

(1)

Character of Millamant
(The Way of the World)

(Dr. Kishat Shirin)

Millamant is generally conceded to be the most charming heroine in Restoration comedy. She is a fitting partner-antagonist to Moliere. She maintains the self-control to the very end of the prologue scene. She too loves but shows no sentiment. She is airy, teasing, light, beautiful, tantalizing and infuriating. Moliere is aware of her faults and comes to love them. The reader is aware of her faults and come to love them too. She is affected, coy and arch and we would her no other way. She can be sweet and charming but there can be acid and irony in her wit.

Spoiled, beautiful and rich Millamant could have any man, she wants and knows it too. She is very fashionable and popular in London. Though she can be cruel and uncaring toward.

Moliere, she does love him but is very ~~greatly~~ guarded with her emotions. She is very independent and loves poetry. Before she gets engaged, she enjoys keeping Moliere on his toes and tries to make him jealous by spending time with the fools, Witwood and Petulant, even though she isn't romantically interested in them. She mainly supports her Aunt Wishfort in all things and doesn't initially offer much resistance to her aunt's proposition to marry her off to first Sir Roiland and then cousin Sir Wilfull in order to thwart Moliere. She

(2)

Sets multiple conditions to assert her continued independence within the marriage which Mirabell, after setting some conditions of his own, readily accepts.

Millamant appears significantly in five scenes: her first appearance, her dialogue with Mrs. Marwood, her scene with Sir Wilful, the proviso scene with Mirabell and the drunken scene immediately following. The first and fourth are the most important for revealing her character.

Millamant's full appearance is prepared for carefully. When she arrives trailing her coat, mincing and young witwood. She automatically takes the center of the stage as if it is her right as indeed it is. Her character is outlined in the passage about putting up one's hair. Prose would never do only poetry, a piece of flippancy that delights in its own reverence. She is completely sure of the feminine power and Congreve has given her the lines to justify her assurance. The lines concerning Sisters - One makes them others are all flippant. She knows her power and can laugh at herself, just as she can tease Mirabell.

Within the limited world where she operates, she is intelligent. She sees through the forced

(3)

false wit of young Witwoud's humor and handles him gracefully and efficiently." Bruce with your similitudes" and Princing stands between me and his wit "are deft lies which give Witwoud precisely the attention he merits incidentally, the gracefully dispense of the small deer, for Millamant stalks more worthy game. She is shrewd enough to see through Mrs. Malwood.

That Mirabell loves me is no more a secret than it is a secret that you discovered to my aunt, or than the reason why you discovered it is a secret.

Above all, Millamant's character is Millamant in love. She and Mirabell are worthy partners. She too, will not admit her love to him, for to do so would be to give one's position of vantage in the game. It is the control of the skillful Restorationist ^{wit} which overlays her love and through which it must operate, that makes the proviso scene so completely successful.

