

Sir George Etherege in Regensburg *

By

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Recent scholarship has suggested that the only valid critical approach to Restoration Comedy as literature is one based exclusively on intrinsic and formal aesthetic criteria.¹ In fact, this view originates with Charles Lamb,² who claims that the world of this genre is an illusory one above and beyond reality, and thus cannot be judged in terms of the accepted moral standards. The Dorimants leave Merry England behind for a utopian Never-Never Land of mannered gallantry that transcends the categories of good and evil. In contrast to modern drama (by which Lamb means the drama of common life or Sentimental Comedy), the world of Restoration Comedy is one of fiction divorced from real life; indeed, any resemblance to the latter would detract from the overall aesthetic effect. Lamb concludes that such works of creative imagination could never be drawn upon as a model for actual imitation: "They are a world of themselves, almost as much as fairy-land."³

He views the action upon the stage as a complete fantasy, to be regarded with the same critical detachment as Aristophanes' *The Frogs*. Thus the term 'immoral' means little when applied to Restoration Comedy. The figures move in a world totally devoid of morality and are thus exempt from any judgment on the basis of ruling norms. For Lamb, the Comedy of Manners is an illusion, a typical product of *homo ludens*, and thus unrelatable to the prevailing code of social behav-

* The translation of this article owes much to the assistance given by Dr. Jean Ritzke-Rutherford and Mrs. Alison Thielecke-Gifford, B.A.

iour. "Here is no question of realism," is the conclusion drawn by a later critic of the same school:

Etherege seized upon and embodied in his play not the real, day by day life of Whitehall, but the Life which Whitehall was pleased to imagine it led. Individual items may be factual, but the total picture is a comic illusion.⁴

Diametrically opposed to Lamb's opinion and that of his successors is that of Sir Richard Steele. This critic also had his group of followers, and his views are still shared by many even today. In an article which appeared in the *Spectator* on May 15, 1711, Steele questioned the justification of the universal view that Etherege's play *Sir Fopling Flutter* was, indeed, a model of Genteel Comedy. His conclusion was devastating: in his opinion, the famous play was a total desecration of good taste and good morals, and a downright mockery of decency and propriety. Steele was convinced that everything valued and respected by the better part of society was drawn through the mud, and human nature was shown at its ugliest and most sordid:

To speak plainly of this whole Work, I think nothing but being lost to a Sense of Innocence and Virtue can make any one see this Comedy without observing more frequent Occasions to move Sorrow and Indignation, than Mirth and Laughter. At the same time I allow it to be Nature, but it is Nature in its utmost Corruption and Degeneracy.⁵

Corrupt portrayal of a corrupt reality, on the one hand, and the recreation of an artificial Never-Never Land far removed from reality, on the other - such are the two mutually exclusive points of view which were characteristic of the main body of research and its attitude towards Restoration Comedy until only recently. Only in the past few years have scholars discovered that such sweeping generalizations distort the essence of what this multifaceted genre is about, and that a detailed investigation of individual phenomena inevitably yields a more complex and varicoloured picture.⁶ Thus Restoration Comedy can hardly be reduced to a simple common denominator, nor all conflicting factors to the harmo-

nious congruity of true synthesis. What is essential is that the critic not overlook or fail to give due consideration to any one of the factors which make up the world of this comedy, as, for instance, the evident immorality of the majority of the plays.

Some modern interpretations have attempted to view the works of Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve as pure comedy, while intentionally excluding the moral question. A thorough understanding of Restoration Comedy, however, is only possible through a realization of the significance of the morality behind it, for it represents the expression of an attitude towards life and society all its own. What would remain of this comedy without any regard for the principles of human interrelationships? A study of Restoration Comedy from a purely intrinsic and formalistic point of view remains just as futile as a purely structural consideration of language to the exclusion of semantic meaning. The immorality of Restoration Comedy is undeniable, however palatable it may be rendered by the devices of wit and rhetoric. Consequently, we are forced to ask ourselves what it all means.

The answer to these and similar questions yields a kind of pattern of ideas which can be seen as characteristic of Restoration Comedy. The scope of the present article does not allow for more than a brief sketch, and the following remarks will therefore be largely confined to factors connected with Etherege's activities in Regensburg. Nevertheless, there are four major characteristic features involved which can tell us much about Restoration Comedy in general.

1. Cynicism and immorality in Restoration Comedy are understood as a reaction against puritanical repression during the Commonwealth period (1649 to 1660) - a fact which would scarcely be contested today. But this superficial explanation alone is insufficient as a key to the complex world of thought behind the 'wit.' Firstly, it must be noted that the Christian side of human relationships was repressed; neither

the authors nor the characters of Restoration Comedy could be called Christian, and religion plays a very subordinate role, if any at all. To a certain extent there is open revolt against the laws of faith and the Church, which are branded as a restriction of man's natural creative potential, and thus, of nature itself. Nor was marriage held in high esteem. At best, it was viewed as a social contract and a financial arrangement; at worst - and this was generally the case - as an inconvenience and a violation of the laws of nature.⁷ Love played no role whatsoever, and if it existed, it was something one did not talk about. Man was regarded as an uninhibited, animalic creature, for whom the only proper attitude was to yield to his instincts without superfluous moral reservations. Thus the first characteristic feature of Restoration Comedy can be summed up as *r e v o l t* - simple protest against all the ruling norms of convention, of etiquette, morality, family, church, state, and society in general.

2. The counterpart to this destructive attitude is to be found in a complementary desire for freedom. It was taken for granted that sexual desire had little or nothing to do with love and marriage, and that the only agreeable mode of existence was to give free rein to the basic human drives. The resultant libertinism was thought to set men free, and to bring release from the oppressive restrictions imposed by the laws of society, and its mores and manners. *L i b e r - t i n i s m* is thus the second characteristic feature of Restoration Comedy.

3. If egotism, pleasure, passion, and the gratification of the senses represent the essence of one's attitude towards life, then it follows that individual behaviour is no longer guided by normative or prescriptive ethics, and that any code or set of standards must originate with the individual alone and his own inner resources. How strange, then, that Nature rather than Reason should be the chosen guiding star of this small, intellectual circle. In fact, doubt was cast on the

capability of the human mind to grasp reality at all. Basically, each individual had to shoulder the responsibility for any possible error in judgment made. A single universally recognizable order of the world did not exist, at least none perceptible to human reason. Thus it can be said that a n t i - r a t i o n a l i s m or scepticism is the third major characteristic of Restoration Comedy.

4. Instinct and the senses ruled the day. Sensual pleasure and the resultant epicureanism conjoined with heterodox libertinism to form a new kind of primitivism. This major trend of eighteenth-century thought had nothing at all to do with the Golden Age, with its nymphs and shepherds, for it was coloured by elements derived from the philosophy of Hobbes and Machiavelli - concupiscence and gratification of the senses were now augmented by egotism and aggression. The result was an egocentric person who found pleasure in aggression and who regarded the individual realization of his own desires as the prime objective in life. Consequently the fourth major characteristic of this genre is its a n t i - s o c i a l quality.

The main obstacle to a valid and comprehensive evaluation of Restoration Comedy, however, lies in the dichotomy of its Janus-like dual countenance. For each of the four major characteristics named above (this number, of course, could easily be increased) a corresponding counterpart can be found. Thus, for instance, the inclination towards revolt is counterbalanced by a tendency towards conformity and uniformity. The concept of the 'wit,' although ambiguous and bound up with an entire spectrum of connotations, was, even at that time, nevertheless regarded as incontestable. The accepted etiquette, although rejected and branded as obsolete, is replaced by another one no less rigorous in its demands. Libertinism is counterbalanced by a subconscious acceptance of Christian moral standards - the joke about the cuckolded husband only works in a context where monogamy is taken for granted. Even blasphemy,

as T.S. Eliot points out, is an indication of faith. Anti-rationalism finds its counterpart in a strong emphasis on spirit, understanding, wit, and intellect. Thus a good portion of Restoration Comedy consists of ingenious dialogue, witticisms, and rhetorical preciousness. The battle of the sexes is conducted in a tone of highly sophisticated informality, which had to seem natural in spite of all its artificiality and which was a far cry from the simplicity of the Golden Age, to say nothing of that genuine rustic life. Affectedness is only avoidable through a mastery of the rules of the game to the extent that they become a kind of second nature. Such is the case with the protagonist of Restoration Comedy, for whom art and nature are two opposite ends of the scale. The result is that the anti-social factor is counterbalanced by an orientation towards society. A Comedy of Manners is, by its very nature, not concerned with the individual, but rather with the group, and, in the case of Restoration Comedy, with a very small and genteel, or aristocratic, circle at that.

• The available sources on Etherege consist mainly of the correspondence of Sir George himself, as well as that of his secretary H. H. (= Hugh Hughes).⁸ The latter must have been, it seems, a malicious and backbiting spy, but the present day profits by his compilation of the so-called *Letterbook*, a series of copies of Etherege's letters to various addressees in England. Until now this collection was the only source of information available to critics and biographers on Etherege in Regensburg. I have, however, come across a further collection in the British Library, one which is extremely interesting and informative: the original correspondence of Sir George Etherege to Middleton, recounting his activities in Regensburg (BL Add. Ms. 41836-7). These letters, all of which bear Etherege's signature, save the few dictated from a sickbed, form two thick folio volumes of approximately 1000 pages altogether; they were published four years ago, but their criti-

cal implications have not yet been weighed. A number of the letters are also contained in the *Letterbook*.⁹

A comparison of the two collections gives one the impression that the letters in the *Letterbook* were selected according to a certain principle and that they are by no means typical or representative of Etherege's activity in Regensburg, or of his correspondence in general. The accounts sent to Middleton show us an English diplomat and civil servant who, though stranded far from his native shore, did his best to fulfil his duty to his king and to provide an accurate account of all the major activities of the Imperial Diet, the intrigues and machinations of Imperial politics, the war in Hungary, the relations of the members of the Diet to England, and the personalia of the diplomats and aristocrats. Thus the volumes are primarily of interest to historians, but at the same time deserve closer scrutiny from the viewpoint of literary scholarship.

The *Letterbook*, on the other hand, contains letters of a more personal character. H. H. evidently copied only part of the entire correspondence. Thus the question arises as to what guided his selection and who was behind it. My own comparison of the first hundred folio pages of the manuscript Add. Ms. 41836 with the *Letterbook* reveals that the latter contains only a portion of the correspondence with Middleton, and even that appears to differ considerably from the original form of the letters sent - and not merely in matters of style.¹⁰

In some cases the *Letterbook* contains only a short abstract of the respective letter, in others, the full version has been preserved.¹¹ Very seldom are the letters quite identical, for the most part only those in folio size; those which Etherege wrote on smaller-sized paper are generally omitted. At any rate, the *Letterbook* shows us Etherege the man, his relationship with Regensburg, his cares and worries, pleasures and amusements, in short - an English fop in a German provincial town.

A third source of information is to be seen in close connection with the *Letterbook* - namely the letters addressed by Etherege's secretary, H. H., to an unidentified person of high station in London, probably in conjunction with a promise (or commission) to keep Etherege under surveillance and to supply reports at regular intervals. Evidently the recipient was not in the least interested in Etherege's official duties and activities, but rather in his private life and manners. In an undated letter the secretary mentions his promise to give a more personal account of Sir George:

... which you may call duty, for though I be but one of the meanest of his Sacred Majesty's subjects, yet I can frame to myself such an idea of his honour as will not suffer me without grief and shame to see it abused.¹²

One is tempted to view the insidious tales contained in the *Letterbook* as pure libel and falsehood, but they convey an impression of factual truth. H. H., himself, remarks on one occasion that his descriptions must sound like "knight errand-ries," but that anyone in Regensburg could testify to their truth. Clearly H. H. could count on the fact that the recipient of his letters was interested, above all, in the negative side of Etherege's character, for he writes without compunction. He is utterly convinced that his addressee shares his moral indignation, and likes Etherege no better than he himself does.

In the "Comedy" of Regensburg, Etherege's secretary plays the role of a Jeremy Collier or Sir Richard Steele. In temperament and character he is the exact opposite of our hero but is nonetheless an acute observer, as well as a malevolent critic. His manner of thought still reflects that of the Commonwealth period, which is to say, he is a Puritan to the core and no doubt felt far more at home in Regensburg than Etherege, who found the *spiritus loci* less congenial.

In the case of Sir George Etherege, we are truly in a position to study the relationship of art to life, of drama to

reality. Although he did not remove himself, to use the words of Charles Lamb, from Merry England to a Never-Never Land, nevertheless he went to Regensburg, a far more alien and mysterious world than that of fairy-land for an Englishman of the seventeenth century. Etherege arrived in Regensburg in November, 1685, after leaving London on the 30th of August.¹³ Thus he apparently took his time along the way; the reasons for his doing so are given by his secretary:

I suppose you have been already informed ... of what passed at the Hague either as to his losing £ 250 by play, his haunting pitiful and mean houses contrary to Mr. Skelton's advice, or as to his making love, for which he was sufficiently laughed at. And not to mention his caressing every dirty drab that came in his way from Holland to this place, I shall only begin with the manner of his life and conversation after his arrival.¹⁴

Once in Regensburg, Etherege moved into the house vacated by his predecessor in St. Jacob's Square (*Jakobsplatz*). From the very first day he wrote complaining letters to friends and acquaintances on the stiff conventions and stuffy manners of the Imperial city. His social contacts appear to have been largely restricted to the delegates of the Diet, a reserved lot at best:

... les messieurs de la Diète sont toujours vêtus de leur caractère, et à peine s'en dépouillent-ils, à ce que je crois, quand ils s'approchent de leurs femmes, ou de leur maîtresses.

(... the gentlemen of the Diet always clothe themselves in a certain character and don't even remove it, I believe, when they approach their wives or their mistresses.)¹⁵

Etherege missed life in London sorely, for it was freer, more informal, and more frivolous.

Is it not enough to breed an ill habit of body in a man who was used to sit up till morning, to be forced, for want of knowing what to do with himself, to go to bed in the evening; one who has been used to see his friends with all freedom never to approach anybody but with ceremony; instead of rattling about the streets to seek variety of company, to sit at home and entertain himself with solitude and silence? The pleasures of play and women are not so much as talk(ed) of, and one would think the Diet had made a *Reichsgutachten* to banish them the city. Here was the Countess of Nostitz, but malice, that always persecutes the good, has made her lately remove to Prague.

... you must allow me to be a philosopher, and I dare affirm Cato left not the world with more firmness of soul than I did England.¹⁶

Etherege exaggerates here, or, possibly, intends to convey the type of impression of himself which might be expected by a superior. For in truth, Etherege enjoyed life to the full, without the least regard for public opinion as far as the manners and customs of Regensburg society were concerned. On the contrary, he lived precisely as he had in London - or at least attempted to. Regensburg was introduced to a genuine Dorimant, and even to a Sir Fopling Flutter, and he could not have cared less what the town thought of him. Various remarks indicate that he even prided himself on his bad reputation. Every single personal letter he wrote reveals the features of a London dandy, of a "fop." That was the way he saw himself, and the way he described himself, as well.¹⁷

Regensburg may not have had congenial social contacts to offer, but that was no reason for Etherege to retire to bed early in the evening, as he led his superior to believe. Hardly a gamester, actor, acrobat, or petty aristocrat came to Regensburg without making Etherege's acquaintance. French card sharps enjoyed his hospitality and constant companionship for months on end, and even sent for reinforcements from Vienna before relieving him of 1,500 Guilders. At night he roamed the town with a horde of friends and hangers-on, touring the more disreputable of the local beer taverns, whose number was considerable even at that time. Once he spent the night in a dirty gutter, on other occasions he smashed windows, attacked men or women he encountered for no apparent reason, often arriving home black and blue all over. On other nights he took the serving wenches home, but rather than restricting it to a discreet soir   behind drawn curtains, he invited the neighbours to join in the fun. In 1686 he celebrated the Feast of St. Louis with two young ladies (both of them barmaids) in the privacy of his room, "where they all danced stark naked,"

and afterwards he accompanied them into the street dressed only in his shirt.

His affair with an actress from Nuremburg was one of the major scandals of the year 1686 in Regensburg. The story sounds like a veritable Comedy of Manners:

... he was so far from being concerned at what any one said that sometimes after the play was ended he has put her into his coach before all the company, notwithstanding all the giggling and hissing [sic] of the Austrian ladies and of the ministers' wives and daughters ...

She had not been here many days before his Excellence, Sir G. E., intending to forestall the rest of the ministers in paying the honour due to her character (of an errant whore), was civilly pleased to send his steward to make her a compliment and to desire audience (which is the only kind he has hitherto had).¹⁸

On November 15, 1686, while the actress, whose name was Julia, was dining at his home, a large group of young men from Regensburg led by Baron de Sensheim gathered in front of the entrance, laid siege to the house, and demanded the immediate surrender of the unpopular heroine. On this occasion, however, Etherege won the victory with his 'gallant' band of friends, managing to deliver Julia safely to the Inn of the Whale, where she was lodging.

Small wonder, then, that Etherege was not exactly popular in Regensburg. In the year 1686 he received not a single visitor - aside from drinking companions. Various delegates and aristocrats declared their refusal to have anything to do with him. He spoiled his chances with the municipal administration by his open opposition to the expulsion of prostitutes from the city. Indeed, he stated that, were he Elector of Bavaria, he would have the city walls torn down and build a home for the "ladies" in distress.

Thus we see open rebellion, revolt against the ruling order in all its manifestations, even against marriage. One would hardly suppose from his correspondence that Etherege was married. His wife remained in England, and they appear

to have had little to do with each other. In 1687 Lady Etherege heard of her husband's misbehaviour in Regensburg (probably in connection with the Julia affair), whereupon she wrote him a letter denouncing him as an outright scoundrel. Etherege, for his part, replied:

I wish there were copies of it in London, it might serve for a pattern for modest wives to write to their husbands. You shall find me so careful hereafter how I offend you that I will no more subscribe myself your loving, since you take it ill, but Madame, Your most dutiful husband G.E. ¹⁹

If the marriage had ever meant anything at all, this was the end of it. Afterwards Etherege's only contact with his wife was through third parties, as, for instance, when he wished her a speedy recovery after an illness; he never saw her again.

Examples of Etherege's libertinism are plentiful enough. He tried to deal with the fair sex in the same way he would have done in London and seems to have made a number of conquests. But the "ladies" of his acquaintance seldom moved in his social circle. The German *Fräuleins* were completely inaccessible:

*Tout ce que je sais de nos Fräuleins ne vaut pas la peine de vous le mander. Elles sont insensibles à tout hormis le tonnerre qui depuis peu se fait craindre.*²⁰

(All I know of the *Fräuleins* isn't worth the trouble of recounting. They are utterly insensible to everything except the thunderstorm which has been threatening us of late.)

As a matter of fact, Etherege found the women of Regensburg generally unattractive - lacking in grace, "of brawny limb and martial face." Of course one might, with good reason, surmise that it was "a case of sour grapes," particularly in view of his words in a letter to Corbet, "I have only a plain Bavarian, ... yet I find myself often very hearty."²¹

In justification of his way of life and his epicurean *carpe diem*, Etherege occasionally touches on the brevity of life. His letter to the Duke of Buckingham on November 12, 1686, is

a homelier prose version of Andrew Marvell's poem *To His Coy Mistress*: "Had we but World enough and time, ... this coyness Lady were no crime."²² Towards the end of the letter he writes:

And, my Lord, since our Gayety and Vigour leaves us so soon in the lurch, since Feebleness attacks us without giving us fair Warning, and we no sooner pass the Meridian of Life but begin to decline, its [*sic*] hardly worth a Lover's while to stay as long for compassing a Mistress, as Jacob did for obtaining a Wife; and without this tedious Drudgery and Application, I can assure your Grace that an Amour is not to be managed here.²³

Surprisingly, some biographers have alleged that Etherege's numerous liaisons were purely platonic - an all the more remarkable assertion in the face of the fact that Etherege more than once sought medical treatment for a certain unmentionable disease,²⁴ one which he generously shared with all the female members of his household; indeed, even the term "pornography" is practically a euphemism as far as a number of his poems and verse epistles are concerned.²⁵ Furthermore Etherege did not regard his libertinism as anything out of the ordinary. It was hardly possible to be excommunicated for fornication, he once pointed out, "it being a point that all the differing churches agree in."²⁶

Moreover, he was proud of the fact that in spite of approaching old age his basic character had not changed. On December 19, 1687 he writes:

Notwithstanding the ebbing and flowing in the flesh, my mind is a kind of lake and has the same standing pleasures it had in London: wine and women; but our good fellows are far from being wits and our whores are yet farther from being beauties.²⁷

Upon receipt of a copy of John Dryden's *The Hind and the Panther* he wrote to Middleton:

I find John Dryden has a noble ambition to restore poetry to ancient dignity in wrapping up the mysteries of religion in verse. What a shame it is to me to see him a saint and remain still the same devil. I must blame the goodness of my constitution which cannot be much altered since my minde is not much changed from what it was at the gravell pits.²⁸

As far as religion is concerned, Etherege has been termed an atheist, a fact which cannot be proved from any evidence in the correspondence, however. He was totally indifferent towards the various religious denominations, but included religious factors in his political calculations, for he was well aware of the constantly shifting political configurations in the Empire and in Regensburg. His remarks on the clergy of all denominations were invariably caustic and off-handed. His words on life after death reveal a surprising degree of frivolity and lack of seriousness:

*Par la grâce de Dieu je sais où mon esprit est borné et je ne me mets guère en peine de savoir de quelle manière ce monde ici a été fait ou comment on se divert dans l'autre ...*²⁹

(Through the grace of God I know the boundaries of my reason, and I do not go to much trouble to find out how this world was made or what I can do to amuse myself in the next ...)

Elsewhere Etherege stresses that in matters of religion he had always insisted on complete freedom of opinion. Since he found it of no importance whether others shared his viewpoint or not, he very rarely felt like discussing the matter:

... quietly following the light within me I leave that to them who were born with the ambition of becoming prophets or legislators.³⁰

The concept of the inner light is typical of the philosophy held by the writers of Restoration Comedy, who - in spite of all their intellectuality and their extroverted way of life - drew their guiding principles from their own inner resources

The comedy of Sir George Etherege's life in Regensburg arises, above all, from the fact that his superiors in London failed to realize how hopelessly out of place he was as an envoy to the Diet. Etherege was basically very little interested in politics. Only in London could he have found a rewarding occupation. In Regensburg he even lacked the basic stimulus for his own poetic muse. *Sir Fopling Flutter* was his last play; afterwards Etherege never again essayed his pen in this literary genre. He continued to live life according to his own premises, and remained as true to them as to

his King. His only interests were the enjoyment and pleasure found to abundance in gaming, sports, and the hunt; in music and the theatre; and, above all, in wine and women.³¹

The adventurous comedy of Sir George Etherege in Regensburg makes entertaining reading, in spite of his apparent self-indulgence and egocentricity. If we feel no revulsion, it is not because his escapades seem fanciful or fictitious; we cannot say, as Lamb once did, that Restoration Comedy is not compatible with reality. Perhaps our sympathetic and benevolent attitude towards Etherege is due to the intuitive understanding that the muse of comedy smiles down upon his insouciance and gilds his misdeeds and "crimes" with the aura of pure comedy. Thus we see him as the protagonist of a comedy, very much like a young, immature, and foolish Tom Jones. We may shake our heads at him, but it would be difficult to condemn him altogether.

A further reason for this is that nearly every letter reveals some endearing facet of Etherege's character. His weaknesses may not be disguised, but we are brought nearer to a better understanding of Etherege the man. His revolt against society and its morals is counterbalanced by a rather touching loyalty to his King, as well as an equally lasting attachment to friends and acquaintances.³² He had a warm heart for the poor and afflicted (only for those within his own circle of acquaintances, however) and displayed an admirable frankness and lack of guile towards all.

Particularly remarkable in this context is Etherege's close and almost intimate acquaintanceship with Abbot Flemming of the Iro-Scottish Benedictine Monastery of St. James. Etherege often wrote of the abbot in terms of warm admiration, for he valued their friendship highly, in spite of the diplomat's basically anticlerical attitude.³³ In a letter dated March 31 / April 10, 1687, Etherege wrote to Middleton:

Your Lordship knows by experience how impossible it is for any of our country to be in this place without being very much obliged to him [Abbot Flemming], his greatest care, next to that which he has for his cloister and matters of religion, being to do good offices to strangers. I am confident I tell your Lordship no news when I acquaint you that his piety, his courtesy, his industry, and his good husbandry are the wonder of all who know him...³⁴

His libertinism cannot be denied, but it appears that it was by no means completely lawless and anarchic. It was simply that the laws he observed were not those of society or the church. Etherege, himself, was convinced that he always knew when to draw the line and when he had overextended the reaches of his inner guiding light. On September 12, 1687 he wrote:

*Le transport d'une débauche ne paye pas le mal au coeur qu'on sent le lendemain au matin.*³⁵

(The ecstasy of a debauch by no means compensates for the heartsickness of the next morning.)

Each page of his voluminous correspondence testifies to his need for human contact and intellectual exchange. Again and again he implored his friends for news of London's society, of which he still felt himself a member in spite of his banishment to Regensburg and his fears of being cut off by the sheer distance. His thoughts were constantly with his friends, to whom he continued to feel close until the end of his life. He was the living paradox of Restoration Comedy: the completely egocentric "fop," whose heart belonged to his King and friends.

Etherege's ambivalent attitude towards Regensburg can be reconstructed from his correspondence with his friends.³⁶ Two of the letters in particular reveal the Janus-like duality of his outlook; to a friend named Cooke he wrote:

... you can do no less than pity me, who have been forced from the shore of delightful Thames to be confined to live on the banks of the unwholesome Danube, where we have been this month choked with fogs and cannot now set a foot out of doors without being up to the knee in snow. The Muses when they were banished Greece travelled westward and have established themselves in other countries, but could never find in their hearts to dwell here. The mountains are

the abode of wolves and bears, and the inhabitants of the towns have something as fierce and rugged in their natures.³⁷

And, in contrast, he wrote to the Duke of Buckingham:

... tis true we have not Pleasure, in that Perfection as we see it in London and Paris, yet to make us amends, we enjoy a noble serene Air, that makes us hungry as Hawks; and though Business, and even the worst Sort of Business, wicked Politics, is the distinguishing Commodity of the Place, yet I will say that for the Germans, that they manage it the best of any people in the World; they cut off and retrench all those idle Preliminaries and useless Ceremonies that clog the Wheels of it everywhere else.³⁸

When all was said and done, however, Sir George Etherege was still able to conclude on Regensburg:

I live in one of the finest, and best manner'd Cities in Germany....³⁹

N o t e s

¹ Cp. Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, and others, *The Spectator*, ed. Gregory Smith (London: Dent [Everyman's Library, Vols. 164-67], 1950), No. 65, Vol. 1, pp. 200-03. On Restoration Comedy, cp. *The London Stage: 1660-1800*, ed. William Van Lennep (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), Introduction: "The London Stage 1660-1700," pp. cxi-clxxv; Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama: 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), Vol. 1, pp. 181-283, esp. pp. 280-83. Cp. also Walter E. Houghton, Jr., "Lamb's Criticism of Restoration Comedy," *ELH*, 10 (1943), 61-72. Texts: *Middleton Papers*, XXXIV, British Library [BL] Add. Mss. 41836 and 41837; *The Letterbook of Sir George Etherege, Minister at Ratisbon 1685-88*, BL Add. Ms. 11513, Edition: *The Letterbook of Sir George Etherege*, ed. Sybil Rosenfeld, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928; *The Poems of Sir George Etherege*, ed. James Thorpe, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963; *The Poetical Remains of the Duke of Buckingham, Sir George Etheridge, Mr. Milton, A. Marvel, Madam Behn etc.*, London, 1698, BL 239 h. 19; *Res Scenicae Ratisbonae*, 3 vols., BL 840 e. 4. Secondary literature: Sybil Rosenfeld, "Sir George Etherege in Ratisbon," *RES*, 10 (1934), 177-89; Vincenz Meindl, *Sir George Etherege: Sein Leben, seine Zeit und seine Dramen* (Wiener Beiträge zur englischen Philologie, Vol. 14), Vienna and Leipzig: Braumüller, 1901; John Dennis, *A Defence of Sir Fopling Flut-ter, a Comedy Written by Sir George Etherege*..., London, 1722; John Harold Wilson, *The Court Wits of the Restoration*, New York: Octagon Books, 1967 (rpt.; orig., 1948); Eleanor Boswell, "Sir George Etherege," *RES*, 7 (1931), 207-09; Vivian de Sola Pinto, *The Restoration Court Poets* (Writers and their Work, No. 186), London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1965;

Frances Smith McCamic, *Sir George Etherege: A Study in Restoration Comedy (1600-1680)*, Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1931; Sybil Rosenfeld, "The Second Letterbook of Sir George Etherege," *RES*, NS 3 (1952), 19-27; Dorothy Foster, "Sir George Etherege," *RES*, 8 (1932), 458-59; Dale Underwood, *Etherege and the Seventeenth Century Comedy of Manners* (Yale Studies in English, Vol. 135), New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957; Harold Clifford Brown, Jr., "Etherege and Comic Shallowness," *TSL*, 16 (1975), 675-90; Robert D. Hume, "Reading and Misreading *The Man of Mode*," *Criticism*, 14 (1972), 1-11; Virginia Ojden Birdsall, *Wild Civility: The English Comic Spirit on the Restoration Stage* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1970), Chap. IV, "The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter," pp. 77-104; Ronald Berman, "The Comic Passions of *The Man of Mode*," *SEL*, 10 (1971), 459-68.

² *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. Edward Verrall Lucas (New York: Putnam, 1903-1905), Vol. 2, pp. 141-47. Cp. Houghton, "Lamb's Criticism."

³ Cit. in Houghton, "Lamb's Criticism," 68.

⁴ Wilson, *The Court Wits*, p. 164. Cp. Nicoll, *History*, p. 282.

⁵ *Spectator*, No. 65, Vol. 1, p. 203. Cp. also *Spectator*, No. 75, Vol. 1, pp. 233-35.

⁶ On the following, see Underwood, *Etherege and the Seventeenth Century Comedy of Manners*. The present essay is indebted to the detailed work of Underwood in a number of points.

⁷ Lord Rochester, "A Satire against Marriage," in: *The Poetical Remains of the Duke of Buckingham, Sir George Etheridge, Mr. Milton, A. Marvel, Madam etc.*

⁸ *The Letter Book of Sir George Etherege, Minister at Ratisbon 1685-1688*, BL Add. Ms. 11513; *The Letterbook of Sir George Etherege*, ed. Rosenfeld, Introduction, p. 49, note 1.

⁹ *Letters of Sir George Etherege*, ed. Frederick Bracher, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1974.

¹⁰ Ms. Add. 41836 M. Rb. February 22, 1685 / March 4, 1686, fol.59-60: "We are still becalmed here, not the least breeze of business stirring; ease and quiet, the breeders of discord, and mutiny has renew'd the quarrel which was made up between the Count de Windisgratz and the Electorate Colledge; and a Civill war of Ceremony is a fresh broke out..." *Letterbook*, pp. 63-64, February 22, 1685 / March 4, 1686: "The Diet sleeps still, and when they will awake I know not. In my last I told you what I had reason to think kept them from deliberating on those affairs they have had so long before them. Ease and quiet, the common breeders of discord and mutiny have revived the quarrel which was made up between the Count de W. and the Electoral College. The Emperors Concommissary is recalled for not behaving himself to the liking of his superior officers...etc."

- 11 In the letter of February 22, 1685 / March 4, 1686, fol. 59-60, a passage present in the *Letterbook* is struck out.
- 12 *Letterbook*, p. 394.
- 13 *Treasury Books*, 1685-9, Vol. 2, p. 876, cited by Rosenfeld, *Letterbook*, Introduction, p. 17, note 1.
- 14 *Letterbook*, pp. 378-79.
- 15 *Letterbook*, p. 54.
- 16 *Letterbook*, p. 58.
- 17 *Letterbook*, p. 317.
- 18 *Letterbook*, pp. 388-89.
- 19 *Letterbook*, pp. 161-62.
- 20 *Letterbook*, p. 264.
- 21 *Letterbook*, p. 190.
- 22 *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Herschel Maurice Margoliouth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), Vol. 1, p. 26.
- 23 *Letterbook*, p. 415.
- 24 Probably from Dr. med. and phil. Georg Christoph Göller, town physician in Regensburg until 1703 and family doctor to numerous diplomats of the Diet.
- 25 Cp. *The Poems of Sir George Etherege*, ed. Thorpe, pp. 7-8, 35-45.
- 26 *Letterbook*, p. 305.
- 27 *Letterbook*, p. 304.
- 28 *Letterbook*, p. 227. Etherege's original in BL Add. Ms. 49837, fol. 38.
- 29 *Letterbook*, p. 264.
- 30 *Letterbook*, p. 305.
- 31 Cp. Meindl, *Sir George Etherege*, pp. 73-101.
- 32 *Letterbook*, p. 189: "... if my ghost be as restless when I am in the other world as my mind is now I am in another country, my friends must expect to be much haunted, it will cost them some frights, and, it may be, some money to lay me. There is not a day but my thoughts dog you from the coffee-house to the play, from thence to Marylebone, always concerned for your good luck, and in pain I cannot make one with you in the sports you follow. Some of the ancients have imagined that the greatest torment of the dead was an impatient longing after what they delighted most in while they were living, and I can swear by my damnation in Germany, this hell is no jesting matter..."
- 33 *Letterbook*, p. 337.
- 34 *Letterbook*, p. 179.
- 35 *Letterbook*, p. 264.
- 36 In the letters to Middleton there are numerous remarks about Re-

gensburg, however seldom positive ones, such as: "men are politick as well as Civill in this place" (*Letters*, ed. Bracher, p. 10). More frequent are complaints of the following kind: "I have had since my last a little fever, which made me keep my bed till yesterday. I am now fallen on my legs again and in a state of convalescence. I shall be glad if I pay no dearer for my entrance into this rough Climate" (*Letters*, p. 14). "This drooping place" (*Letters*, pp. 16-17); "the least marke of your fauvour is able to make Ratisbonne agreable" (*Letters*, p. 24); the members of the Diet "Complement one an other till it be time to eate their Sauer Craut" (*Letters*, p. 25), Etherege obviously considering *Sauerkraut* to be the typical German dish.

³⁷ *Letterbook*, p. 293.

³⁸ *Letterbook*, p. 413.

³⁹ *Ibid.*