[ Presentation on William Wycherly’s Play 'The Country Wife

\*Structure of the presentation\*

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a) Relevance

2. The Title

a) Implication/Relevance

3. The Setting

a) Implication of the;

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II) Social

III) Physical

4. The Plot summary

a) The literature in there(What is William saying?)

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a) How are they developed

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a) Lessons

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\*1. Historical Background of the Play.\*

The Country Wife is a Restoration Comedy written in 1975 by William Wycherley.

a) What is Restoration Comedy also known as Comedy of Manners?

- A form of comedy that satirizes the manners & affections of contemporary society and questions societal standards & morals.

- In this type of comedy, social class stereotypes are often represented through stock characters (a stereotyped fictional person) who frequently re-occur in a play. Lucy represents the lower class, Horner represents the middle class, Sir Jasper represents the aristocrats/upper class, etc

- Comedy of manners usually center around a scandal to witty dialogue & then to social criticism. E.g. Horner cooks up a lie that he is impotent.

- Plays have complex love triangles. Mr. & Mrs. Pinchwife, Sparkish & Alithea, Sir Jasper & Lady Fidget

- they Contain a lot of sexual jokes. E.g. “china”, “oranges”, “coming from behind”, etc

- Often refer to contemporary figures. E.g. Charles2

- they Celebrate extravagant life styles. Sir Jasper, Sparkish, etc

- they Mock royalist values.

- they Expose hedonistic values of the upper class

- Etc

Therefore, we can deduce that indeed, the play “The Country Wife” is a Comedy of Manners.

After public stage performances had been curtailed for 18years by The Puritan Government, the English Protestants in the 16th & 17th Centuries sought to purify the Church of England of all Roman Catholic Practices, maintaining that the Church of England had not fully reformed and needed to be made more Protestant. Charles2 put to death these Puritan polices thereby cultivating an environment of leisure & hedonism, he literally supported theatre & he also celebrated the values of the nobility. In this regard, theatre was one of the birds that were set free.

Therefore, the re-opening, call it, Restoration, of the theatres in 1660 signaled a re-birth of English drama e g. Sexually explicit language was 'encouraged' by King Charles 2(1660-1685)

\*The Title\*

a) Relevance/implication

Who is a Country Wife – let’s use characteristics of a Country Wife ( locally referred to as 'omunakyaalo' or 'villager'

I) Not educated/ ignorant of modern ways of life

II) Young & beautiful/attractive

III) She shares her husband's beliefs

IV) She is trustworthy

V) She has ambitions

VI) She is selfless

VII) She is smart

VIII) She loves unconditionally

IX) She is responsible

X) She is submissive, loyal, etc

Therefore, those who have interfaced with the play, we can agree that we're indirectly describing Mrs. Pinchwife Margery.

However, the way William portrays Margery & how she finally ends up at the end of the play communicates one thing, \*Mockery\*, William uses offensive pun punctuated with sensual humor to portray Margery as;

 Insensitive towards Mr. Pinchwife's towards her.

 Unappreciative of his efforts to protect her from being sexually used by Horner.

 Lethal when educated or liberated. When she is taught how to write a letter, when she gains a feel of London, etc

 Ignorant e.g. she can’t even write a letter

 Easily manipulated/gullible

 Apart from sensual satisfaction nothing much changes about her.

 Etc

During pre-Charles 2’s reign

- theatres & all forms of entertainment were banned

- Marriage was a very important aspect of life irrespective of whether the partners were happy or not

- One's reputation was a priceless gem

- Man overly dominated over woman

- Etc

Therefore, when Charles 2, took over, he gave theatre back it’s key to the stage and as a result these among other Puritan values were subjected to mockery & criticism.

Hence, plays such as The Country Wife reflect an aristocratic & an anti Puritan ideology (formal rejection of Catholism).

In the play, William rebukes & pours scorn on three institutions;

i. The Church for imposing unrealistic values & virtues on to their 'sheep' e.g. marriage & it’s vows

ii. The state or government for dictating doctrines of dominance on a subdued individual e.g. as symbolized by the aristocrats/upper class over the middle & lower class individuals

iii. The society for being accomplices to the above mentioned 'individuals' e.g. in the play, Horner asks Sparkish to be step on the stage and steer the ship to anchor but he fails, the audience seated helplessly can’t do anything but watch on

The Setting\*

a) Time- during The Restoration period (1660-1685)

- The events occur in 2 days sequenced in Morning, afternoon, evening e.g.

- Mornings are synonymous with a 'new beginning' e.g. in the play, Act1, Scene 1, Horner begins off a new life disguised as a Eunuch

- Evenings are synonymous with mischief, in the play, Act 5, scene 2..Pinchwife hands over 'Margery disguised as Alithea to Horner

- Etc

b) Social setting – the audience that reflects society, judges, harbors stereotypes sentiments especially towards women, they treasure reputation ahead of anything, etc

c) Physical setting – the play is set in London. What comes to your mind; extravagant lifestyles, business, entertainment, sex,

etc

- the theatre

Thanks so much..

The title is also appropriate/relevant to the resolution of the main conflict.The country wife Mergery nearly exposes Horner's cunningness by falling in love with him and publicly confessing it to him

4. The Plot Summary\*

The plot rotates around three very distinct & interconnected major events;

• Horner feigning sexual inactivity or impotence

• The coming of Margery to London/her life as a wife to Mr. Pinchwife & their life in general

• The courtship & eventual marriage of Harcourt & Alithea

a) Synopsis

• Act 1, Scene 1 (at Horner’s lodging in London (in the morning))

i. Horner cooks up a lie that he is impotent

ii. He asks The 'Quack' to spread the lie

iii. Sir Jasper Fidget(an old business man) accompanied by his wife Lady Fidget & his sister, Dainty Fidget visits Horner (to covertly affirm that Horner is indeed impotent)

iv. Horner 'insults' the women(something that proves to Sir Jasper that indeed, Horner has an aversion for women hence he is impotent)

v. Sir Jasper invites Horner to tend to his wife and sister

vi. Sir Jasper invites Horner to dinner & a game of cards at his home.

vii. Sparkish mocks Horner calling him 'a shadow of a man’s

viii. Mr. Pinchwife a newly wed warns Horner against coming near his wife

• Act2, Scene 1 (at Mr. Pinchwife's lodging later that morning

i. Pinchwife warns his wife Margery of the vices of London

ii. Mr. Pinchwife sends his wife Margery away the moment Harcourt enters

iii. Harcourt flirts with disinterested Alithea in the presence of a deluded Sparkish who is actually Alithea's husband to be

iv. The “virtuous gang” of Lady Fidget, Dainty Fidget & Mrs. Squeamish arrive to take Margery to the theatre.

v. Sir Jasper, Horner & Dorilant join them. Sir Jasper asks the Ladies to go out with Horner (unintentionally placing fire next to butter)

• Act3, Scene 1(at Pinchwife's lodging later that day)

i. Margery learns that a gallant (admirable young lad) at the play harbors an admiration for her

ii. Pinchwife agrees to take Margery to the Exchange (a shopping arena) but in guise of a man

• Act3, Scene2(outside that night)

i. Harcourt expresses love for Alithea

ii. Sparkish hides from Alithea

iii. Harcourt continues to pursue Alithea

iv. Pinchwife rebukes Sparkish for not realizing that Harcourt is flirting with Alithea

v. Horner recognizes Margery

vi. Horner takes Margery away to buy her a present

vii. Margery returns with Oranges

viii. Dorilant bids farewell to Lucy in the lewdest manner while Harcourt does the same to Alithea romantically

• Act4, Scene1 – it is in two parts (at Pinchwife’s lodging the next morning)

i. Lucy forces Alithea to realize the mistake of loving Harcourt yet marrying Sparkish.

ii. Harcourt pretends to be 'Ned', brother of Harcourt

• Act4, Scene2 – it is in two parts (at Pinchwife’s Lodging later that Morning)

i. Margery narrates her ordeal with Horner to her husband, Pinchwife

ii. Pinchwife forces her to write to Horner expressing disgust towards him & whatever happened between them.

iii. She however in his absence writes another letter which she substitutes with the first one.

• Act4, Scene3 (at Horner’s Lodging that afternoon)

i. Horner demonstrates to The Quack how successful he has been with his 'lie'

ii. Lady Fidget throws herself all over Horner only to be interrupted by her unsuspecting husband.

iii. She pretends to be angry with Horner & runs into a room where Horner follows suit(they make out while locked away)

iv. Mrs. Squeamish and her mother arrive seeking for “China” from Horner

v. Lady Fidget with the real China in hand emerges from a room followed by Horner (it’s clear they have made out)

vi. Pinchwife arrives to assert the objective of the letter 'Margery' addressed to Horner

vii. Sparkish requests Horner’s company to dinner, Horner asks Sparkish to make sure Margery is in attendance as well

• Act4, Scene4 – at Pinchwife’s lodging later that afternoon

i. Pinchwife discovers Margery writing a letter

ii. He locks her up

iii. Pinchwife refuses' Sparkish's request to dinner.

• Act5, Scene1 – at Pinchwife’s lodging that evening

i. Margery pretends to be Alithea’s confidante by signing off the letter in Alithea’s name much to the surprise of Pinchwife.

ii. Margery fools Pinchwife who believes that she is writing the letter on Alithea’s behalf.

• Act5, Scene3 outside somewhere later that evening

i. Pinchwife informs Sparkish of the alleged courtship between Alithea & Horner

ii. Sparkish bitterly approaches Alithea

• Act 5, Scene4 at Horner’s lodging later that night

i. The Ladies admit to all their deceits.

ii. They agree to amicably share Horner

iii. Sparkish confronts Alithea

iv. Alithea marries Harcourt

v. The Quack re-affirms Horner’s 'disease'

vi. Lucy tells Pinchwife that Margery only stage managed her elopement as revenge for his jealous

-The Play ends where it all started-

NB; these aren’t the only events in the various acts & scenes.

\*a) Where is the Literature in all this? In short, what is William Wycherley saying.\*

 Marriage as an institution is in itself a prison e.g. Mr. Pinchwife & Margery

 An individual can be the undoing of oneself e.g. Sparkish allows Harcourt around Alithea, Pinchwife's curtailing of Margery's indulgence with the outside instead aroused her anxiety to go out, Pinchwife himself delivers Margery disguised as a boy to Horner, He also delivers the letters to Horner which were expressing Margery's infatuation of Horner,

 William mocks the church for 'forcing' couples into loveless marriages & the consequences are clear to a naked eye to see e.g. Sir Jasper is concerned about his business leaving Lady Fidget hungry for affection, Sparkish is pre-occupied with his witless antics leaving Alithea prone & vulnerable to the love & romance endowed Harcourt, Mr. Pinchwife is busy fighting for his reputation at the expense of Margery's need for affection.

 Charles1 & Charles2's reign are more less the same, why, what we see during Charles2's reign was done behind the curtains during Charles1's reign because the play ends where it started. No wonder, when Charles2 ascended to the throne he only set loose the dogs that were under lock & key…Mr. Pinchwife locks up Margery but when she sets her free, the wild her is exposed.

 A human being is always a human being whether one is from London or from the Country. Margery comes from the Country side while Ladies like Lady Fidget are from London, is there a difference between them when it comes to matters of the heart, I doubt e.g. both crave for Horner’s “China”, both sacrifice their reputation for sensual gratification from Horner,

 Emotions, greed, selfishness, ignorance, excitement, business, override Marital & social values of e.g. love, trust, respect, patience, affection, living in harmony, etc . Sir Jasper is concerned with his business leaving Lady Fidget hungry for affection, Sparkish is so occupied with chasing for the wind leaving Alithea at the mercy of Harcourt. Mr. Pinchwife picks Margery from the Country side just because he believes she can’t go against his wishes.

 William mocks the Society (represented by the audience in the form of Sparkish) who sit back & enjoy the murder of the institution of marriage, the insulting of the woman, glorifying of sex & immorality, etc. The audience doesn’t raise a finger or 'take up arms' to protect the sanctity of the above. Horner challenges Sparkish to step on stage & give a better version of what he was despising but he fails.

 William portrays Charles1's reign as hypocrites. Mr. Pinchwife is revealed as a former 'Whoremaster' but see how is jealous over Margery to an extent of locking her up so that she doesn’t meet up with Horner, he even scolds Alithea for not protecting Margery from Horner & herself from Harcourt.

 Men just like women lose their freedom when attached to each other e.g. Mr. Pinchwife becomes a soldier more less a body guard of sorts to Margery, Harcourt can not think of anything else apart from courting Alithea, The 'virtuous gang” can only think of Horner's 'China',

 Husbands to a large extent cause women to cheat on them (being cuckolded) e.g. Sparkish introduces Harcourt to Alithea, Sir Jasper takes Lady Fidget to Horner himself, Mr. Pinchwife tells his wife Margery that a “gallant” admires her, he even tells her the “gallant’s name (Horner), he brings up the idea of writing a letter to Horner, he even goes ahead to teach her how to write a letter,

 Women just like Men desire attention & sexual gratifying, if deprived, they are likely to stray e g. Sir Jasper who concentrates on his business leaving Lady Fidget 'hungry' for affection

 Women just like men can also use men to their convenience e.g. the “Virtuous Gang” uses Horner for their undoing

 Women just like men usually attach objects to each other e.g. men are compared to the horned animals while Margery is referred to as “Oranges” whose juices are squeezed out.

 William ridicules the virtuous woman. Horner uses the married woman who carry themselves as virtuous e.g. Lady Jasper, Margery,

 Women emancipation as women make decisions & impose their influence on the men

: Its ironic because she(the country wife) falls victim of an already rotten at morals society yet she is supposed to be clean;

-she is tricked by Horner

-humiliated and treated with contempt by Mr Pinchwife

-all her disguises are innocent

\*5. Character & Characterization\*

a. Harry Horner

o He is the protagonist of the play

o Opportunistic e.g. he takes advantage of vulnerable Margery

o Sacrificial e.g. he exposes the double standards of society by sacrificing his reputation by pretending to be impotent

o Witty e.g. he outsmarts Mr. Pinchwife & the women who almost exposed his lie

o Exploitative e.g. he uses the The Quack to spread his lie

o Womanizer, he sleeps with all the business & married women

o Callous, he doesn’t sympathize with Mr. Pinchwife & Sir Jasper,

o Cunning, he manages to keep his lie intact

o

b. Margery Pinchwife

o Young wife to Mr. Pinchwife

o Intelligent, she switches the letters, she also tricks her husband to deliver her to Horner

o Naïve & ignorant, esp. about life in London

o Honest as she openly tells her husband what Horner did to her,

o Courageous & bold as she switches letters, etc

o

c. Mr. Pinchwife

o Husband to Margery

o Jealous & envious of Horner

o Over protective hence portraying Margery as untrustworthy

o Callous & insensitive towards Margery

o Violent as he draws a knife at Margery

o Hypocrite, he's a former whoremaster but he curtails Margery’s pursuit of happiness

o Ignorant & oblivious of what lies before him

d. Sir Jasper Fidget\*

o Husband to Lady Fidget

o Brother to Mrs. Dainty Fidget

o A wealthy businessman

o Ignorant about the dirty mischief of his wife thereby exposing her as unappreciative

o Naïve

o

\*e. Lady Fidget\*

o Highly promiscuous

o Gullible

o Sacrificial as she asserts that as man can cheat even a woman can cheat

o Witty

o Cunning

o

\*f. Mrs. Dainty Fidget\*

o Honest

o Pretentious

o gullibble

\*g. Mrs. Squeamish\*

o Pretentious

o Jealous

o Opportunist

o Etc

\*h. Sparkish\*

o Vain

o Gullible

o Opportunist

o Ignorant

o Arrogant

o Etc

\*i. Alithea\*

o Sister to Pinchwife

o Genuine

o Honest

o Sacrificial

o Etc

\*j. Harcourt\*

o Alithea’s lover

o Loving

o Honest

o Bold

o Etc

\*k. Dorilant\*

o Passive

o Insensitive as he calls Lucy a Strapper (whore

o Exploitative, “…I could be with them rich coxcoms unless I could cheat them…” (Act3, Scene 2)

o Etc

\*l. Lucy\*

o Intelligent as she realizes that Sparkish isn’t the right person for Alithea

o Loyal

o Etc

\*m. The Quack\*

o Unprofessional

o Gullible

o Etc

6. Themes & Ideas

 Reputation, appearance & hypocrisy.

Reputation is a belief or opinion that is generally held about someone or something. Simply put, it is basically a widespread belief that someone or something has a particular characteristic. Horner is a “cuckold” maker.

Appearance is the general physical outlook of someone or something.

Hypocrisy is insincerity by virtue of pretending to have qualities or beliefs that you don’t really have.

Horner puts his 'reputation' on the line by claiming to be impotent, a claim he uses to sexually take advantage of unsuspecting “honorable” women. The “honorable” women exploit Horner’s situation to satisfy & enjoy their sensual pleasures. Lady Fidget describes her reputation as a jewel. The seemingly over protective Pinchwife locks his wife Margery away from contracting the “London Sickness” because it will consequently damage his reputation as a husband & a former “whoremaster”. Alithea tells off Harcourt countless times so as to protect her reputation as a virtuous woman & the sanctity of a relationship (between her & Sparkish). The Restoration society is more interested in the appearance of “virtuousness” than the practice of it. Mrs. Squeamish, a 'honorable' lady seduced by Horner asserts that the crime is less when it is not known. Therefore, such assertions & actions mock the Restoration society as being shallow & naïve, hence the equation, “most virtuous is equivalent to most promiscuous”

\*Love, marriage, & prejudice\*

Love is the act of having & displaying affection towards someone or something.

Marriage is the legal & consensual matrimonial union between a man & woman.

Prejudice is an opinion or opinions based on judgements formed without due examination.

William portrays marriage as a misrepresentation of love(not a symbol of love) but as;

hate, greed, violence, disrespect, impatience, & dislike. To Sparkish marriage is a transaction; to Horner, marriage is unnatural; to Margery, marriage is unpleasant, etc. something that puts both parties in a pending disaster. Sir Jasper is constantly trying to evade Lady Fidget. Lady Fidget claims that sleeping with honorable men is less pleasurable compared with the less honorable lads.

Marriage is a vehicle that helps one to get to his or her destination. Pinchwife marries a country girl with the idea that she will remain faithful to him since at his age he can not keep a 'whore' to himself. He doesn’t care about Margery’s feelings but his own satisfaction, pride & ego. Sparkish is only marrying Alithea for her money. Sir Jasper leaves Lady Fidget with Horner as he concentrates on his businesses because he believes women must be kept occupied to keep them out of trouble. Pinchwife locks away Margery because he believes women should be kept “ignorant”

\* Forbidden desire & infatuation\*

This is the prohibition of an intensely wanted foolish sometimes extravagant passion(love or admiration). The more something is forbidden, the more attractive and sought after it becomes. During the reign of Charles1, theatre, and all it’s associated activities like dancing & hanging out were forbidden no wonder the eventual exodus of theatres in the reign of Charles2. The more Pinchwife keeps away “London life” from Margery, the more he brings it closer to her e.g. he describes the kind of life to her, he takes her to the theatre from where Horner notices her, he teaches her how to write a letter, he tells her about the 'gallant' who desires her, he even goes ahead to mention his name, he even delivers her to Horner TWICE on two different occasions. What becomes of Margery!? In her own words (in a letter to Horner disguised as Alithea

) “…I have got the London disease they call love; I am sick of my husband and for my gallant…” (Act4, Scene4)

[5/28, 3:44 PM] Wambi Er:  Loveless marriage. Lady Fidget & Sir Jasper, Margery & Pinchwife, Alithea & Sparkish

 Town life versus country life . All the London dwellers versus Margery

 Morality versus immorality. Alithea & Harcourt vs Horner & all the women he sleeps with

 Hypocrisy/double standards of the church, society, People Upholding cosmetic virtuousness

 Innocence versus experience. Margery versus Pinchwife

 Intelligent versus the not so intelligent. Sparkish versus Horner

 Male chauvinism, Horner dominates over a bunch of women, Pinchwife soldiers Margery,

 Women emancipation. Alithea is emancipated from Sparkish, The women are free to explore their desires,

 Change is the only constant in life. Eg. Mr. Pinchwife is a reformed whoremaster, Alithea’s love is channeled to Harcourt, The doctor changes to a 'Quack', Horner takes up a different identity, etc

7. Dramatic techniques & their effectiveness\*

• Prologue. The cast submit to the dictations of the audience hence evoking pretense.

i. The prologue evokes sympathy from the reader(audience) because the character dances to the tune of the audience.

ii. The prologue exposes the hypocrisy & double standards exuded by the society.

iii. The prologue also mocks those who think that they’re witty & more intelligent than those on stage, the audience sits back helplessly as events unfold on stage.

iv. The prologue also exposes the audience as accomplices to vanity & moral derailment

v.

\*• Nomenclature\*

+ Horner, to put horns on other men. (Cuckolding other men)

+ Sparkish, something that has a Spark, unique & special however, Sparkish is actually the opposite

+ Fidget, they keep on fidgeting through out the play

+ Frank Harcourt, he is frank just like his name, he relentlessly 'courts' Alithea until he finally becomes

“Her Court” just like his name suggests

+ London, when you pronounce London, it sounds like “learn done”. In the play when Margery ‘learns’ about life in London she catches the “London sickness” meaning she is done, gone, wasted, finished, exploited,

+ Margery, to merge two things or people. Margery merges the country to London, she merges pre- Charles1 era with the Charles2 era (her being young marries a rather aged Pinchwife who exhibits Puritan tendencies),

+ The Quack, as a doctor, he goes against his profession ethics hence the name 'quack'

• Symbolism

o Signs on the streets of horned animals means men have been cuckolded

o Wrenched Oranges means to be sexually exploited

o Sparkish symbolizes witlessness

o Horner cuckolds other men

o China symbolizes sexual relations

o Theatre symbolizes the union of different people

o The titles 'Sir' & 'Lady' symbolize the aristocrats/upperclassmen whom William mocks

o Blindness, Harcourt claims that he could look at Alithea until he was blind. Sparkish doesn’t love Alithea because he isn’t 'blind'

o Etc

• Offensive pun

• Disguise & deception. Pinchwife dresses awkwardly to hide the fact that he just got married. (Act1, scene1)

• Euphemism e.g. China, Wrenched Oranges

• Juxtaposition e.g. Alithea vs Sparkish (intelligent vs Foolish), Margery vs Pinchwife, Alithea vs Pinchwife, Sir Jasper vs Lady Fidget, The Quack vs Horner,

• Aside. Margery exposes Pinchwife as gullible (Act4, Scene4)

• Dramatic irony, Sir Jasper delivers Lady Fidget to Horner,

• Humor as Pinchwife cuckolds himself

• Similes

• Epilogue, just as men cheat so can the women. Women too deserve sensual attention,

• Etc

\*8. Application\*

\*a) Lessons\*

 Every action has an equal & opposite reaction. Margery triumphs over Pinchwife's 'oppression'

 Looks can be deceiving e.g Sparkish

 Silence doesn’t mean consensus e.g. Alithea

 When you set a goal, you stick to it, chase for it & u'll achieve e g. Harcourt pets Alithea until he marries her.

 No pain, no gain. Margery,

 True love is blind. Harcourt & Alithea



\*b) Relevance to society\*

• Disguise & deception are tools used to extract information among other reasons. Governments e.g. use spies, recently a Ugandan Minister disguised herself as a patient & she unearthed bribery tendencies in one government health facility

• Domestic violence & crimes of passion are prevalent in today’s society e.g. a former vice president opened about being in an abusive marriage, a renown musician turned politician called off her engagement citing abuse from her partner,

• Loveless marriages are prevalent in our society as affirmed by the so many divorce cases, domestic violence, single Parenthood,

• Cross generation relationships are common in contemporary Uganda.

• Just like Sparkish, different People get into marriage with personal motives e.g. for financial reasons, to gain citizenship, to get access to some services e.g. positions in society,

• Sexual immorality e.g. adultery & fornication are prevalent in contemporary society