**Techniques in the country wife**

Dramatic techniques are devices used by the playwright to develop the plot of the play, reveal characters, develop themes etc. In the county wife, the dramatic techniques used include symbolism, irony, nomenclature, disguise, sarcasm, humour etc.

**Symbolism.**

This is the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities. Symbols in the country wife include the following;

**Signs**

Signs represent reputation in the play The Country Wife and symbolize the way in which characters use their reputation to advertise things about themselves which they wish to be widely known.

* When Sparkish first arrives in at Horner’s house, he tells Horner a joke that suggests that Horner is a ‘sign’ of a man to imply that he is impotent.
* In act three scene two while on the street in London, Margery is amazed by by the painted signs on shop fronts which depict horned animals like rams, bulls etc and pinchwife says ‘ if every husbands proper sign here were visible, they would be all like’. This implies that all men are cheated on and therefore all women are unfaithful

**China**

The word china in play is a sexual innuendo used to represent sex. Horner and his lovers use it as a code word to hide their acts.

When Horner takes Margery aside in convent garden stealing her from pinchwife watch, he gives her ‘china oranges’ which she brings to pinchwife . although Horner doesn’t actually have sex with her, pinchwife comments that ‘ you have only squeezed my orange, I suppose and given it to me again.’

The term china comes again in the play when Horner and lady fidget pretend to be fighting over china when they are really having sex while sir jasper waits innocently outside the door.

**Blindness**

Blindness is associated with love.

When Harcourt first meets Alithea, he says that he could look at her until he was blind as sparkish. Sparkish is indeed blind since he cannot see that Harcourt is courting alithea. This is in line the old tradition that lovers are blind since they are biased and therefore cannot see follies of others.

Wycherley however subverts this tradition to mean that they are only the characters with true love that can see. Harcourt can see immediately that sparkish does not love alithea but is marrying her for her money. Likewise alithea is able to see Harcourt’s disguise as a parson. Sparkish who is not a lover is the one who is metaphorically blind since he can’t see the truth about himself or that his friends make fun of him. While sparkish doesn’t believe alithea when she is accused of having an affair with Horner, Harcourt sees through this instantly and stands up for alithea’s innocence.

**Character symbol**

1. Pinchwife. He is a symbol of patriarchal impulses in society which seek to censor and eradicate female promiscuity but inadvently encourage them to be rebels and do the same vice theyare trying to prohibit
2. Sparkish is a symbol of failed men. He allows Harcourt to court his wife in front of him to prove that he is witty yet stupid.
3. Sir.jasper is a symbol of business men who abandon their wives in preference to business.
4. Alithea is a symbol of truth and holiness.

2**. Disguise**

Disguise is used in the following ways;

* Horner spreads a romour that he is impotent and society believes him.
* Margery disguises as a man
* Harcourt disguises as a priest
* Margery disguises as alithea
* There is disguise of true emotions and intentions for example lady fidget, dainty and squeamish. Sir jasper wants to relieve his duty of a husband and leaves his wife and sister at Horner’s.
* Sparkish pretends to love alithea yet the truth is that he is after her money.

3. **Nomenclature**

The names of the character reflect what they are or are used ironically to suggest that they are opposite of what their names mean.

* Horner can be associated with being horny since his intention is to sleep with as many women as possibly can. He goes around putting ‘horns’ on other men by sleeping with their wives
* Sparkish implies a young fellow who would be thought elegant and witty yet in reality he is a fool whose pretense is observed and mocked by other characters.
* Sir jasper. Jasper is the English form of Casper, one of the three wise men. This is used ironically as he thinks he wise to find diversion for his sister and wife yet not but bringing them to Horner.
* Pinchwife. To pinch is to harass or inflict etc. this portrays his violent nature through his empty threats ‘ write as bid or I will write whore with this knife In your face’
* Alithea signifies truth and commitment to the word.
* Squeamish is ironically used to mean one who is very proper and canot stand to hear any sexual references or story.

4. asides

In this technique in which the character speaks to audience but is unheard by fellow characters. This is used throught the play, characters such as pinchwife, alithea, sir jasper etc speak to us in asides.

5**. Prologue**

This is spoken by actor playing Horner and says that the wits in the audience will criticize the play. In the play sparkish in act 3 scene 2 criticizes playwrights and is ridiculed by other character.

6. **Epilogue**

This is spoken by the actor playing the character of lady fidget and addresses the rakes in the audience that the those who act like Horner may impress other men with sexual exploits, they will never fool women.

7. **Monologue |soliloquy**

Act 4 scene 2,pg 245 pinchwife left alone wonders women have more invention in love than men………..have more desires, more soliciting more lust..’ this portrays his jealousy and chauvinism.

Act 4 scene 2 page 248, pinchwife plots to deal with horner as he leaves to take the letter to him.

Act 4scene 4 page 259, Margery confesses catching the London disease and plans to write to horner. In the monologue she says that she dreads her husband but feels anxious when she thinks about horner etc..

Act 5 scene one page 263, pinchwifes selfishness and jealousy make him to resolve to give his siser away to horner other than being cuckolded ‘ well, I resolve it; horner shall have her….’

Etc

8**. Letters**.

After interrogating his wife regarding her encounter with Harry, pincwife orders her to write a letter to Horner as he dictates renouncing any further connection with Horner. When pinchwife goes to pick wax to seal it, Margery quickly composes her own letter ……..

Another letter is written by Margery when she longs for Horner. While she is engaged pinchwife comes and reads the letter aloud. He finds out that Margery is begging horner to rescue her from her unfortunate match. Margery though later uses her wit to convince pinchwife that its alithea that had told her to write the letter on her behalf.

9. **Irony**; consider all the disguises and pretense.

**Lessons from the play**

* Appearances can sometimes be deceptive
* Lack is the mother of invention
* Always marry the person that you love
* What you do in darkness is revealed in daylight
* Jealousy and suspicion is the bane of love
* Domestic violence is a source of divorce
* Ignorance is bliss
* Love many but trust a few

**Relevance to our society**:

* Men have ignored their responsibilities as they opt for business
* Urban women due to the above normally find for themselves side lovers
* Many men prefer marrying women from the country to town women
* People pretend a lot.
* There is a lot of domestic violence in our society.
* Men think they can cheat or marry more women but women should not even try.

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