

The Country Wife: A Restoration Comedy of Sexual Morality

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William Wycherley's "The Country Wife" is a provocative and entertaining comedy that delves into the complexities of sexual morality during the Restoration era in England. This classic piece of literature, first performed in 1675, presents a satirical and witty examination of the social norms and hypocrisy surrounding marriage, love, and fidelity.

Exploring the Themes:

At the heart of "The Country Wife" lie several key themes that resonate with audiences centuries after its initial production:



The Country Wife by William Wycherley

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 1718 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 97 pages
Lending : Enabled



- **Sexual Morality:** The play exposes the double standards and hypocrisy surrounding sexual behavior, particularly the disparity in expectations for men and women. - **Marriage and Infidelity:** Wycherley explores the nature

of marriage, its motivations, and the consequences of infidelity. - **Social Class and Gender:** The play reflects the social hierarchy and gender roles of the time, highlighting the inequalities and power dynamics between characters. - **Wit and Satire:** The Country Wife is renowned for its clever and sharp dialogue, which utilizes wit and satire to expose societal flaws.

Meet the Characters:

"The Country Wife" boasts a cast of memorable characters who embody the themes and social commentary of the play:

- **Horner:** A libertine and rake, Horner pretends to be impotent to gain access to married women without raising suspicions. - **Pinchwife:** A foolish and jealous cuckold, Pinchwife tries to enforce chastity on his young wife by keeping her isolated and guarded. - **Margery Pinchwife** (The Country Wife): An innocent and naive young woman, Margery finds herself trapped in an unhappy marriage, longing for freedom and companionship. - **Harriet:** Pinchwife's sister, Harriet is an intelligent and independent woman who defies social conventions and pursues her own desires. - **Lady Fidget:** A fashionable lady obsessed with appearances and reputation, Lady Fidget is easily manipulated and deceived by Horner.

Historical Context:

The Country Wife was written and performed during the Restoration period in England, a time marked by significant social and political changes. The Restoration saw the return of the monarchy after the Puritan Commonwealth, leading to a resurgence of pleasure-seeking and libertine behavior. This context influenced the play's themes and portrayal of sexual morality.

Reception and Legacy:

"The Country Wife" received both praise and criticism upon its initial performance. While some lauded its wit and satire, others condemned its perceived immorality and indecency. Over time, the play has become a celebrated work in English literature, lauded for its sharp observations, clever dialogue, and enduring relevance.

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William Wycherley's "The Country Wife" remains a captivating and thought-provoking comedy that offers a satirical examination of sexual morality and societal norms during the Restoration era. Through its witty characters, clever dialogue, and enduring themes, the play continues to captivate audiences, offering insights into the complexities of human behavior and the timeless struggle to navigate love, marriage, and societal expectations.



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