

# The Country Wife by William Wycherley: A New Mermaids Critical Edition



## The Country Wife (New Mermaids) by Plato

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 6722 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 128 pages



William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* is a classic Restoration comedy that satirizes the sexual mores of the time. First performed in 1675, the play tells the story of Horner, a young rake who pretends to be impotent in order to gain access to married women. The play was a huge success, and it has been performed regularly ever since.

This new Mermaids critical edition of *The Country Wife* provides a comprehensive and annotation, making it an essential resource for students and scholars of Restoration literature. The provides an overview of the play's historical and cultural context, as well as a discussion of its critical reception. The annotation provides detailed explanations of the play's language, allusions, and stage directions.

## William Wycherley Biography

William Wycherley was born in Clive, Shropshire, England, in 1640. He was the son of a wealthy landowner, and he received a classical education at Queen's College, Oxford. After graduating from Oxford, Wycherley traveled to France, where he spent several years studying law.

In 1671, Wycherley returned to England and began writing for the stage. His first play, *Love in a Wood*, was a huge success, and it established him as one of the leading playwrights of the Restoration era. Wycherley's other plays include *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1672), *The Country Wife* (1675), and *The Plain Dealer* (1676).

Wycherley's plays are known for their wit, satire, and bawdy humor. He was a master of the Restoration comedy of manners, and his plays provide a valuable glimpse into the social and sexual mores of the time.

## **The Country Wife Characters**

The *Country Wife* features a cast of colorful characters, including:

- **Horner:** A young rake who pretends to be impotent in order to gain access to married women.
- **Mrs. Horner:** Horner's wife, who is unaware of her husband's true nature.
- **Pinchwife:** A jealous husband who tries to keep his wife away from Horner.
- **Margery Pinchwife:** Pinchwife's wife, who is attracted to Horner.
- **Sir Jasper Fidget:** A foolish old man who is in love with Margery Pinchwife.

- **Lady Fidget:** Sir Jasper's wife, who is a flirt.
- **Quaker:** A hypocritical Quaker who is actually a pimp.

## **The Country Wife Themes**

The Country Wife explores a number of themes, including:

- **The hypocrisy of marriage:** The play satirizes the institution of marriage, arguing that it is often based on convenience rather than love.
- **The double standard:** The play exposes the double standard that existed in Restoration society, which allowed men to have affairs but not women.
- **The power of sex:** The play shows how sex can be used as a weapon to control and manipulate others.

## **The Country Wife Plot Summary**

The play begins with Horner pretending to be impotent in order to gain access to married women. He is successful in seducing several women, including Margery Pinchwife. However, Pinchwife eventually discovers Horner's true nature and challenges him to a duel. Horner kills Pinchwife and escapes with Margery.

## **The Country Wife Critical Analysis**

The Country Wife has been praised by critics for its wit, satire, and bawdy humor. However, it has also been criticized for its misogyny and its portrayal of women as objects of sexual desire.

Despite its flaws, *The Country Wife* remains a classic of Restoration comedy. It is a valuable glimpse into the social and sexual mores of the time, and it continues to be performed and enjoyed by audiences today.

## Bibliography

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- Fujimura, Thomas H. *Restoration Comedy: A Critical* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.



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