

**SEVENTEENTH -AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH
COMEDIES AS A NEW KIND OF DRAMA:
A FOUCAULDIAN INTERPRETATION OF FAMILY RELATIONS, SEXUALITY,
AND RESISTANCE AS PSYCHOLOGICAL POWER**

*Laura Martínez-García
Universidad de Oviedo*

Contribution to Scholarship:

This book opens new ways to study a literary genre that has been neglected far too long, and one misunderstood by many. For centuries the Restoration and its comedy have been ignored and rejected by critics and audiences in general. This study sheds new light on this period of drama by revealing how the general chaos of this passage from a pre-modern to a modern society, its uncertainty and unpredictability also had a deeper social and political message.

Classification: Literary Criticism / European / English / Humor / Semiotics & Theory
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From the Foreword:

“One of the great merits of this work is that, Dr. Martínez-García offers her own “reconstruction” of the Restoration from a Foucauldian perspective, which allows her to rediscover the 17th and 18th centuries...we have on our hands, undoubtedly, an important piece of research in the field of Restoration drama: an ambitious study of the hard and complex struggle for power between the sexes in the 17th and 18th centuries.”

*-Dr. María José Álvarez Faedo,
University of Oviedo*

From a Peer Review:

“The book engages with the plays at great length in order to demonstrate their nuanced take on social, sexual, familial and gendered relationships...Some of the best work here demonstrates how the plays eschew an ordering dynamic, and hence how they are at odds with the dominant social discourse of their time.”

*-Dr. Jerome de Groot,
School of Arts, Histories and Cultures,
University of Manchester, UK*

The Edwin Mellen Press
240 Portage Road, PO Box 450,
Lewiston, NY 14092-0450
United States of America
Tele: (716) 754-2788 Fax: (716) 754-1860
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www.mellenpress.com

The Edwin Mellen Press
17 Llambled Business Park,
Lampeter, Ceredigion,
SA48 8LT Wales, United Kingdom
Tele: 01570-423-356 Fax: 01570-423-775
email: cs@mellen.demon.co.uk
www.mellenpress.com

Author Information:

Dr. Laura Martínez García received her Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of Oviedo. Her principal research interests lie in the field of English literature and culture of the 17th and 19th centuries, especially the drama of that period

Abstract:

The 17th century was not an easy time to live through; although the return of the Monarchy to Britain was greeted with great enthusiasm and fanfare, the problems soon stacked: the First Anglo-Dutch war was devastating for the country, with thousands of men dying in battle and with numerous ships sunk by the enemy. This mercantile war had disastrous consequences not just for the precarious economy of Britain, but for its already weak morale.

The Great Plague, the largest pandemic in the history of Britain, devastated London in 1665-66; around 100,000 people were killed and most were displaced from their homes. When it seemed that the plague had remitted, a fire started in a bakery on Pudding Lane on Sunday, September 2nd. The fire lasted for three days and burned 13,287 buildings.

Many took a cynical and hedonistic approach to these terrible events, including King Charles; indulging in sensual pleasures, he kept a merry court where enjoyment was paramount. Still, this hedonistic attitude is not just a frivolous attempt at forgetting the traumas around, but has a deeper meaning: by adopting a libertine lifestyle based on the Hobbesian principles, these men and women are, in fact reacting against the precepts of the New Order.

In this study, the Foucauldian notions of power and resistance are put into use to better understand the true subversive potential of *The Man of Mode* and *The Country Wife* canonical masterpieces by Etherege and Wycherley and *The Busybody*, written by the virtual unknown Susannah Centlivre. These plays are not just mere entertaining pieces, but they offer us a wealth of subversive identities and characters.

Topics:

Abstract/Foreword/Preface/Acknowledgements

1. The plays in context: history, literature and criticism
2. Reconstructing the Restoration
3. Power, sexuality and resistance: identity in Restoration comedy
4. Power and the family: patriarchy and social order
5. Power and resistance: disruptive identities
6. General conclusions: From the Leprosarium to the Panopticon

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