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Marriage as a Collection of Obstacles Preventing a Functional Relationship

Who's The Dupe by Cowley and *Nature and Art* by Inchbald both show multiple marriages and the process of them, with both the time before marriage and after varying in quality even within each text. The reason for declaring marriage as a collection of obstacles is not because every marriage presented is unsuccessful, which is factually not true. The problem comes from the fact marriage itself is a ceremony, including rules, traditions and loopholes. It is important to note the authors of the texts have no issues, or at least present none in their works, with romantic relationships between men and women and will say it can be successful, as shown by the functional and flourishing relationships presented in the texts. However, the tribulations a marriage entail prevent those from happening. As without the rules of marriage, it is not considered to be a marriage, all of the nuances a marriage may or may not entail is the marriage itself. In the many marriages in the two texts, reasons for marriages are complicated and the amount of people's approvals needed are multiple. Because of the number of requirements needing to be met and number of factors needing to be considered, existing human connection is not a good enough reason on its own, or at all, to justify two people being married. As a result, in order for actual affection to prevail, it must make it through the tribulations of marriage especially since social norms prevent them from happening outside of marriage.

Since marriage requires certain factors be met, such as wealth or reputation depending on the reason for marriage, if affection exists without them, the only way to get married then would be to make it past these factors with deception. This is the way in which the concept of marriage perverts the, what could be simple, process of entering a relationship into a difficult

game of deception and finding loopholes. At its fundamentals, the union of two people does not need to be a complicated and nuanced process. The only two steps it actually needs is for two people to like each other and then for them to decide to be together. In this process, marriage is not only not necessary, but it adds obstacles between the first and second step. As a result, a relationship does not flourish because of marriage, but in spite of it.

Furthermore, as a person marrying someone else receives more than just their companionship, one may choose to marry for a completely unrelated reason. This comes back to the factors involved in two people allowing to be married and, as a result, also comes back to deception. One may choose to marry for the rewards of marriage, resulting in them having to play the same game of meeting criteria and impressing people, only this time, whether one wins or loses, there will be no affectionate relationship at the end. Because of the exclusive nature of marriage, as having lovers outside of marriage is socially unacceptable, there will be no future or possibility of a relationship afterwards as well.

After marriage, no matter for what reason as long as it's for a reward, the same problems remain. As the concept of marriage itself as become a game in which there is a winner, married life becomes the same. If one marries someone else for something marriage can give them, such as reputation for example, they will live married life trying use it to achieve the same purpose. This essentially makes the relationship between two married people one of manipulating each other into achieving their personal goals.

In *Who's the Dupe*, two people get married to two other people. It does not sound like has to be particular convoluted but it is. Firstly, the character who decides it is time to marry is not even the people getting married, it is actually the character Mr. Doiley, the father of the brides (Cowley, 5). If the initiation of the process of marriage is not even related to two people liking

each other, then it's existence in marriage is not guaranteed. However, in this work, it is present, Granger and Elizabeth wants to be with each other while Charlotte wants to be with Gradus.

Once again, it seems simple, but marriage adds obstacles.

The first obstacle would be how Gradus has become Elizabeth's suitor, partially, at the very least, because of Mr. Doiley. Mr. Doiley, has decided, independently of anyone else, "he'll [only] have a man of 'larning'" (Cowley, 4). This does not add the obstacle of Elizabeth's groom having to actually be a man of 'larning,' it instead adds the obstacle of Elizabeth's groom being a man who is perceived by Mr. Doiley as man of 'larning.' Since Gradus is already a suitor for Elizabeth, it adds obstacles to both Elizabeth and Charlotte in being with who they want to be with. In order for Elizabeth and Granger to get married, they must now convince Mr. Doiley Granger is a better suitor for Elizabeth than Gradus. And now, in order for Charlotte and Gradus to get married, they must not only also convince Mr. Doiley Gradus should not be Elizabeth's suitor, but must also convince him Gradus should be Charlotte's suitor. What was once a simple situation of people wanting to be with the people they like who like them back has now become a game where the players must trick Mr. Doiley, still a third party, into believing they themselves fit the arbitrary criteria Mr. Doiley has set, in order to achieve their originally simple goals.

There are two primary instances of deceiving Mr. Doiley. Firstly, to make Mr. Doiley stop wanting Gradus to be Elizabeth's suitor, Granger pretends to be a Frenchwoman and undermines Gradus (Cowley, 10-12). Secondly, to fit Mr. Doiley's imaged of a learned man, Granger pretends to be educated and to know Greek (Cowley, 32-37). These two instances of deception wouldn't be necessary if Mr. Doiley didn't independently set the condition of the suitor having to be learned, which wouldn't matter if he wasn't the only one deciding who

should be allowed to be married to who, which is barely, if at all, related to whether the two parties in a marriage actually like each other.

Furthermore, to achieve the same purpose of meeting Mr. Doiley's conditions, Charlotte and Sandford tells Gradus how to impress Elizabeth which leads to him saying "Learning, with all its tribe of solemn fopperies, I abjure [] forever" and sabotaging his reputation with Mr. Doiley (Cowley, 26). This is the primary instance of deceiving Gradus. The significance in this is how, at this point, not only has the concepts and traditions of marriage made deceiving a third party into a necessity to enter a willing relationship but deceiving one of the suitors has also become a necessity. Gradus realised and said, "I perceive I have been dup'd," though he has "no inclination to contest" marrying Charlotte (Cowley, 39).

While it is true the characters, in the end, were able to be married to the ones they wanted to be married to despite the conditions of marriage itself, they have now realised marriage is a concept based on deception. While this does show Cowley's recognition of a relationship built on mutual fondness being possible, marriage or no, it also shows marriage corrupts the parties involved, even with love as a factor. Something built upon deception will continue to run on deception, as show in Inchbald's *Nature and Art*.

The first marriage between main characters in *Nature and Art* was between William Senior and Lady Clementia. William's primary desire through the story was to increase the status. Meanwhile, Lady Clementia's desire is to maintain her high reputation. The goals of both parties in the marriage was to further their personal goals, which are unrelated to how they feel about each other, as the story directly states "[William] had chosen [Lady Clementia] merely that he might be proud of her family" (Inchbald, 10). As these are their original goals when getting

married, they continue to be their goals afterwards. Their married lives are now used as a way to further their ambitions and they go about it the same way marriage is achieved in the first place.

When Lady Clementia feels her reputation is jeopardised after Henry's son, her husband's nephew, arrives, she uses this situation as an opportunity to further her original ambition of gaining reputation, as her accepting Henry Junior living in her house was only so her "heroic virtue would excite [envy] in the hearts of her particular friends and [] grief in the bosoms of all those who did not like her" (Inchbald, 25). Since both the existence of this situation and the fact Lady Clementia has a party in it only appeared due to who her husband is, her using this situation for her personal ambition is the result of her using her marriage for her personal ambition. The two parts of marriage, being the becoming married and the being married, served the exact same purpose for Lady Clementia. Both are built on deception. With William Senior and Henry Junior present, Lady Clementia must do deceive both of them into thinking she actually cares about William Senior's family and Henry Junior's wellbeing, the ultimate purpose being to deceive her friends and all who know her into thinking she is a better person than she actually is.

Meanwhile, William Senior is doing a similar thing. At this point in the story, one of his personal desires, as in one unrelated to his marriage or his spouse, is reconciliation with his brother or at least to be better to him than he was previously, as he claims to Henry Junior "I will repay to you all I owe to your father" (Inchbald, 22). He considers Lady Clementia being good to Henry Junior as a part of his goal and uses his marriage to achieve his personal ambition, just like his spouse is doing in the same situation. He goes about this by manipulating his wife into thinking he cares about her personally and more so when she is treating his nephew better by "praising her for having shown [Henry Junior] so much kindness" to "stimulate her vanity to be

praised still more” (Inchbald, 25). Another important aspect of this quote is how William Senior is seeking to appeal to her vanity. If he is using his knowledge of his wife’s personal ambition to achieve his own, then he is manipulating and deceiving her using her own original purpose of deceiving him. A marriage began by deception has spiralled into a marriage of two parties in which they use each other’s manipulations and deceptions of themselves to deceive and manipulate the other. This constant struggle for power and personal reasons leaves no room for actual closeness for each other, however this is the purpose of marriage.

What counts as a successful marriage at all? Apparently, to others at least, William Senior and Lady Clementia’s marriage is a good one, as “observers in general thought her happier in her marriage” (32). The two people involved in a marriage doing nothing relating to each other and spending their time only pursuing their own goals somehow counts as a success marriage. Is this despite the fact or because of the fact they do not care for each other at all as shown in William Senior “having neither personal nor mental affection towards her” (Inchbald, 32)? There are two possible conclusions from this.

The first conclusion requires the assumption the people perceiving their marriage as successful understands what their marriage is really like, considering the fact they perceive success because of how much they pursue their own goals, this does not seem implausible. If this assumption truly is the case, it would be a situation where two people who do not care about each other and are together only too use each other is what marriage is by design. The second conclusion would rely on the assumption the others do not know what their marriage is really like and if they did, they would not find it to be a successful one. For this to be the case, it would have to mean the image of a successful marriage William Senior and Lady Clementia are giving off is also a form of deception, except to a third party instead of each other. This goes back to the

deception of Mr. Doiley in Cowley's *Who's the Dupe*, being a mirror of the same fundamental event except it is of after getting married instead of before. Either way, it shows how marriage by design will facilitate deception being used or outright force it. It may seem avoiding marriage is a way to avoid it and to be in an actual relationship but it is not the case, as whether or not two people can marry or whether two people are married is part of marriage as a concept.

This is once again shown in *Nature and Art* except by William Junior and Agnes. They had sex and later had a child together, which also seems like two secluded events. However, because marriage is the way it is and because it exists in the first place, they didn't just have sex and a child, instead having sex and child out of wedlock. Agnes feels guilty from losing her virginity to someone she is not married to as shown in her state being called the "joys of guilt" which wouldn't have happened without marriage existing as the concept of virtue would not exist either (Inchbald, 56). The concept of marriage has prevented aspects of relationships from appearing outside of marriage. Marriage has managed to monopolise sex and procreation while actively preventing love.

William Junior on the other hand, still had affections for Agnes before his father informed him of a marriage proposal, based on the other party meeting his father's conditions just like in *Who's the Dupe*.

Later on, Agnes becomes unable to marry anyone else as a result. Because of her being in a relationship previously, she is now unable to get married which makes her unable to enter another relationship. What marriage means for people who are not married has taken away Agnes' ability to be in a relationship. Furthermore, the concept of marriage expands vastly enough it prevents Rebecca and Henry Junior, two people who had no part in the occurrence of

these events from marrying because they, completely coincidentally, had a role to play in the events taking place outside of wedlock.

Henry Junior and Rebecca are unable to marry because of the relationship between Agnes and William Senior. The person who decided they can't marry was William Senior. While his authority and ability to do so is a result of his position in society, he also has the position of being the father of William Junior, who was part of the marriage during this situation. Somehow, the third party involved in marriages has not only prevented a relationship from forming in regard to the people involved in the marriage, it also prevented a relationship from forming in regard to barely related people by preventing them from being married. While the argument could be made they could still have a relationship without being married, the consequences of enjoying aspects associated with relationships outside of marriage was too grave as shown by Agnes' situation. As being physically capable of doing something does not mean having the freedom to do something if there are heavy negative consequences, Henry Junior and Rebecca are not free to pursue a relationship because of William Senior's decision.

Marriage both perverts relationships between married people by requiring deception to meet its conditions and prevents relationships outside of marriage by monopolising aspects of them by using social acceptability. However, in both *Nature and Art* and *Who's the Dupe*, there were functional relationships between people who cared for each other formed at the end in spite of marriage. How this was able to occur is related to what Henry Junior and Rebecca learnt at the end of *Nature and Art* when Henry said, "let the poor, then, no more be their persecutors—no longer pay homage to wealth" (Inchbald, 136). The other marriages shown in the works have included factors such as third-party approval and personal ambition, which didn't apply to Henry Junior and Rebecca because they decided to not at all care for nor want to such matters. If they

learnt they were only able to enjoy a marriage and a relationship without these aspects of a marriage, does it not mean the less factors of marriage encountered, the happier a marriage is? If having less marriage is the only way to enjoy more of a relationship, then factors of marriage and factors of functional relationships are exclusive and replacements of each other.

Works Cited

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