable, story: 'For his wife (by whom he had two daughters only) through the reputation of a great fortune, tricked him into matrimony. This was chiefly the fault of her love, which was so violent for him, that she resolved to leave nothing untried to gain him.' To his 'immortal honour' he forgave her.⁵ Nevertheless many writers assume the marriage must have been unhappy. Among the few known facts of Farquhar's life are the records of his brief military career. These establish that in 1704 Farquhar was commissioned as a lieutenant in a new regiment raised by an Irish peer, the Duke of Ormond, and commanded by the Earl of Orrery.⁶ He was engaged in two periods of recruiting, in Shrewsbury and, probably, Lichfield, separated by a period in mid 1705 when the regiment was in Ireland, and where, the early Lives relate, he acted Sir Harry Wildair for Ormond, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, at Dublin Castle. Again, it is said, his acting let him down, but he received a hundred pounds. As for making money from his military career, recruiting left him out of pocket, as his commander admitted.⁷ To pay his debts, according to the early Lives, he sold his commission, and did so encouraged by Ormond's promise of a post of captain. None was forthcoming. He turned back to the stage: and though *The Recruiting Officer* was a phenomenal success, his situation grew more and more desperate. Finally, with money and encouragement from Wilks, he wrote *The Beaux' Stratagem*, but, broken by illness and worry, died in London, and was buried on 23 May 1707.⁸

Given the lack of personal reminiscences of Farquhar by his con-

5 1728; in her petition Margaret Farquhar makes it clear that she had lost her fortune before the death of her first husband.

6 Robert John Jordan, 'George Farquhar's Military Career', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 37 (1974), 251-64.

7 See the Earl of Orrery's 'certificate' supporting Mrs Farquhar's petition, Sutherland, *op. cit.*

8 Eric Rothstein, *George Farquhar* (NY 1967), p. 29 records that the burial register spells him 'Falkwere' reflecting, Rothstein suggests, a Derry pronunciation.

temporaries,⁹ it is more than usually tempting to look for the writer in his work. He teasingly suggests this tactic himself in his first play *Love and a Bottle* where Lyric, a poor writer, declares that ‘the hero in comedy is always the poet’s character’.¹⁰ The description of Wildair, ‘An airy gentleman affecting humourous gaiety and freedom in his behaviour’ makes it obvious what qualities Farquhar admired – and perhaps possessed.¹¹ Among the published love-letters is a self-portrait. What he writes there of his lack of ‘estate’ and his capacity to write quickly and earn money takes the reader momentarily close to the tough circumstances of his short life, and the humour with which he countered them: ‘I have very little estate, but what lies under the circumference of my hat . . . but I ought to thank providence that I can by three hours study live one and twenty with satisfaction myself, and contribute to the maintenance of more families than some who have thousands a year.’¹²

In his plays, as in his prefaces and dedications, his boldness, inventiveness, wit and independence shine out. His 1775 biographer however concluded on a note of pathos. One may see Farquhar’s disposition best, he wrote, in ‘that very laconic but expressive billet which Mr Wilkes [Wilks, the actor] found after his death, among his papers, directed to him . . . “Dear Bob, I have not anything to leave thee to perpetuate my memory, but these two helpless girls; look upon them sometimes, and think of him that was, to the last moment of his life, thine, GEORGE FARQUHAR”’. According to the 1728 Life, the dying Farquhar flung all his papers into the fire, and so this note, like other anecdotes, remains uncorroborated. His comedies are his lasting legacy. They have a secure place among what, in his ‘Discourse upon Comedy’, he called ‘the darlings of the English audience’.¹³

The Play

The Beaux’ Stratagem, Farquhar’s last play, was written when he was dying. He lived long enough to know it was an immediate success and it went on to become one of the most performed plays of the eighteenth century. Farquhar’s warm-hearted humour, vitality and wit light up the play, as they did his own last days, according to reports. For instance,

9 In *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* Cibber refers to Farquhar’s plays and the great acting roles he created, but tells no stories of him; he attributes the ‘discovery’ of Anne Oldfield not to Farquhar in the first place and then to Vanbrugh but to Vanbrugh alone.

10 *Love and a Bottle*, IV.ii.47–8.

11 Description of Sir Harry Wildair in the *Dramatis Personae*, *The Constant Couple*.

12 Kenny, II, 352.

13 Kenny, II, 380.

when the actress Anne Oldfield complained that he had given her character Mrs Sullen to Archer 'without a proper divorce, which was not a security for her honour . . . "to salve this," replied our author, "I'll get a real divorce, marry her myself, and give her my bond she shall be a real widow in less than a fortnight."' ¹⁴

The plot follows the familiar outline mocked by the hack writer Lyric in Farquhar's *Love and a Bottle*: the gentleman-rake hero bears off the great fortune, and all ends in marriage.¹⁵ But here the race for sex and money has the gentle tone of that 'humane comedy' (in Kenny's phrase)¹⁶ which evolved during the 1690s. The satire is more genial, and there is less of the 'immorality and profaneness' condemned by Collier in his 1698 attack on the stage. Though Mrs Sullen comes teasingly close to sexual impropriety, none occurs. Everyone still speaks frankly about sex, and the men talk with rakish determination about getting hold of money, but then sentiment breaks in, and finer feelings emerge. The treatment of the comic butts, Scrub and Foigard, is sympathetic, not destructive.

The country setting of *The Beaux' Stratagem*, and of Farquhar's preceding play, *The Recruiting Officer*, rare in comedies of this time, gives both plays a distinctive freshness. Mrs Sullen may despise 'country pleasures', but rural characters here are valued as well as teased. The comedy's moments of concern with serious human situations, particularly poverty and marriage, are another aspect of its distinctive appeal. Though obtaining a divorce is today relatively straightforward, the lines about compatibility in marriage still resonate. And with these concerns comes a greater psychological complexity of characterization – in the unhappy Mrs Sullen, and in Archer's resentment of his poverty, and arguably in the miserable Squire Sullen. Mrs Sullen and Archer are roles worthy of great actors, and the 'minor persons . . . invested with a distinction almost Shakespearean',¹⁷ have proved equally attractive to actors, and to audiences. It is the play's capturing of this range and depth of characters, and its refusal to patronize any one of them that is so remarkable. It not only anticipates the later comedy of Sheridan and Goldsmith, a point often made, but also forges links with the comedy of the past.

14 A much repeated anecdote, quoted here from Thomas Wilkes' 'Life', cited in Kenny, II, 133 (substituting 'honour' for husband in agreement with other accounts).

15 See IV.ii. 50–4.

16 Shirley Strum Kenny, 'Humane Comedy', *Modern Philology*, 75 (1977–8), 24–43.

17 Louis A. Strauss, *A Discourse upon Comedy: 'The Recruiting Officer' and 'The Beaux' Stratagem'* (Boston, 1914), reprinted in Raymond A. Anselment, ed., *The Recruiting Officer and 'The Beaux' Stratagem: a Casebook* (Basingstoke 1977), p. 63.



Dorinda (Jane Gurnett) and Lady Bountiful (Matyelok Gibbs) revive Aimwell (Paul Mooney) (IV.i) in Peter Wood's National Theatre Production, 1989. © Clive Barda/ArenaPAL

Farquhar was an inventive, even experimental writer. He evolved as a playwright, as indeed did 'Restoration comedy', in the years from 1660 to 1735. In this play he combines a recognizably Restoration plot turning on the fortune-hunting of a contrasting pair of pleasure-loving rakes with a more late-Restoration theme, marital discord. *The Beaux' Stratagem's* bedroom seduction scene has a parallel in Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* (1700), and the unhappily matched Sullens recall Sir John and Lady Brute in Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Wife*.¹⁸ A favourite scene in Restoration comedy, the proviso scene, where a couple negotiates a marriage, most famously in *The Way of the World*, appears in a variation when the Sullens arrange not a marriage but a divorce. But Farquhar's management of these materials has a respect for kinder feeling, which, for all his Restoration vitality, distinguishes him from his late-Restoration contemporary, Vanbrugh.

The comedies of the 1680s and 90s pay more attention to marriage and its problems, and less to courtship. This new emphasis can be attributed in part to the expectations of an audience now less rakish, more middle-class, and especially to 'the ladies', then equated with its moral element. Demands for reform of the stage culminated in Collier's 1698 denunciation of playwrights, for 'their smuttiness of expression; their swearing, profaneness, and lewd application of Scripture; their abuse of the clergy; their making their top characters libertines, and giving them success in their debauchery'. Though impatient of Collier's attack, Farquhar felt its influence, wryly noting in his Preface to *The Constant Couple* (1699), 'I have not displeased the ladies, nor offended the clergy'. In *The Beaux Stratagem*, 'humane comedy' is most obvious when Aimwell becomes a figure of sentiment, so moved by love for Dorinda that he can no longer deceive her. His reformation is believably human, just as is Plume's when, in *The Recruiting Officer*, he gives up his life of liberty for marriage. Farquhar prepares us for this change with Archer's earlier complaint about his friend's 'romantic airs' (III.ii.15). Archer keeps *his* eye on feeding his needs for sex and money without emotional entanglement. Or does he? One of the great attractions of the comedy is the intriguing development of the relationship between Archer and Mrs Sullen. The humanity of the late Farquhar is apparent throughout the serio-comic miseries of Mrs Sullen, neither unwaveringly chaste like Vanbrugh's Amanda, nor willingly seduced like his Berinthia. In a telling difference, Archer's attempt to possess the lady is interrupted, but

18 Colley Cibber's *The Lady's Last Stake* (December 1707) imitates Farquhar's Sullens in Lord and Lady Wronglove's discussions of separating.

his scenes with Mrs Sullen captivate with their own sexual excitement as he presses her, and she struggles between her scruples and inclinations.

In constructing this comedy Farquhar has produced a less complex intrigue, and abandoned one of his favoured devices, the cross-dressed heroine, thereby reducing the opportunities for sexual innuendo. In comparison to his earlier comedies, the incidents are less contrived, the characters less exaggerated, and, critics agree, more 'natural'.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Farquhar provides the diverse incidents and neatly interwoven subplots which, contrary to neoclassical rules of unity of action, he believed the playwright should devise to entertain his audience.²⁰ The scene in Mrs Sullen's bedroom is, as Styan claims, a masterpiece of comic writing. The inventive sequence of events, all carefully indicated in the stage directions, deftly brings the plots together. Archer's appearance from the closet, though anticipated since the audience knows his plan to hide there instead of the Count (IV.ii.100–1), is a dramatic surprise when it actually happens. It leads into Mrs Sullen's wavering and that is ended only by the arrival of Scrub. His comic terror, mistaking Archer for a thief, 'take all we have', and his hiding behind the bed with his 'dear brother' Martin, provide a nice contrast to Gibbet's equally comic self-possession, before and after his capture: 'Sir, I'll have no prayer at all; the government has provided a chaplain to say prayers for us on these occasions' (V.ii.143–4).

The range of characters in this play is another striking feature, and one it shares with *The Recruiting Officer*. Where the action in that play moves about the town of Shrewsbury, here it moves between Lady Bountiful's house, and a Lichfield inn. Farquhar had previously, in collaboration with Peter Motteux, written a play set in an inn, the highly successful afterpiece, *The Stage-Coach*.²¹ The adventures of Don Quixote, and dramatic versions of them,²² perhaps also contributed to the choice of setting. Besides these literary promptings, it is not wholly impossible that, as a plaque on the George Inn in Lichfield proclaims, Farquhar

19 So much so that the names of two characters, Lady Bountiful and Bonniface, went into the language meaning benevolent country lady, and jovial host.

20 See 'A Discourse upon Comedy', Kenny, II, pp. 367–8 and p. 382.

21 First performed between autumn 1700 and February 1702, and based on *Les Carrosses d'Orléans* by Jean de la Chapelle. For the suggestion that Farquhar wrote all but the song, see Shirley Strum Kenny, 'The Mystery of Farquhar's *The Stage-Coach* Reconsidered', *Studies in Bibliography*, 32 (1979), 219–36.

22 For Thomas Durfey's popular '*Comical History of Don Quixote*' (1694–5) and other Quixote plays see Gordon K. Thomas, 'The Knight among the Dunces', *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research*, 14 (1975), 10–22, 11–13, and the note at II.ii.219–20.

wrote his play there. Using a location where people of all ranks in society are brought together in one place, as in a stage-coach: 'Here chance kindly mixes, / All sorts and all sexes' (Kenny, I, 324-5), now seems unremarkable, but then it was not. Humble people in Restoration comedy do not have major roles, but here they are at least both prominent and sympathetically presented.²³ *The Stage-Coach* is a miniature version of *The Beaux' Stratagem* as farce, with its heroine fleeing an arranged marriage, her booby fiancé, her lover, the comic Irish servant, and the coachman pursuing the maid Dolly from bedroom to bedroom. In the full-length play, Farquhar develops romantic and marriage plots, weaves in a burglary plot, and still has space to develop the innkeeper and Cherry the maid, and to flesh out the highwayman, Gibbet. Gibbet's professional style of managing his business endears him to the audience. But it was Scrub, in his lowly station, who became the audience's favourite, and one of the best loved comic roles of the eighteenth century. Like so many of the figures in the play he is a life-like mixture. Some have complained his Latin phrases do not suit a country factotum, but they are commonplace phrases, and surely acceptable in one who can mimic 'the French air' and throw the occasional innuendo to Mrs Sullen (III.i.89-90). He is not easy to sum up, his 'world of simplicity', as Dorinda points out, often masking a cunning sense of what's going on (III.i.71). Moving between the Inn and Lady Bountiful's are Foigard, the Irish priest masquerading as a native of Brussels who plots with the ladies' maid, Gipsy, and Count Bellair, who courts Mrs Sullen. Foigard, the last in a line of Farquhar's comic Irishmen, is the most engaging, and the most pretentious. Like Gibbet, he is uncrushable. The Count, a French prisoner, contributes to the play's topicality. Like the numerous military metaphors which all through the play colour the speech of men and women alike, the Count is an acknowledgement of the war proceeding outside the play. Though the play indulges the audience's patriotism in a few lines of anti-French and anti-Catholic feeling, the figure of the Count redresses the balance. His debonair response to Mrs Sullen's manipulation of his courtship, his 'French air', is admirable. Nevertheless, according to the 1728 edition, the role of the Count was 'cut out by the author, after the first night's representation.' Mrs Sullen's manipulation of him detracts from the interplay between her and Archer, and the comedy can bear losing him.

23 John Loftis, *Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding* (Stanford 1959), pp. 48-9.

TOWN AND COUNTRY

Everyone writing about Farquhar remarks that in his two last plays a new freshness comes with their country settings. Leigh Hunt, writing in 1840 on *The Recruiting Officer*, 'We seem to breathe the clear fresh ruddy-making air of a remote country town',²⁴ has been echoed repeatedly in remarks on the play's 'sunny country air'.²⁵ In *The Recruiting Officer* there is a move outdoors into the Herefordshire countryside, with two scenes set on 'The Walk by the Severn side'. From the opening in the Market Place where Sergeant Kite addresses the 'Mob' of local people, a sense of a country town and its surroundings builds up, with the recruits Coster Pearmain and Thomas Appletree, and Rose who comes to town to sell her chickens with her brother Bullock, all of them part of a community presided over by the admirable Justice Balance, Farquhar's own version of Justice Shallow, younger, patriotic, and an indulgent father.

In *The Beaux' Stratagem* the sense of an outside London 'freshness' emerges more subtly. The scenes are 'in and about Lichfield' (I.i.67-8) but all are indoors: at the Inn or Lady Bountiful's house. Nevertheless, innumerable points of detail suggest a distinctively provincial setting: from Bonniface's remark about Lichfield being an 'inland town, and indifferently provided with fish' (I.i.238-9), to Mrs Sullen's satirical picture of 'country pleasures' and 'rural accomplishments', and Archer's remarks describing the approach to Lady Bountiful's house: 'drawn by the appearance of your handsome house to view it nearer, and walking up the avenue within five paces of the courtyard' (IV.i.70-2).

But rather than the physical location it is the inhabitants who most create a sense of 'not London'. Lady Bountiful, Dorinda, Squire Sullen, Bonniface, Cherry, Scrub, Gipsy and the country-woman who comes seeking a cure for her husband's bad leg, all contribute to it in various ways. At the simplest level is the naive country-woman who, in perhaps the play's oldest joke, innocently suggests her husband is reluctant to work: 'No, no, madam, the poor man's inclinable enough to lie still' (IV.i.51). A more complex type is Bonniface, the self-assured, cheery innkeeper, 'Mr Guts', who lives on his own ale, has his own 'fraternity' of highwaymen, and is willing to prostitute his daughter. Jovial and outrageous, cunning but easily imposed on, he embodies the play's 'tone of healthy vitality and of easy accommodation to evil'.²⁶ Squire Sullen

24 *The Dramatic Works of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh and Farquhar*, with Biographical and Critical Notices by Leigh Hunt, [1840] (London 1849), p. 18.

25 Robert D. Hume, *The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama, 1660-1800* (Carbondale 1983), p. 227.

26 Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, p. 72.



'Captain' Gibbet (Paul Curran) fails to convince Aimwell (Ronald Pickup) (III.ii).



Bonniface (Gerald James) and Cherry (Helen Frazer) are puzzled by Aimwell's box 'full of money' (I.i).

Both pictures from National Theatre production, 1970, © Douglas Jeffery

with his 'good parcel of land' and his assorted unrefined drinking companions, 'the constable . . . the exciseman, the hunchbacked barber' (V.i.10–11), the least attractive of the country folk, is no caricature rustic, as his conversation with Sir Charles in Act V.i makes clear. As for Lady Bountiful and Dorinda, the 'country ladies' as Mrs Sullen thinks of them, they are marked by their directness and vigour. Lady Bountiful is a new kind of old lady in English comedy, still laughable, but also benevolent. She takes pride in her knowledge of herbs and distilling, her wholesome country remedies prevailing when, as Boniface asserts, London trained doctors do only harm. Though her determination to minister to Aimwell is made fun of in IV.i when she is imposed on by the young men, the efficacy of her good works is in no doubt. Her servant Scrub tells us most about living in the country as he complains about his weekly round of duties. He like the rest of the country figures is deceived by 'Martin', but, as just noted, his naivety masks a country cunning of his own. He also possesses a coward's ability to save his own skin, always a good source of comedy. Gipsy, in her dealings with Foigard, displays a false naiveté: she is another very well able to look after herself. The presentation of these figures achieves a remarkable solidity. Farquhar's affectionate treatment of them is far from either the traditional celebration of country innocence, or London scorn of rustic uncouthness.

More in accord with most Restoration comedy, the play's city folk praise the pleasures of London and bemoan the lack of anything like them in the country. 'O London, London,' rhapsodize Archer and Aimwell. Only lack of money has dragged them down to the country. Mrs Sullen thinks of her unhappiness in terms of her distaste for 'country pleasures', as well as for her Squire husband. At different moments, Cherry, Gibbet and Dorinda all look forward to leaving the country for a high life in London. Nevertheless, the play radiates a sense of the Lichfield people living in their own style without any sense of inferiority when, for instance Boniface boasts of his ale, or praises the good works of Lady Bountiful, or Scrub talks about ploughing, hunting or dunning the tenants, or about Foigard and Gipsy 'devouring my lady's marmalade in the closet'. None of this is diminished by talk of London. The country folk stand on their own.

In giving his last two plays a country setting Farquhar took an unusual step. As Hume points out, only six of the seventy comedies written between 1660 and 1708 and set in England move out of London.²⁷ One is

²⁷ Robert D. Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the late Seventeenth Century* (Oxford 1976), p. 140. Fifteen of the 85 comedies written between 1661 and 1709 have foreign settings (p. 139).

Vanbrugh's *The Country House* which turns on the idea of the house being mistaken for an inn, as in *She Stoops to Conquer*, with the owner being driven mad by his 'guests'. Another is *The Relapse* where some scenes are set at Sir Tunbelly's house. But here all is rustic uncouthness. Country locations in these few comedies, apart from Farquhar's, 'serve primarily as pretexts for sniping at rural life'.²⁸

How far Farquhar was from sniping is apparent in his Epistle Dedicatory to *The Recruiting Officer*, addressed, significantly, to 'All Friends round the Wrekin', where, confident in his ability to create attractive but unidealized country people, he promises 'no person of any character in your county should suffer by being exposed'. This is at odds with most Restoration comedy, where what is not London is despicable, even horrific. A typical estimate is that of Millamant in *The Way of the World*, commenting on her cousin Sir Wilful Witwoud up from the country to woo her: 'Ah rustic! Ruder than Gothic' (IV.i.90). In his earlier comedies Farquhar could himself jibe at rural life, but that changed. The contrast between Dorinda, heiress to ten thousand pounds, and Miss Hoyden, the 'great fortune', daughter to Sir Tunbelly, wooed in Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* illustrates Farquhar's distinctive attitude. Where Dorinda is a country girl of sense and sensibility Miss Hoyden is ignorant, amoral and the occasion of much broad sexual comedy. Dorinda, though bowled over by Aimwell, observes her brother's marriage with clear eyes. In according respect to country figures of various ranks, when creating Boniface, Scrub, and the charming Cherry, all dramatic successes, Farquhar went his own way, leaving others to debate the superiority of town or country.

CLASS, MONEY AND FORTUNE HUNTING: 'BECAUSE THEY WANTED MONEY' (II.i.37)

In Farquhar's time and on into the nineteenth century the recognized way for men and women of the upper, non-working classes to alter their social status was through marriage.²⁹ Love affairs among gentle folk were inevitably entangled with economic considerations, as readers of Jane Austen's novels learn. The opportunities offered by marriage could be vital for a young man, dependent, like Orlando in *As You Like It*, on the generosity of his elder brother. For the playwright, the situation of the younger brother, or indeed of any young man in search of a rich wife, is good dramatic material. Fortune hunters propel the plots of much

28 Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, p. 75.

29 Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, p. 45.