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# FROM THE STAGE TO THE WORLD: THE MORALIZING METHODS OF SIR RICHARD STEELE

by

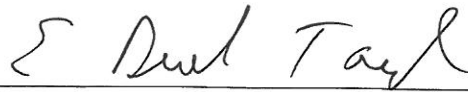
Shelah Y. Simpson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in English

Longwood University

Department of English and Modern Languages



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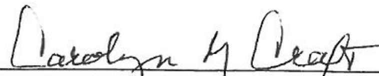

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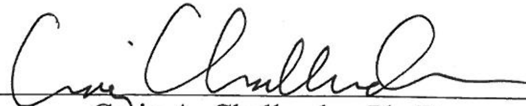

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# From the Stage to the World:
# The Moralizing Methods of Sir Richard Steele

By

Shelah Y. Simpson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Arts in English at Longwood University, Farmville, Virginia, May 2005.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, all glory, praise, and thanks belongs to my Heavenly Father, in whom I live, move, and have my being and with whom all things are possible. I would also like to thank my parents and friends for all of their prayers, support, and encouragement throughout the years of my graduate program. I extend heartfelt thanks and deep gratitude to the members of my thesis committee, who also happen to be the only three Longwood professors I had the honor of sitting under for graduate classes. Thank you for sharing with me your wisdom and passion for literature. Your contribution to this phase of my life will be forever remembered and appreciated.

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## Introduction: History of the Code

Few men throw themselves into as many activities and aspects of life with as much passion as did Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729). As student and soldier, lover and husband, essayist and dramatist, political activist and stage reformer, Steele always possessed a strong moral code, which he developed early, yet struggled to follow himself. In all he undertook, he strove to communicate this moral code of behavior to anyone who would listen, believing that if individuals—himself included—could be disciplined enough to embrace and follow it, society would be a better place.

Steele's plays have been studied, applauded, and criticized for style, dramatic technique, comedic technique, elements of plot and character, impact on dramatic history, and many other genre-related aspects; however, little attention, if any, has been given to Steele's plays solely as instruments to accomplish the goal of introducing his code of morals—his idea of what was and was not ideal behavior for individuals—to as wide an audience, and in as pleasing and influential a manner, as possible. Steele knew the stage could provide a more effective venue for the consolidation and communication of his moral code than could any collection of essays, and would have more of an enduring influence on his audience, as his comment in *Spectator* no. 370 (May 5,1712) reveals: "For this reason it is that I make so frequent mention of the Stage: It is, with me, a Matter of the highest Consideration what Parts are well or ill performed, what Passions or Sentiments are indulged or cultivated, and consequently what Manners and Customs are transfused from the Stage to the World, which reciprocally imitate each other" (3:393). This reciprocal relationship which Steele saw between the stage and the world helps explain his plays as four attempts to find the appropriate balance, the exact formula, for

mixing entertainment and instruction, one that would communicate his moral code to society with more sustained influence than pamphlets and essays, he came to believe, ever could.

How did Steele's moral code develop, and what drove his desire to sermonize and to indoctrinate others with it? These questions have all but been ignored by critics of Steele's writings; rather than seek the reason why his works appear to exhibit two conflicting sides of his personality, some critics prefer to find fault with his moralizing and blame him for the ruination of the comedic genre of his time. For instance, critic M. E. Hare, who accuses Steele of destroying good comedy by introducing sentimentality, maintains, "There is, if one must confess it, just a little of that horrid thing the revivalist in Steele. He is normally an amusing expansive good fellow, but a moralist to be shunned when he is crapulous" (24). What Hare and other critics have failed to recognize is that Steele continuously struggled with these two sides of himself; he was a man of deep passion and sentiment, ever striving to reach his own high ideals of behavior, ones he had developed partly from observation but mostly through experiencing the results of his own failure to achieve them.

Fittingly, critics have either accused him of or credited him with introducing sentimentality into restoration drama, for an incident in Steele's earliest years opened that deep place in his psyche which led to a life of alternately exhibiting and taming his extreme passion for people, for ideals, and even for unhealthy activities. The incident was the death of Steele's father when Steele was not quite five years old, which, as related by Steele himself, had a tremendous, lasting impact upon him:

> I went into the room where his body lay, and my mother sat weeping alone by it. I had my battledore in my hand, and fell a-beating the coffin, and calling Papa; for I know not how, I had some slight idea that he was locked up there. My mother catched me in her arms, and, transported beyond all patience of the silent grief she was before in, she almost smothered me in her embraces; and told me in a flood of tears Papa could not hear me, and would play with me no more, for they were going to put him under ground, whence he would never come to us again . . . there was a dignity in her grief amidst all the wildness of her transport; which, methought, struck me with an instinct of sorrow that, before I was sensible what it was to grieve, seized my very soul. . . ." (qtd. In Connely 8-9)

Just a short time later, within the very same year, Steele's mother unexpectedly passed away as well (Connely 9). That "instinct of sorrow" Steele experienced at such a young age elevated his mind toward higher thoughts and helped shape his personality into the one of deep feeling and strong sentiment with which he later wrote.

From the point of his parents' deaths, many influences contributed to Steele's development of moral ideals, including classically devout instruction from a local vicar in Dublin where he lived with his uncle and aunt until the age of 12 (Connely 11-14) and books he read on his own during that time:

> Bred up with a relation that had a pretty large study of books, it became my province once a week to dust them. In the performance of this my duty, as I was obliged to take down every particular book, I thought there was no way to deceive the toil of my journey through the different abodes

> and habitations of these authors but by reading something in every one of them. By frequent exercise I became so great a proficient in this transitory application to books that I could hold open a half dozen small authors in an hand, as a drawer doth his glasses, and feasting my curious eye with all of them at the same instant. (Connely 11)

At the age of 12, upon recommendation from the Duke of Ormond, Steele's uncle's employer, Steele became a gown-boy at Charterhouse in London, where he undoubtedly was further indoctrinated with moral teaching and where he also met Joseph Addison, his lifelong friend and writing partner (Connely 14-19). Steele followed Addison to Oxford in 1689, where Steele received more instruction at Christ Church but left without finishing his degree; he enlisted as a soldier sometime between 1692 and 1693 (Connely 25-37). It was at this point that his direct instruction in morals ended; his experiences with them, however, had just begun.

According to historians, upon leaving Oxford, "Steele lost no time, whether in London or encamped about the country, in winning the love of the whole messroom" (Connely 38). In the words of George Aitken, "The life of a soldier was certain to lead a young man of Steele's sociable, hearty nature, into excesses. It was, as he says, 'a life exposed to much irregularity,' and he often did things of which he repented" ("Richard Steele" ix). In short, Steele socialized to the extreme, and such indulgence resulted in heavy drinking, a duel, and even illegitimate children (Connely 38-51).

Steele's drinking resulted in part from his popularity with the wits in the coffeehouses, his ability to make the other soldiers laugh, and his affinity for Bond Street capers: "It was all very delightful, but it meant that during more hours than a man should

stay awake [Steele] undertook three varieties of drinking; messroom, Covent Garden, and Mayfair" (Connely 48). In early June of 1700, Steele fell ill of a fever due to all this excess and was attempting to live a calmer lifestyle when another Captain challenged Steele to a duel over some misunderstanding. Steele reportedly attempted to dissuade this man, Captain Kelly, from fighting the duel, but Kelly, according to Willard Connely, "could utter nothing except that he was 'ready to give Captain Steele satisfaction'," so Steele met Kelly in Hyde Park on Sunday, June 16, before nightfall (48-49). Steele, while attempting to disarm Kelly without harming him, unintentionally ran Kelly through the body. While Kelly remained precariously close to death over the next few weeks, Steele, according to Connely, "thought only of Kelly's life, thought anxiously, suffered distractedly: what if the man should not get well? In the end, however, he did. And Steele vowed that this duel should be his last. At every chance which offered he condemned dueling as bastard knight-errantry" (49).

Steele was no less successful with women than he was with drinking and dueling—his success once again leading to unpleasant consequences. Jacob Tonson, a book publisher in London who had published some verses by a collection of wits—Steele being one of them—had an attractive orphan niece whom Steele succeeded in wooing but left with child in late 1700 (Connely 50-51). These misadventures clearly reveal that although Steele left Oxford with an intellectual understanding of high morals, it was only after numerous cycles of excess followed by remorse, only after he experienced his own moral failures and their inevitable consequences, that he was driven into publishing the moral code by which he himself could not fully live.

Steele's first attempt at writing out the moral code borne of his schooling and his own failures came in the form of a religious tract or pamphlet, entitled The Christian Hero, which he originally wrote for his own private edification and use after he was transferred to the Tower Guard during the winter of 1700:

> In the winter nights, he had many a long and lonely watch to sit through in contrast to his accustomed afternoons of prodigal mirth. He meditated. His spirit grew contrite, perhaps over that little mischance with Tonson's niece. What made self-indulgence so compelling? His fantastic appetite for the moment, the single moment? It pained the captain to have to own that he slid into sin far more easily, more frequently, and more cheerfully than he climbed to virtue. To enable him to fling away his "unwarrantable pleasures" he decided in his midnight solitude that he must write for private use a tract, which should impel him through religion to a change of mind. (Connely 53)

This tract was "an argument proving that no principles but those of religion are sufficient to make a great man" (Aitken, "Richard Steele" ix). In the Tower, while writing this tract, Steele determined henceforth to "treat religion in his writing not as a Sunday tidbit but as a daily staple" (qtd. In Connely 53). However, Steele admits that after this period of repentance, he fell into old habits once more, leading him to have the tract published in April of 1701:

> "This secret admonition," he later granted, "was too weak." No manuscript written for private perusal bore threat of penalty. Steele therefore decided to print the book, signed, "in hopes that a standing

> testimony against himself and the eyes of the world upon him in a new light, might curb his desires, and make him ashamed of understanding and seeming to feel what was virtuous, and living so quite contrary a life." (Connely 55)

Steele's desire simply to be held accountable and perhaps inspire others backfired with an unexpected intensity as his fellow soldiers ridiculed him unmercifully, and as Steele himself acknowledged, he quickly went "from being thought no undelightful companion" to being thought "a disagreeable fellow," and could "say no word, hear no word, make no move, without having it at once labeled 'unworthy a Christian Hero'" (qtd. in Connely 55). It was with the motive of regaining his popularity that Steele wrote his first play, published in the summer of 1701, called The Funeral or Grief A-la-Mode (Aitken, "Richard Steele" ix-x).

Thus matters stood with Steele personally when he wrote his first play: he had an intellectual understanding of high morals from his education and, as a result of his failures, was driven to espouse high moral standards in whatever he wrote; however, the condition of the theatre at this time was also not without its influence on Steele's playwriting. English theatre was in the midst of a period of reformation—a reaction to the alleged licentiousness of the Restoration plays. Jeremy Collier published an attack on the theatre in 1698, A Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage, on the heels of which "proclamations were issued against the acting of anything immoral or irreligious, and a Society for the Reformation of Manners was founded, which was soon followed by similar societies in various parts of the country" (Aitken, "Richard Steele" x-xi). Indeed, Collier's piece argued heavily on the side of moral

instruction within plays, encouraging a shift away from Horace's recommended balance of pleasure and instruction:

> In all his plays, Steele followed the theory of comedy which was already commonplace when Horace expressed it in Ars Poetica, that the business of the literary artist was "to teach and to please." Jeremy Collier's influential A Short View had given much less emphasis to the aim of providing pleasure; in fact, it stated that "to make delight the main business of comedy was dangerous and unreasonable." (Nettleton 435)

Thus, it was under the influence of these shifting artistic philosophies and expectations as well as that of his own moral compass that Steele wrote his plays, ever striving to find that delicate balance between instruction and entertainment, morality and pleasure.

Since Steele wrote his first play, The Funeral or Grief A-la-Mode, as damage control for the beating his reputation took as a result of The Christian Hero, Steele felt it to be, in his own words, "incumbent upon him to enliven his character, for which reason he wrote the comedy called The Funeral, in which (though full of incidents that move laughter) virtue and vice appear just as they ought to do. Nothing can make the town so fond of a man as a successful play" (Aitken, "Richard Steele" ix-x). In essence, Steele's intent was to write a play which would be entertaining enough to salvage his previous popularity yet simultaneously moral in its proper presentation of virtue and vice.

The Funeral is a lighthearted, somewhat satirical play with the scales of entertainment versus instruction tipped in favor of entertainment, most likely due to Steele's desire to put himself back in his fellow soldiers' good graces. The play centers around the household of Lord Brumpton who, it is thought, had recently died but in

reality who has revived, unbeknownst to all except his honest servant named Trusty. With those closest to him under the assumption that he is dead, Lord Brumpton is able to observe their private behavior and discern their true feelings about him. Lord Brumpton immediately learns his second and much younger wife, Lady Brumpton, feigned her affection for him, used his love for her to convince him to disinherit his son, is gleeful about his death, and looks forward to re-entering society after a year of mourning for appearance's sake. Lady Brumpton has also managed to gain custody of Lord Brumpton's two lovely wards, Lady Sharlot and Lady Harriot, and, since his assumed demise, keeps them locked up in order to prevent them from marrying before she can steal their inheritance as well. However, Lord Hardy, Lord Brumpton's disinherited son, and his friend, Mr. Campley, have fallen in love with the two wards and devise two separate schemes to sneak Lady Harriot and then Lady Sharlot out from under Lady Brampton's nose.

Though the play contains much more entertainment than overt moralizing, Steele does include several examples of both vice and of virtue. He takes satirical jabs at the common vices of undertakers, lawyers, and "ladies" who come to call on Lady Brumpton. His examples of poor judgment are, of course, Lady Brumpton and Mr. Cabinet, along with Lady Brumpton's maid, Tattleaid, and Lord Brumpton himself as the gullible, besotted old man. Steele exemplifies poor friendship and servitude in the untrustworthy relationship between Lady Brumpton and Tattleaid and demonstrates poor love in the deteriorated relationships between Lady Brumpton and Mr. Cabinet and between Lady Brumpton and Lord Brumpton. Lord Hardy is Steele's example of a true gentleman, as is Lady Sharlot of a true lady. Good examples of friendship and service

also abound: Lord Hardy, Mr. Campley, and Trim's loyalty to one another; Lady Sharlot and Lady Harriot's friendship; and Trusty's loyalty to Lord Brumpton. Steele demonstrates admirable love relationships in those of Lord Hardy and Lady Sharlot and Mr. Campley and Lady Harriot.

Rather than making the vices appear attractively humorous and the virtuous characters appear tiresome as much of the previously-performed comedies of his time had done, Steele reversed the trend and yet still managed to write an extremely entertaining play, succeeding in his goal to recover his popularity lost from publishing The Christian Hero pamphlet. According to Connely, "On the days subsequent to performance and publication [of The Funeral] Dick Steele witnessed generous confirmation of his belief that 'nothing made a man so popular with the town as a successful play'" (64). In A Comparison Between the Two Stages, a book written on the heels of The Funeral, the author, Charles Gildon writes dialogue between three people named Ramble, Sullen, and Chagrin, the latter being a critic: "When Ramble proposes to speak of The Funeral, Sullen says, 'Tis a dangerous matter to talk of this play; the Town has given it such applause, 'twill be an ungrateful undertaking to call their judgments in question'" (Aitken 1:75). Not only did Steele win the applause and approval of "the Town" with this play, but he reportedly also attained recognition in the eyes of royalty: "The talents displayed in his first comedy, and its excellent moral tone, had made him popular with the public, and had also brought him under the favourable notice of King William, who, had he lived, designed to have conferred upon him some substantial mark of his approbation" (Montgomery 1:50). Thus, without mocking virtue or glamorizing vice as his

predecessors had done, Steele was reestablished in his popularity and recognized as a talented new playwright.

Nonetheless, however much applauded, Steele's new morally inoffensive manner of playwriting failed to catch on immediately, as evidenced by continued controversy in the two years following his success:

> In 1702 Queen Anne directed that certain players of Lincoln's Inn Fields should be prosecuted, and they were duly tried and found guilty of 'uttering impious, lewd, and immoral expressions.' In 'A Refutation of the Apology for the Actors,' 1703, published in the Camden Miscellany, we read: 'The English poets and players are still like themselves; they strain to singularity of coarseness. . . . They labour for perspicuity, and shine out in mire and in scandal. . . . They are proof against reason and punishment, and come over again with the old smut and profanity.' (Aitken 1:90)

Reports such as these demonstrate the difficulty the playwrights and actors of the time had adjusting to a cultural shift in what was viewed as morally acceptable. In response to this continuing trend of immorality on the stage, Jeremy Collier published another pamphlet called A Dissuasive from the Play House (1703); furthermore,

> On the 15th of January 1704 the Lord Chamberlain issued an order to the Companies at Drury Lane and Little Lincoln's Inn Fields, directing that as there were many indecencies in the plays which were represented, all plays must be licensed by the Master of the Revels, and all prologues, epilogues, and songs submitted to him; and on the 17th January the Lord Chamberlain ordered Charles Killigrew, Esq., Master of the Revels, not to

> license anything which was not strictly agreeable to religion and good manners. Plays must be submitted before the parts were distributed, and not just before they were brought out. (Aitken 1:90)

Such was the state of the theatre when Steele's second comedy, The Lying Lover, was performed on Thursday, December 2, 1703. It ran for the following six nights and an additional night on December 15th (Aitken 1:91-92).

Without noting these significant influences, critic M.E. Hare, in transitioning from a discussion of The Funeral to one of The Lying Lover, comments: "Steele's next play . . . was to be much less witty and amusing and much more sentimental" (15). This imbalance of instruction versus entertainment within The Lying Lover, heavily weighted on the side of instruction, was a direct result of the continued condemnations of the "immoral" theatre in his society, combined with Steele's ever-present desire to disseminate his moral code through his work. George Aitken notes of The Lying Lover:

> In the dedication of the play to the Duke of Ormond, [Steele] says, "The design of it is to banish out of conversation all entertainment which does not proceed from simplicity of mind, good nature, friendship, and honour;" and in the Preface he again refers to the manner in which the English stage had offended against the laws of morals and religion; "I thought, therefore, it would be an honest ambition to attempt a comedy which might be no improper entertainment in a Christian commonwealth." ("Richard Steele" xix)

At another point in the Preface of The Lying Lover, Steele asserts: "It is high time we should no longer draw occasions of mirth from those images which the religion of our

country tells us we ought to tremble at with horror" (102). Clearly, Steele's motivation for writing this play had nothing to do with his own popularity this time but was in answer to the critics of theatrical immorality, as Steele himself later admitted of The Lying Lover in his subsequent Apology: "Mr. Collier had, about the time wherein this was published, written against the immorality of the stage. I was (as far as I durst for fear of witty men, upon whom he had been too severe) a great admirer of his work, and took it into my head to write a comedy in the severity he required" (qtd. in Aitken 1:92).

In undertaking the task of writing a comedy of "severity," Steele based the majority of the play upon Corneille's Le Menteur (1643); however, the more serious conclusion is entirely Steele's original work (Aitken "Richard Steele" xix-xx). The intricate plot of The Lying Lover or The Ladies' Friendship (as it is fully titled) centers around Young Bookwit and his friend Latine who have irresponsibly left Oxford without finishing their degrees and have come to Town because Bookwit wants to pursue "fair and witty" women. By telling several elaborate lies and posing as an educated soldier in the park under an assumed name with Latine as his servant, Bookwit meets and pursues Penelope, who was already losing interest in her current suitor, Lovemore, though he has been faithful and caring to her for two years. Penelope's friend, Victoria, who is with her in the park, also takes a secret liking to Bookwit. However, due to a mistaken communication between Latine and the ladies' footman, Bookwit believes Penelope's name to be Victoria and vice versa. After charming the ladies with several lies in the park, Bookwit and Latine meet up with Lovemore and his friend, Frederick, all four of whom are former friends. Through more lies and deceit, Bookwit convinces Lovemore that Bookwit has already wooed Penelope with pleasant results. Ironically, unbeknownst

to Bookwit, his father, with permission from Penelope's father, approaches Penelope on behalf of his son whom he assumes is still at Oxford. Penelope does not know this son, Bookwit, is the same man as the '"soldier" she met in the park, so she now believes she has three suitors. The remaining action in the play up to the final scene closely follows Le Menteur and involves Bookwit's lies being exposed, Penelope and Victoria's coquettish behavior, and a duel between Lovemore and Bookwit resulting in Lovemore's alleged death though he is quite alive in reality. Steele then departs from Corneille's plot in the final scenes, where Penelope laments her coquettish and barbarous treatment of her supposedly deceased suitor, and Bookwit, locked up at Newgate for Lovemore's murder, has an emotional scene of repentant remorse, after which Lovemore reveals himself and all is well.

Amid the intricacies of the plot, Steele weaves his moral code into the dialogue and behavior of these characters with less humor than is in The Funeral and does so without creating one character worth emulating. Rather than making virtue attractive through humor and through characters to be admired for their exemplary behavior, in The Lying Lover Steele chooses to create characters who provide very obvious examples of poor behavior, who reap the harsh consequences of their actions for a time, who become contrite and repentant, and who see before themselves the possibility of happiness if they change their ways. In the Preface, Steele describes this entirely different approach when he expresses his hope that "wit will recover from its apostasy; and that, by being encouraged in the interests of virtue, it will strip vice of the gay habit in which it has too long appeared, and clothe it in its native dress of shame, contempt and dishonor" (102). This approach, most likely due to Steele's desire to please the aforementioned critics of

theatrical morality, and though garnered with several genuinely funny moments, tips the scales heavily toward didacticism and away from entertainment, preventing Steele from achieving that balance of instruction and pleasure he usually sought to create in his plays.

This earnest desire of Steele's to please both the critics and the crowd, to disseminate his moral code among the masses, backfired once again with The Lying Lover, as it had with his earlier pamphlet, The Christian Hero. Mentioning a line from the epilogue of The Lying Lover, Connely comments on the poor reception of the play: "If Steele intended 'a generous pity of painted woe,' he found his audience cared neither for the generosity nor for the paint, nor yet for his dimpled didacticism' (Connely 81). As Henry Montgomery puts it,

> The result [of The Lying Lover] is stated by [Steele] himself in his defence in the House of Commons, many years after, against the factious charge of sedition, and of being an enemy to Church and State:--"I acknowledge that I cannot tell, sir, what they would have me do to prove myself a Churchman; but I think I have appeared one even in so trifling a thing as a comedy. And considering me as a comic poet, I have been a martyr and confessor for the Church, for this play was damned for its piety. (1:55)

Though Steele undoubtedly infused his moral code into this play, the approach failed to please and, by societal standards, was certainly not a success, running for only seven performances total. Once again, Steele found it necessary to find a way back into the good graces of his peers, on this occasion a theatrical company of peers, rather than a military one.

A year and a half after the unsuccessful premiere of The Lying Lover, Steele sought to redeem himself: "As he had taken warning to cover The Christian Hero with The Funeral, so now with The Tender Husband (1705) he thought to wipe away the stigma of The Lying Lover" (Connely 87). Because reestablishing himself as a talented and successful comedic playwright was uppermost in Steele's mind, The Tender Husband contains much in the way of enjoyable comedy but little of instruction, especially in contrast to his previous play. M.E. Hare's reaction to the play is telling: "It is a delightful play. True, no philosophy of life can be derived from it; it is, one must confess, more farce than comedy, but it is perpetually witty" (31-32). Steele himself comments in the dedication of the play that, in writing it, he was "very careful to avoid everything that might look ill-natured, immoral, or prejudicial to what the better part of mankind hold sacred and honorable" (193). Avoiding the glorification of vice, always a goal of Steele's, appeared this time more as his sole approach than did instruction in virtue while he focused on regaining his popularity once more. As one Steele historian notes: "Dick Steele had by this time shifted Jeremy Collier to the suburbs of his memory" (Connely 88). Although Steele's moral code manifests itself occasionally, the bulk of The Tender Husband is pure, plot-centered, comedic entertainment.

The plot of The Tender Husband is two-fold; the central plot involves the intricacies of two couples courting at the same time that one of each pair is being pushed into marriage to each other by their parents; the sub-plot centers on a husband who is trying to trap his extravagant wife into infidelity by sending his mistress (disguised as a man) to seduce her. The play opens with Clerimont Senior coaching his mistress, Lucy, who is disguised as Mr. Fainlove, on how to pretend to seduce his wife, Mrs. Clerimont,

in order to test her; since she has been extravagant with his money, he suspects she may eventually be as free with her person.

In another part of town, Humphrey Gubbin, son of Sir Harry Gubbin, has been summoned to the city to be pushed into marriage to Biddy Tipkin, daughter of Sir Harry Gubbin's brother, a marriage between cousins decided upon by their fathers. Humphrey discovers he is "of age" and no longer needs his father's consent to marry but does not want to return without a bride and thus engages the services of Pounce, the lawyer who was to have drawn up the match between Humphrey and his cousin, to find him another bride. Meanwhile, Clerimont Senior also hires Pounce to find a financially well-endowed match for his younger brother, Capt. Clerimont, since their father's wealth goes to the oldest son as custom demands. Pounce proceeds to introduce Capt. Clerimont to Biddy Tipkin and Humphrey Gubbin to Pounce's own sister, who turns out to be none other than Clerimont's old mistress who is helping him put his wife to the test.

Comical scenes are plentiful as these courtships, aided by disguise and even sword play, take place. Humphrey and Biddy meet and secretly agree that they hate each other and will not marry at any cost. Capt. Clerimont woos the fanciful and romantic Biddy Tipkin under the guise of a painter while Humphrey does his best to keep up appearances by visiting her until Capt. Clerimont has won her love. Clerimont Senior's plan to show his frivolous wife the error of her ways, with the help of his former mistress, comes to fruition, and all of the couples are financially and romantically happy together in the end.

By nature, Steele could not write a play and completely omit elements of his moral code; thus, a few elements of it slide through the comedic cracks of The Tender

Husband. In the sub-plot with Clerimont Senior and Mrs. Clerimont, Steele addresses financial responsibility and also lightly touches on the infidelity of both husband and wife. Through the main plot, Steele communicates his moral code regarding parental roles and filial responsibility. However, the comedic, entertaining moments so far outweigh these moments of morality that they might almost easily be overlooked were it not for some rehabilitative references to them at the end of the play.

This balance in favor of entertainment in The Tender Husband may have contributed to its success, but, whatever the reason, a success it was. According to Aitken, the play opened on April 23, 1705, ran for five nights, and was also acted several times almost every single year between 1705 and 1736, and occasionally even after that date ("Richard Steele" 191). Steele himself alludes to its level of success in the play's dedication (published May 9, 1705) to his dearest friend, Joseph Addison: "I hope I make the Town no ill compliment for their kind acceptance of this Comedy, in acknowledging that it has so far raised my opinion of it, as to make me think it no improper memorial of an inviolable friendship" (192). Thus, Steele was once again a respected and popular playwright. He had yet to succeed, however, in writing a comedy well-balanced with both instruction and pleasure, one that would take his moral code "from the stage to the world."

In the next four years, according to Connely, Steele was married, lost his wife to a fatal illness, became an editor for *The London Gazetteer*, re-married, and became a father, but was still unable to influence his society with the moral code he so desperately desired to instill in their lives. In 1709, he tried his hand at a new medium (93-144). Steele biographer, Henry Montgomery narrates:

> To the arduous task of counteracting the prevailing evils of the times—moral, intellectual, and social—and to plant a flower where he plucked up a weed, Steele, with astonishing confidence in his own resources, now set himself as if to the mission of his life. *The Tatler; or, Lucubrations of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.*, made its appearance on the 12th of April 1709, and was published thrice a week, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. (Montgomery 1.138)

Writing under the name of Isaac Bickerstaff because "he apprehended that with the general run of readers, a man known like himself to drink more than he could hold and spend more than he could earn, would ill succeed in persuading followers to any earnest or sustained attention," Steele confidently distributed these weekly, well-received, half-page essays, commentaries on society (to which others such as Addison and Swift occasionally contributed) from 1709 to New Year's of 1711 (Connely 145-180).

Steele had clear goals for *The Tatler.* At the close of the series, Steele wrote that "the general purpose of the whole [had] been to recommend truth, innocence, honour, and virtue, as the chief ornaments of life," which is comparable to his stated goal for the essays from the beginning:

> The general purpose of this paper is to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour. . . . As for my labours, if they but wear one impertinence out of human life, destroy a single vice, or give a morning's cheerfulness to an honest mind; in short, if the world can be but one virtue the better, or in any degree less

> vicious, or receive from them the smallest addition to their innocent diversions; I shall not think my pains, or indeed my life, to have been spent in vain. (Aitken 1:246)

Steele's success in accomplishing this goal, both in the communication of the value of virtue and in societal acceptance and change in response to that communication, is well documented. Montgomery sums up *The Tatler* in this way:

> In the short period of their existence these papers had taken a wide range over the whole field of life, and had left few subjects untouched that concerned the wellbeing of society. They treated of matters of taste, recommended refinement of mind and manners, and touched upon moral subjects in a manner to come home to those who were little likely to be reached by grave and elaborate treatises. The gamblers they attacked with unsparing severity. The regulation of the passions, and the evils arising from their excesses; the duties and obligations of domestic life, in opposition to a sneering libertinism then prevalent; the folly of extravagance, and the superior happiness and wisdom of simple tastes; the qualities of friendship, with the distinctions between what is real and the various disguises it assumes; and lastly, religion as the foundation on which every system of real goodness and happiness must ultimately rest. (153-154)

In other words, Steele was finally able to disseminate his moral code in its entirety to the masses in a pleasing manner, though not through the medium of playwriting as his first attempts had been. The pleasure with which these essays were received and the change in

society they affected is documented by John Gay, writing in *The Present State of Wit* in early 1711. Speaking of the sudden discontinuance of *The Tatler*, Gay says:

> His disappearing seemed to be bewailed as some general calamity: every one wanted so agreeable an amusement; and the coffee-houses began to be sensible that the Esquire's lucubrations alone had brought them more customers than all their other newspapers put together. . . . .[Steele's] reputation was at a greater height than, I believe, ever any living author's was before him. . . . It is incredible to conceive the effect his writings have had on the town; how many thousand follies they have either quite banished, or given a very great check to; how much countenance they have added to virtue and religion; how many people they have rendered happy, by showing them it was their own fault if they were not so; and, lastly, how entirely they have convinced our fops and young fellows of the value and advantages of learning. (qtd. in Aitken 1:253-254)

Finally, Steele was accomplishing his life goals on a weekly basis, effecting moral, social, and behavioral change in a pleasing manner among his peers. Unfortunately, in 1710, rising political tensions engulfing both individual *Tatler* issues and contributing authors took a toll on this beloved publication. Connely writes of Steele:

> He neglected the hints of his friends who judge him at his best in "mirth and waggery," and began to talk politics with a troubled face. His listeners became fewer. . . . In the comparative calm of politics since that first bow of *The Tatler*, Steele had told stories, renovated morals, lampooned manner, put down pernicious social customs, fathered modern dramatic

> criticism. . . . Now he put his hot and worried ear to Whitehall, not forgetting that he was a Whig. (166-166)

This rash decision on Steele's part led to the loss of his Tory readership, resulting in the creation of their own paper: "The crested Tories trusted *The Tatler* no more. They feared it. Within a month—at the beginning of August, 1710—they started a weekly paper of their own, *The Examiner*" (Connely 169). For a few months, Steele attempted to return The Tatler to its earlier subject matter, but the damage had been done. Steele abruptly ended *The Tatler* on New Year's Day of 1711, feeling the paper had lost its spark and he his enthusiasm for it (Connely 170-179).

However, Steele did not allow his pen to rest for long before he, together with Addison, developed the concept of *The Spectator*, a fresh paper, "non-political, that it might live; daily, that it might pay," since political involvement had been *The Tatler's* undoing in the end (Connely 184). "The first number of *The Spectator* appeared on the 1st March 1711, with the announcement, 'To be continued every day,' and the paper was issued without intermission until the 6th December 1712, when No. 555, the last of the original series, was published" (Aitken 1:309). *The Spectator* was similar to *The Tatler* in the issues it addressed, sans political commentary, but its authorship was under the guise of members of a club—The Spectator Club—rather than one assumed persona as in the case of *The Tatler*: "With a dramatic framework and the machinery of a club, the whole [of *The Spectator*] was invested with a living and personal interest, and wit, humour, and reason were brought to bear on the follies and vices of the age in a continuous battery" (Montgomery 1:296).

Steele's essays in *The Spectator* were received with as much popularity, pleasure, and impact as those of his previous periodical. As Aitken says, comparing Steele's work in *The Spectator* with that in *The Tatler*,

> There was the same inexpressible charm in the matter, the same inexhaustible variety in the form; and upon all the keen exposure of vice of the pleasant laugh at folly, as prominent in the life-like little story as in the criticism of an actor or a play, making attractive the gravest themes to the unthinking, and recommending the lightest fancies to the most grave, there was still the old and ineffaceable impress of good-nature and humanity—the soul of a sincere man shining out through it all. (1:312-313)

Of the impact *The Spectator* had on the behavior of society, according to Aitken, another unnamed contemporary writer reported the following:

> This was laying the axe to the root of vice and immorality. All the pulpit discourses of a year scarce produced half the good as flowed from *The Spectator* of a day. They who were tired and lulled to sleep by a long and laboured harangue, or terrified at the appearance of large and weighty volumes, could cheerfully attend to a single half-sheet, where they found the images of virtue so lively and amiable, where vice was so agreeably ridiculed, that it grew painful to no man to part with his beloved follies; nor was he easy till he had practiced those qualities which charmed so much in speculation. (314-315)

Thus, Steele had truly discovered a venue for communication he not only mastered, but through which he also was able to pour his moral code as through a sieve, watering his society with drops here and there, watching growth take place in various ways. However, talented essayist and moralist that he was, he had still yet to achieve this same goal in his old arena of playwriting. Could he possibly ever write a play that would embody his moral code of behavioral standards for his society—that would combine the perfect balance of pleasure and instruction and would succeed as a comedy in its own right? He was certainly going to try.

The Conscious Lovers, Steele's last complete play, performed and published in 1722, was conceived and written, many historians believe, throughout the time period Steele was writing essays for *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*—the year 1710 and following. The plot tells the story of Bevil, Jr., whose father has arranged a marriage for him with the father of the beautiful, virtuous Lucinda, who is actually in love with Bevil, Jr.'s best friend, Mr. Myrtle, and he with her. Knowing this, Bevil, Jr. agrees to the match only because he believes Lucinda will refuse it due to her affection for Mr. Myrtle. However, the break in the arrangement actually comes from Lucinda's father, Mr. Sealand, who thinks he has discovered a smear on Bevil, Jr.'s reputation—in fact, that Bevil, Jr. has a kept mistress. In reality, Bevil, Jr. has rescued a young lady, named Indiana, who had endured much hardship in her life and whom he had rescued from the clutches of a man who had robbed her and was dragging her off to prison. Bevil, Jr. has provided for her financially but has not made any attempts to woo or seduce her; however, it is evident the two are falling in love. Meanwhile, in the sub-plot, Myrtle attempts to woo Lucinda, but Lucinda's mother continues to force an awful suitor on

Lucinda by the name of Cimberton. This sub-plot involves the help of two servants and several disguises on Myrtle's part. In the end, Mr. Sealand, Lucinda's father, discovers that Indiana, Bevil, Jr.'s damsel in distress, is his long-lost daughter—in reality, Lucinda's sister. Bevil, Jr. marries Indiana, and Cimberton breaks his arrangement with Lucinda's mother upon the discovery that half her estate now goes to her sister; thus, Myrtle wins Lucinda.

This play addresses right conduct for sons, fathers, mothers, daughters, servants, suitors, gentlemen, ladies, merchants, and friends—just about every conceivable role in society. The Conscious Lovers enfolds within its characters and lines the majority of Steele's moral code as he had written it, piecemeal, to the masses for years—rejected in The Christian Hero and The Lying Lover, barely acknowledged in The Funeral and The Tender Husband, and embraced in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. No play of his encompasses so much instruction in morality yet is simultaneously successful at maintaining a pleasing and interesting plot without glorifying vice or ridiculing virtue. An overview of Steele's moral code as portrayed throughout his essays in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* and a thorough analysis of his moral code as seen in his three early plays, combined with an extensive study of the characters in The Conscious Lovers, will demonstrate that this, Steele's final complete play, is the culmination of all his writing efforts, his final crowning achievement.

## Chapter One: The Essays

As self-designated observer and commentator of societal and domestic life, Steele focuses his essays in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* specifically on the outward behavior of those around him as it relates to their inner selves and to the code of virtues he views as a necessary pillar of a healthy community. One author notes that "social observation is . . . a way of looking at the interaction between inward and outward, so the spatial metaphor ("Penetration," "looked into, " "inmost," "enter into") dominates the *Spectator's* descriptions of the social man" (Ketcham 143). Thus, though the bulk of Steele's moral code as portrayed in his essays appears to encompass only a mere analysis and critique of the manners and societal behavior of his day, Steele also seeks to discover and improve the underlying morality and motivational standards which produce that behavior. In these short, weekly papers, "Steele showed a genuine interest in reforming manners that pleased well-to-do middle-class readers," as critic Robert Allen notes (x.). Steele "measured the evils of dueling, the inadequacies of education, the extravagances of dress, and the oppressiveness of current marriage conventions by standards that came not from court society but from common sense and Christian morality. Steele was unwilling to see good manners sacrificed to fine manners, and he was unashamed in his concern for the domestic, middle-class virtues" (Allen x.). From very general observations about societal roles to specific remarks and examples regarding certain common relationships, Steele's code in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* always prioritizes high standards of morality and virtue.

Steele often blames his society in his essays for its general admiration of wit, fashion, wealth, and beauty at the expense of virtue, honesty, kindness, and reason. In one

of his very first essays in *The Spectator* (no. 6, March 7, 1711), Steele comments on this condition:

> I know no Evil under the Sun so great as the Abuse of the Understanding, and yet there is no one Vice more common. It has diffus'd it self through both Sexes and all Qualities of Mankind; and there is hardly that Person to be found, who is not more concern'd for the Reputation of wit and Sense, than Honesty and Virtue. But this unhappy Affectation of being Wise rather than Honest, Witty than Good-natur'd, is the Source of most of the ill Habits of Life. (1:28)

Steele feels this waning respect for all that is honorable so keenly that in the very first issue of *The Tatler* (April 12, 1709), he even pronounces one as dead who has succumbed to such a state:

> In one Page of which it is asserted by the said *John Partridge*, That he is still living, and not only so, but that he was also living some Time before, and even at the instant when I writ of his Death. I have in another Place, and in a Paper by it self, sufficiently convinc'd this Man that he is dead, and if he has any Shame, I don't doubt but that by this Time he owns it to all his Acquaintance; For tho' the Legs and Arms, and whole Body of that Man still appear and perform their animal Functions; yet since, as I have elsewhere observ'd, his Art [manners] is gone, the Man is gone. . . . I shall, as I see Occasion, proceed to confute other dead Men, who pretend to be in Being, that they are actually deceased. I therefore give all Men fair Warning to mend their Manners, for I shall from Time to Time print Bills

> of Mortality; and I beg the Pardon of all such who shall be named therein, if they who are good for Nothing shall find themselves in the Number of the Deceased. (qtd. in Allen 7)

Although this humorous provocation originated with Jonathan Swift in *The Accomplishment of the First of Mr. Bickerstaff's Predictions* (1708) when Swift "facetiously announced" the death of the astrologer and almanac maker, John Partridge, Steele continues the attack in order to denounce such ill-mannered behavior and set the tone for the issues to come (Allen 7). In *Spectator* no. 6 (March 7, 1711), Steele continues to vent upon the same topic: "When Modesty ceases to be the Chief Ornament of one sex, and Integrity of the other, Society is upon a wrong Basis, and we shall be ever after without Rules to guide our Judgment in what is really becoming ornamental" (1:30). These are only a few examples of numerous references to the lack of virtue which Steele feels has overtaken the world in which he lives.

In *Spectator* no. 370 (May 5, 1712), Steele's admonishments even extend to particular societal roles which he feels have lost the integrity that their positions demand, signifying the spreading disease of dishonesty, like a plague:

> It is certain that if we look all round us, and behold the different Employments of Mankind, you hardly see one who is not, as the Player is, in an assumed Character. The Lawyer, who is vehement and loud in a Cause wherein he knows he has not the Truth of the Question on his Side, is a Player as to the personated Part [in his legal performance] . . . . The Divine, whose Passions transport him to say any thing with any View but promoting the Interests of true Piety and Religion, is a Player with a still

> greater Imputation of Guilt in Proportion to his depreciating a Character more sacred. Consider all the different Pursuits and Employments of Men, and you will find half their Actions tend to nothing else but Disguise and Imposture. (3:393)

Steele, fond of quoting from Archbishop Tillotson's Sermon "Of Sincerity Towards God and Man" (preached in 1694), does so in *Spectator* no. 103 (June 28, 1711) in order to further decry this vice of dishonesty:

> It is still a just Matter of Complaint, that Sincerity and Plainness are out of Fashion, and that our Language is running into a Lie; that Men have almost quite perverted the use of Speech, and made Words to signify nothing; that the greatest part of the Conversation of Mankind is little else but driving a Trade of Dissimulation; insomuch that it wou'd make a Man heartily sick and weary of the World, to see the little Sincerity that is in Use and Practice among Men. (1: 431).

Steele laments along with Tillotson, in *Spectator* no. 103, that "the old English Plainness and Sincerity, that generous Integrity of Nature, and honesty of Disposition, which always argues true Greatness of Mind, and is usually accompany'd with undaunted Courage and Resolution, is in a great measure lost amongst us" (1:430). Steele found this ever-widening suffusion of dishonesty and insincerity into the mainstream of his society to manifest itself in a less obvious but perhaps more insidious form than lying: that of affectation. In his essays, Steele clearly feels that attempting to be what one is not in order to win the admiration and approval of others is completely at odds with any true form of morality. He writes in *Spectator* no. 6:

> I do not doubt but England is at present as polite a Nation as any in the World; but any Man who thinks can easily see, that the Affectation of being in Fashion has very near eaten up our good Sense and our Religion. Is there anything so just, as that Mode and Gallantry should be built upon exerting our selves in what is proper and agreeable to the Institutions of Justice and Piety among us? And yet is there any thing more common, than that we run in perfect Contradiction to them? (1:30)

One of the arenas in which Steele notes the manifestation of this "Affectation of being in Fashion" is in the mourning customs of his day. He asserts the following in *Spectator* no. 64 (May 14, 1711):

> The Custom of representing the Grief we have for the Loss of the Dead by our Habits, certainly had its Rise from the real Sorrow of such as were too much distressed to take the proper Care they ought of their Dress. . . . In Process of Time this laudable Distinction of the Sorrowful was lost, and Mourning is now worn by Heirs and Widows. You see nothing but Magnificence and Solemnity in the Equipage of the Relict, and an Air of Release from Servitude in the Pomp of a Son who has lost a wealthy Father. (1:275)

Steele, observing this falsity of feeling exerted at most funerals, later comments in *Spectator* no. 95 (June 19, 1711) that "true Affliction labours to be invisible, that it is a Stranger to Ceremony, and that it bears in its own Nature a Dignity much above the little Circumstances, which are affected under the Notion of Decency" (1:404). Thus,

according to Steele's moral code, true virtue must ever be sincere and honest, even in its expression of grief or lack thereof.

Steele's code of sincerity and virtue extends further, and more importantly, into his standards for love and respect—respect in all manner of relationships, between parent and child, between friends, between the lover and the courted, between servants and masters, between merchants and society, and especially between spouses. Steele recommends sincerity in love early on in *Spectator* no. 4 (March 5, 1711) with a ferocity that demonstrates the depth of his feeling on the matter:

> By this Means Love, during the Time of my Speculations, shall be carried on with the same Sincerity as any other Affair of less Consideration. As this is the greatest Concern, Men shall be from henceforth liable to the greatest Reproach for Misbehaviour in it. Falshood in Love shall hereafter bear a blacker Aspect, than Infidelity in Friendship or Villany in Business. For this great and good End, all Breaches against that noble Passion, the Cement of Society, shall be severely examined. (1:22)

This sincerity in love depends on the behavior of any individual of either sex, as Steele asserts in *Spectator* no. 6 (March 7, 1711): "When Modesty ceases to be the Chief Ornament of one sex, and Integrity of the other, Society is upon a wrong Basis, and we shall be ever after without Rules to guide our Judgment in what is really becoming ornamental" (1:30). Behavior that is "ornamental" or praise-worthy can be passed from parent to child early on. Steele eloquently acknowledges the powerful relationship between parent and child: "The most indifferent thing has its Force and Beauty when it is spoke by a kind Father, and an insignificant Trifle has its Weight when offered by a

dutiful Child. I know not how to express it, but I think I may call it a transplanted Self-love" (2:255). However, Steele claims, parental love is often misguided in how it is expressed, which may lead to a daughter who is an empty-headed, vain coquette, and a son who is given to excess in gambling, wine, and women: "The general Mistake among us in the Educating of our Children, is, That in our Daughters we take Care of their Persons and neglect their Minds; in our Sons, we are so intent upon adorning their Minds, that we wholly neglect their Bodies" (1:282). Steele goes on to predict the results of such actions by parents as they relate to the daughter: "To make her an agreeable Person is the main Purpose of her Parents; to that is all their cost, to that all their Care directed; and from this general Folly of Parents we owe our present numerous Race of Coquets" (1:283). Of the disastrous consequence to the sons, Steele tells the following story in *Tatler* no. 25 (June 7, 1709):

> I learned this Caution by a Gentleman's consulting me formerly about his Son. He railed at his [the son's] damn'd Extravagance, and told me, In a very little Time, [his son] would beggar him by the exorbitant Bills which came from *Oxford* every Quarter. *Make the Rogue bite upon the Bridle*, said I, *pay none of his Bills, it will but encourage him to further Trespasses*. He look'd plaguy sowr at me. His Son soon after sent up a Paper of verses, forsooth, in Print, on the last Publick Occasion; upon which, he [the father] is convinced the Boy has Parts, and a Lad of Spirit is not to be too much cramp'd in his Maintenance, lest he take ill Courses. Neither Father nor Son can ever since endure the Sight of me. (qtd. in Allen 17)

Thus, parents, though sincere in their love, may be sincerely wrong in their expression of it to the hurt of their beloved children who in turn will not possess the foundation of virtue Steele so longed to see at the core of his society.

Steele often addresses the feminine or "fair" sex in his essays, and, repeatedly, his mantra remains the same: women should strive for inner virtue and reason as much as, if not more than, they strive for outward beauty. Steele writes: "As a pattern for improving their Charms, let the Sex study the agreeable *Statira*. Her Features are enlivened with the Chearfulness of her Mind, and good Humour gives an Alacrity to her Eyes. She is Graceful without affecting an Air, and Unconcerned without appearing Careless. Her having no manner of Art in her Mind, makes her want none in her Person" (1:176). *Spectator* no. 41 (April 17, 1711) is completely dedicated to addressing this issue of character before beauty through a quite humorous story. Steele prefaces the story by describing a certain type of female he calls a "Pict," which is name for a lady with a "borrowed complexion:" "A *Pict*, though she takes all that Pains to invite the Approach of Lovers, is obliged to keep them at a certain Distance; a Sigh in a Languishing Lover, if fetched too near her, would dissolve a Feature; and a Kiss snatched by a Forward one, might transfer the Complexion of the Mistress to the Admirer" (1:174-175). Steele then relates an adventure that Will Honeycomb, one of the fictitious members of the *Spectator* Club, had with a "Pict:"

> This Lady had Wit, as well as Beauty, at Will; and made it her Business to gain Hearts, for no other Reason, but to railly [mock] the Torments of her Lovers. She would make great Advances to insnare Men, but without any manner of Scruple break off when there was no Provocation. Her Ill-

> nature and Vanity made him very easily Proof against the Charms of her Wit and Conversation; but her beauteous Form, instead of being blemished by her Falsehood and Inconstancy, every Day increased upon him, and she had new Attractions every time he saw her. When she observed Will irrevocably her Slave, she began to use him as such, and after many steps toward such a Cruelty, she at last utterly banished him. (1:175)

Steele goes on to describe how Will bribed the "Pict's" maid to sneak him into her dressing room, where he "stood very conveniently to observe without being seen:"

> The Pict begins the Face she designed to wear that Day, and I have heard him protest she had worked a full half Hour before he knew her to be the same Woman. As soon as he saw the Dawn of that Complexion, for which he had so long languished, he thought fit to break from his Concealment...The Pict stood before him in the utmost Confusion, with the prettiest Smirk imaginable on the finish'd side of her Face, pale as Ashes on the other. Honeycomb seized all her Gally-pots and Washes. . . .
>
> The Lady went into the Country; the Lover was cured. (1:175-176)

(This description is most likely the precursor of Swift's infamous and graphic poem, "The Ladies [sic] Dressing Room" (1732), where Swift describes a suitor's horrifying discovery of his love's dressing room and his thorough examination of all her "equipment" he finds therein.) Steele often repeats the lesson of this tale in numerous essays. He writes in *Spectator* no. 33 (April 7, 1711):

> How much nobler is the Contemplation of Beauty heighten'd by Virtue, and commanding our Esteem and Love, while it draws our Observation? How faint and spiritless are the Charms of a Coquet, when compar'd with the real Loveliness of Innocence, Piety, good Humour and Truth; Virtues which add a new Softness to her Sex, and even beautify her Beauty! That Agreeableness, which must otherwise have appeared no longer in the modest Virgin, is now preserve'd in the tender Mother, the prudent Friend, and the faithful Wife. (1:140)

This praise of such a one circles back around to Steele's original concern for sincerity and virtue as foundational pillars of a healthy society. Steele pleads with the young women of his day to cultivate virtuous behavior in themselves and others around them—as vigorously as they seek outer beauty—for the good of the community as a whole.

However, Steele has much more to say to the men and holds them much more responsible for society's ills at large. The words of Sir Roger DeCoverly, one of Steele's fictitious Spectator Club members, give voice to this belief in *Spectator* no. 6 (March 7, 1711):

> For the Loss of publick and private Virtue, we are beholden to your Men of Parts forsooth; it is with them no matter what is done, so it is done with an Air. . . . I lay it down therefore for a Rule, That the whole Man is to move together; that every Action of any Importance is to have a Prospect of publick Good; and that the general Tendency of our indifferent Actions ought to be agreeable to the Dictates of Reason, of Religion, of good

> Breeding; without this, a Man, as I before have hinted is hopping instead of walking, he is not in his entire and proper Motion. (1:29)

To encourage the men of his day to "walk" instead of "hop," Steele uses numerous essays to promote and propagate his view of exactly what defines a true gentleman, including what a true gentleman is and is not and what he does and does not do. One particular passage in *Spectator* no. 49 (April 26, 1711) sums up many of the elements Steele considers essential to the character of a true gentleman:

> The Persons to whose Behaviour and Discourse I have most regard . . . of these sort of Men consist the worthier Part of Mankind; of these are all good Fathers, generous Brothers, sincere Friends, and faithful Subjects. Their Entertainments are derived rather from Reason than Imagination: Which is the Cause that there is no Impatience or Instability in their Speech or Action. You see in their Countenances they are at home, and in quiet Possession of the present Instant, as it passes, without desiring to Quicken it by gratifying any Passion, or prosecuting any new Design. These are the Men formed for Society, and those little Communities which we express by the Word *Neighbourhoods*. (1:210)

In other words, the true Gentleman, in Steele's mind, is good-natured, benevolent, sincere, and self-controlled; he endures quarrels and affliction, wealth and poverty, with an unshakeable equanimity. According to Steele, a man is good-natured that

> has that innate Goodness of Temper, that he is welcome to every Body, because every Man thinks he is so to him. He does not seem to contribute any thing to the Mirth of the Company; and yet upon Reflection you find it

> all happened by his being there. . . . It is certain, when a well corrected lively Imagination and good Breeding are added to a sweet Disposition, they qualify it to be one of the greatest Blessings, as well as Pleasures of Life. (1:421)

This virtue of having a "sweet disposition" then manifests itself in a true gentleman's generosity to those about him in need. Steele speaks emphatically to this virtue in *Spectator* no. 294 (February 6, 1712):

> If we mean by a Man of Condition or Quality one, who, according to the Wealth he is Master of, shews himself just, beneficent, and charitable, that Term ought very deservedly to be had in the highest Veneration; but when Wealth is used only as it is the Support of Pomp and Luxury, to be rich is very far from being a Recommendation to Honour and Respect. It is indeed the greatest Insolence imaginable, in a Creature who would feel the Extremes of Thirst and Hunger if he did not prevent his Appetites before they call upon him, to be so forgetful of the Common Necessity of humane Nature as never to cast an Eye upon the Poor and Needy. (3:47)

Just to be sure his point is clear, later in the same essay, Steele further exclaims that "it is monstrous how a Man can live with so little Reflection, as to fancy he is not in a Condition very unjust, and disproportioned to the rest of Mankind, while he enjoys Wealth, and exerts no Benevolence or Bounty to others" (3:48-49). Thus, Steele views unselfishness as an essential characteristic of a true gentleman.

Where there is self-denial, self-control may certainly be found, which is necessary to Steele's other requirement of a gentleman—a calm approach to an insult or quarrel.

Having been involved in the near disastrous consequences of a duel himself, Steele often takes the opportunity in his essays to demonstrate the evils of duels and to argue against of the custom of dueling. In *Tatler* no. 25 (June 7, 1709), where Steele first mentions this custom, he does not hesitate to disparage it immediately:

> A Letter from a young Lady wherein she laments the Misfortune of a Gentleman, her Lover, who was lately wounded in a Duel, has turned my Thoughts to that Subject, and enclined [sic] me to examine into the Causes which precipitate Men into so fatal a Folly. . . . no one Point in Nature is more proper to be consider'd by the Company who frequent this Place [White's], than that of Duels, it is worth our Consideration to examine into this Chimaerical groundless Humour, and to lay every other Thought aside, till we have strip'd it of all its false Pretences to Credit and Reputation amongst Men. (qtd. in Allen 14)

In a subsequent essay, *Spectator* no. 84 (June 6, 1711), Steele actually writes a small tale in order to paint a better picture of the evils of dueling. In this short story, Eucrate, a subject in the kingdom of a Prince named Pharamond, duels with a friend over some small matter and kills him. Grief-stricken, Eucrate comes before Prince Pharamond and makes the following appeal:

> Know then, that I have this Morning unfortunately killed in a Duel the Man whom of all Men living I most loved. I command my self too much in your Royal Presence, to say Pharamond give me my Friend! Pharamond has taken him from me! . . . Will the Father of his Country murder his People; but the merciful Pharamond does destroy his Subjects, the Father

> of his Country does murder his People . . . . all Glory and Honour is in the Power of a Prince, because he has the Distribution of their Fortunes. It is therefore the Inadvertency, Negligence or Guilt of Princes, to let any thing grow into Custom which is against their Laws. . . . But alas! In the Dominions of Pharamond, by the Force of a Tyrant Custom, which is misnamed a Point of Honour, the Duellist kills his Friend whom he loves; and the Judge condemns the Duellist, while he approves his Behaviour. Shame is the greatest of all Evils. (1:359-360)

Several essays later, in *Spectator* no. 97 (June 21, 1711), Steele's readers finally witness Pharamond's response to Eucrate, which is to issue the following edict against Duels:

> Whereas it has come to our Royal Notice and Observation, that in Contempt of all Laws, Divine and Human, it is of late become a Custom among the Nobility and Gentry of this our Kingdom, upon slight and trivial, as well as great and urgent Provocations, to invite each other into the Field, there by their own Hands, and of their own Authority, to decide their Controversies by Combat, we have thought fit to take the said Custom into our Royal Consideration, and find, upon Enquiry into the usual Causes whereon such fatal Decisions have arisen, that by this wicked Custom, maugre all the Precepts of our Holy Religion, and the Rules of Right Reason, the greatest Act of the Human Mind, Forgiveness of Injuries, is become vile and shameful; that the Rules of Good Society and Virtuous Conversation are hereby inverted; that the Loose, the Vain and the Impudent insult the Careful, the Discreet and the Modest; that all

> Virtue is suppressed, and all Vice supported, in the one Act of being capable to dare to the Death. We have also further, with great Sorrow of Mind, observed that this Dreadful Action, by long Impunity, is become Honourable, and the Refusal to engage in it Ignominious. . . . We do resolve to Blot this Fashion, or Wantonness of Anger, out of the Minds of our Subjects, by our Royal Resolutions declared in this Edict. (1:411-412)

The edict concludes with several new laws detailing what will happen from that day forward to anyone who either issues or accepts a challenge to duel, regardless of the outcome. A man who engages in a duel will face harsh consequences, including not being able to "bear office in these Dominions," losing his personal estate to the one who turned him in, and losing his life if he kills the other party in the duel (1:412). In the course of this story, Steele is able to point out several unreasonable and unjust aspects of dueling, not the least of which is subverting "the greatest Act of the Human Mind, Forgiveness of Injuries" (1:411) He also maintains that the responsibility lies with the lawmakers to put an end to this abhorrent custom once and for all. Steele's desire for true gentlemen, however, was for them to avoid a duel, whether currently legal or no, by maintaining self-control and using sound judgment and reasoning.

Steele's moral code for a true gentleman not only demands calm in the face of insult but also calm in the face of tribulation and affliction. In *Spectator* no. 75 (May 26, 1711), Steele writes:

> He that can work himself into a Pleasure in considering this Being [mortal body] as an uncertain one, and think to reap an Advantage by its Discontinuance, is in a fair way of doing all Things with a graceful

> Unconcern, and Gentleman-like Ease. Such a one does not behold his Life as a short, transient, perplexing State, made up of trifling Pleasures and great Anxieties, but sees it in quite another Light; his Griefs are Momentary, and his Joys Immortal. (1:325)

Much later, in *Spectator* no. 312 (February 27, 1712), Steele comments that "he therefore who turns his Face from the unhappy Man, who will not look again when his Eye is cast upon modest Sorrow, who shuns Affliction like a Contagion, does but pamper himself up for a Sacrifice, and contract in himself a greater Aptitude to misery by attempting to escape it" (3:129). Thus, Steele suggests calm in the face of affliction may be accomplished through preparing for affliction by being open to it, accepting trials as they come, and enduring them with an easy disposition.

Another requirement Steele finds necessary in order to produce a true gentleman is virtue in money management, not only benevolence, but also frugality—a characteristic that Steele himself admittedly could never seem to quite achieve. To encourage this quality in his male readers, Steele often referred to the model merchant, an honest one, as someone worth emulating. One recent critic, Charles Knight, in summing up the moral economy put forth in *The Spectator*, writes: "Good character without work makes one attractive but marginal to the social order. Work without personal goodness produces [one] for whom profit has replaced legitimate human values. Appearance without reality is a cheat, and status without achievement is ephemeral. In his proper integration of character, practice, and appearance, the trader is the moral hero of *The Spectator*" (174). Steele demonstrates this belief as early as an issue of *The Tatler*. In *Tatler* no. 25 (June 7, 1709), a man asks advice as to which of two merchants he should

place his son with as an apprentice. Steele chooses the better of the two as having "the Air of a Nobleman and a Merchant," Paulo. Steele describes his household thus: "You see the Servants act with Affection to their Master, and Satisfaction in themselves: The Master meets you with an open Countenance, full of Benevolence and Integrity: Your Business is dispatched with that Confidence and Welcome which always accompanies honest Minds: His table is the Image of Plenty and Generosity, supported by Justice and Frugality" (qtd. in Allen 18). Thus the honest and noble merchant becomes the model of stewardship and money management for the true gentleman.

In the aforementioned description of Paulo, the merchant, his remarkable relationship to his servants is also described; in Steele's moral code, this is one more ingredient, one final requirement of a true gentleman: a respectful, reciprocal relationship as master and servant. In *Spectator* no. 107 (July 3, 1711), Steele remarks that "a Man who preserves a Respect, founded on his Benevolence to his Dependents, lives rather like a Prince than a Master in his Family; his Orders are received as Favours, rather than Duties; and the Distinction of approaching him is Part of the Reward for executing what is commanded by him" (1:444). The only man with an ability to do this is one who is self-controlled and empathetic, as Steele explains in *Spectator* no. 137 (August 7, 1711): "There is something very unaccountable that People cannot put themselves in the Condition of the Persons below them, when they consider the Commands they give. . . . It would, perhaps, be running too far out of common Life to urge, that he who is not Master of himself, and his own Passions, cannot be proper Master of another. Equanimity in a Man's own Words and Actions, will easily diffuse it self through his whole Family"

(2:43). Thus, the true gentleman is first an excellent master of himself, then a respected and trusted master of his entire household.

This "equanimity" Steele speaks of is seemingly a rare jewel found among the men of his day; however, finding it in a marriage seems to have been an even greater difficulty. Steele makes his views on the sanctity of the marriage relationship abundantly clear in his essays—how it ought to be the most blessed bond that one could ever experience, but sadly is not. In *Spectator* no. 268 (January 7, 1712), Steele laments:

> Methinks it is a Misfortune, that the Marriage State, which in its own Nature is adapted to give us the compleatest Happiness this Life is capable of, should be so uncomfortable a one to so many as it daily proves. But the Mischief generally proceeds from the unwise Choice People make for themselves, and an Expectation of Happiness from things not capable of giving it. Nothing but the good Qualities of the Person beloved, can be a Foundation for a Love of Judgment and Discretion; and whoever expect Happiness from any thing but Virtue, Wisdom, Good-humour, and a Similitude of Manners, will find themselves widely mistaken. (2:545)

Steele continues on in the same vein, revealing what he feels is the root cause of this unfortunate state of affairs as it relates to marriage in his society:

> How rare is it for a Man, when he engages himself in the Thoughts of Marriage, to place his Hopes of having in such a Woman a constant, agreeable Companion? One who will divide his Cares and double his Joys? . . . . Where shall we find the Man who looks out for one who places her chief Happiness in the Practice of Virtue, and makes her Duty her

> continual Pleasure? No, Men rather seek for Money as the Complement of all their Desires; and regardless of what kind of Wives they take, they think Riches will be a Minister to all kind of Pleasures, and...[thus] indulge themselves in Pleasures which are a Shame and Scandal to humane Nature. Now as for the Women; How few of them are there who place the Happiness of their Marriage in the having a wise and virtuous Friend? One who will be faithful and just to all, and constant and loving to them? Who with Care and Diligence will look after and improve the Estate, and without grudging allow whatever is prudent and convenient? Rather, how few are there who do not place their Happiness in out-shining others in Pomp and Show? (2:545-546)

Here Steele faults the love of money and pleasure above virtue—faulty priorities in choosing a spouse—as the cause of most miserable marriages. He concludes by saying that in doing this, "both Sexes deceive themselves, and bring Reflections and Disgrace upon the most happy and most honourable State of Life; whereas if they would but correct their depraved Taste, moderate their Ambition, and place their Happiness upon proper Objects, we should not find Felicity in the Marriage State such a Wonder in the World as it now is" (2:546). Hence, Steele's advice to those in a miserable marriage is to change their source of happiness; those who are not yet married must change their focus and choose a spouse based on virtue and love rather than money.

Steele's moral code at its most basic was virtue, sincerity, and sound judgment in any given societal role: parent, child, lady, gentleman, spouse, merchant, servant, lawyer, and minister. Whatever station or position in life Steele's readers represented, his hope

was to lift them up to higher standards of moral virtue within themselves that would be made manifest in their outward behavior, thus improving the society in which they all lived. Steele's essays accomplished this to a greater degree than his earlier plays had; however, Steele still felt what he voiced in *Spectator* no. 65 (May 15, 1711): "The Seat of Wit, when one speaks as a Man of the Town and the World, is the Play-house....The Application of Wit in the Theatre has as strong an Effect upon the Manners of our Gentlemen, as the Taste of it has upon the Writings of our Authors" (1:278). As critic Michael Ketcham notes of these comments, "Thus while the stage is inherently a place of pretense and illusion, it is also a source of true sentiment felt equally in the actor and the audience, and therefore a model of true social community" (147). A careful examination of Steele's earlier plays will demonstrate that his code did not change through the years leading up to his essays. Steele still believed that he should and could eventually write a play that articulated and enacted this code in its entirety before the world while providing his audience with a memorable and entertaining experience that would stay with them longer than any essay ever would.

## Chapter Two: The Funeral

A significant amount of Steele's moral code and social commentary as later set forth in his essays is also found in his earliest play, The Funeral or Grief A-La-Mode; nevertheless, this play is unsuccessful at achieving a balance of complete moral instruction with pleasing entertainment. As Steele expert George Aitken notes, Steele "did not hesitate, in the fifty-first number of the *Spectator*, to himself condemn one passage as printed in the first edition of *The Funeral*, as an offence to delicacy and modesty" (1.74). In this particular *Spectator* issue (April 28, 1711), a female reader's letter is printed wherein she denounces a scene in The Funeral as inappropriate:

> I have, from a very careful Education, contracted a great Aversion to the forward Air and Fashion which is practiced in all Publick Places and Assemblies. I attribute this very much to the Stile and Manners of our Plays: I was last Night at the *Funeral*, where a Confident Lover in the Play, speaking of his Mistress, Cries out—*Oh that* Harriot! *To fold these Arms about the Waste [sic] of that Beauteous struggling, and at last yielding Fair!* Such an image as this ought, by no means to be presented to a Chaste and Regular Audience. I expect your Opinion of this Sentence, and recommend to your Consideration, as a SPECTATOR, the Conduct of the Stage at present, with Relation to Chastity and Modesty. (1:216)

Donald Bond, editor of an edition of *The Spectator*, notes that though an actual performance of the play had taken place on Thursday, April 26, 1711, and though the letter itself claims to be written on the April 27, the issue of *The Spectator* in which it is printed is dated April 28, which would had given Steele very little time "for the writing

of the essay, delivery to the printer, setting up in type, and delivery to readers by Saturday morning. One suspects the correspondent to be Steele himself" (1:216). Steele often uses fictitious letters in his essays to set up or set forth a topic for the day, and may do so in this particular issue as he goes on to agree with the sentiments in the letter and explain, though not justify, why such scenes too often appear:

> The Complaint of this Young Lady is so just, that the Offence is gross enough to have displeased Persons who cannot pretend to that Delicacy and Modesty, of which she is Mistress. But there is a great deal to be said in Behalf of an Author. . . . No one ever writ Bawdry for any other Reason but Dearth of Invention. When the Author cannot strike out of himself any more of that which he has superior to those who make up the Bulk of his Audience, his natural Recourse is to that which he has in common with them; and a Description which gratifies a sensual Appetite will please, when the Author has nothing about him to delight a refined Imagination. It is to such a Poverty we must impute this and all other Sentences in Plays, which are of this kind. (1:216)

Thus, with tongue partly in cheek, Steele not only condemns himself for such a lightly offensive comment in his play but effectively condemns all playwrights who write "Bawdry" as deficient in creativity and originality. Steele here also alludes to the fact that such scenes aim to please the audience, which was exactly what Steele was attempting to do when he wrote the play in 1701 and which he clearly accomplished, since the play was still being performed in 1711.

Portions of Steele's moral code are suffused throughout the characters and lines of The Funeral but are diluted by the lighthearted tone and comedic style of the play; many of the lines with moral instruction are spoken in jest or with jovial and witty sarcasm, with more of a wink than a tug at the conscience, heart, or mind. In the course of the play and in this lighthearted manner, Steele uses the various characters to comment on certain societal roles and behavior and to provide both poor and excellent models of servants and masters, ladies, gentlemen, spouses, sons, and fathers. These characters demonstrate that Steele's moral code in relation to such topics did not waver or shift over the years leading up to the time his essays were written.

In The Funeral, the characters of Sable, the undertaker, and Puzzle, the lawyer, adumbrate Steele's comments in *Spectator* no. 370 (May 5, 1712): "It is certain that if we look all round us, and behold the different Employments of Mankind, you hardly see one who is not, as the Player is, in an assumed Character. . . . Consider all the different Pursuits and Employments of Men, and you will find half their Actions tend to nothing else but Disguise and Imposture" (3:393). Sable is the undertaker hired to make the funeral arrangements for Lord Brumpton and has turned his undertaking business into quite the moneymaking scheme as he steals from corpses, works in conjunction with a doctor to ensure his "clientele" continues to grow, and coaches his hired mourners. In the very first scene, a gravedigger approaches Sable with this news: "I carried home to your house the shroud the gentleman was buried in last night. I could not get his ring off very easily, therefore I brought the finger and all" (15).[1] The sexton of the churchyard from which Sable steals is revealed to be part of the scheme when the gravedigger continues:

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[1] Quotations from Steele's four plays will only be referenced by page number as no modern edition of Steele's first three plays exists that includes line numbers.

"Sir, the sexton gives his service to you, and desires to know whether you'd have any bodies removed or not. If not, he'll let 'em lie in their graves a week longer" (15). Sable then responds, revealing his "deal" with the doctor as well: "I can't tell readily; but our friend, tell him, Dr. Passeport, with the powder, has promised me six or seven funerals this week" (15). Apparently Dr. Passeport and his lethal powder keep Sable in supply of clients for whom he can provide service and from whom he can steal baubles. In addition to recycling shrouds, moving bodies, stealing, and encouraging early deaths, Sable also provides an earlier form of Steele's criticism of the mourning custom mentioned in *Spectator* nos. 64 (May 14, 1711) and 95 (June 19, 1711):

> If he [a friend or relative] happens to be taken from you, you are immediately surrounded with Numbers of these Spectators, who expect a melancholy Shrug of your Shoulders, a Pathetical Shake of your Head, and an Expressive Distortion of your Face, to measure your Affections and Value for the Deceased: But there is nothing, on these Occasions, so much in their Favour as immoderate Weeping…they judge what Stock of Kindness you had for the Living, by the quantity of Tears you pour out for the Dead; so that if one Body wants that Quantity of Salt-water another abounds with, he is in great Danger of being thought insensible or ill-natured. (3:403)

For this reason, Sable vigorously sets about teaching his hired mourners how properly to enact this now insincere, vain, and meaningless custom:

> Well, come you that are to be mourners in this house, put on your sad looks, and walk by me that I may sort you. Ha, you! A little more upon the

> dismal; this fellow has a good mortal look—place him near the corpse. . . .I'll fix you all myself—Let's have no laughing now on any provocation (*makes faces*). Look yonder, that hale, well-looking puppy! You ungrateful scoundrel, did not I pity you, take you out of a great man's service, and show you the pleasure of receiving wages? Did not I give you ten, then fifteen, now twenty shillings a week, to be sorrowful? And the more I give you, I think, the gladder you are. (15)

This humorous monologue perfectly, but perhaps too satirically to produce any lasting moral impact, captures Steele's disdain for the lack of virtue and sincerity within societal positions.

Puzzle, in another stab at the morality of certain community roles, is the lawyer hired by Lady Brumpton to help her bring Lord Brumpton to the point of disinheriting his son and leaving his fortune to her. The lawyer is, of course, in the scheme for himself. Puzzle explains to his nephew Tom, who is apprenticed to Puzzle as his Clerk, the true art of being a lawyer:

> Know then, child, that the lord of this house. . . .entirely trusted me, and I made the only use a man of business can of a trust—I cheated him. For I, imperceptibly, before his face, made his whole estate liable to an hundred per annum for myself, for good services. . . . A true lawyer never makes any man's will but his own; and as the priest of old among us got near the dying man and gave all to the church, so now the lawyer gives all to the law. (22-23).

Thus, Puzzle once again demonstrates Steele's belief that the integrity of society at large is in great decline and can only be reversed by each individual embracing virtue over wealth, beauty, or applause.

Another topic in Steele's code of morals, that of servants and masters, is widely addressed in The Funeral through the relationships of Lord Brumpton to his servant, Trusty; Lord Hardy (Brumpton's falsely disinherited son) to his servant, Trim; and Lady Brumpton to her maid, Tattleaid. Both Trusty and Trim respect their masters and their masters' loved ones if those loved ones are deserving of affection. The reciprocal relationship between Lord Hardy and Trim offers a precedent for Steele's words in *Spectator* no. 137 (August 7, 1711):

> There is something very unaccountable that People cannot put themselves in the Condition of the Persons below them, when they consider the Commands they give. . . . It would, perhaps, be running too far out of common Life to urge, that he who is not Master of himself, and his own Passions, cannot be proper Master of another. Equanimity in a Man's own Words and Actions, will easily diffuse it self through his whole Family. (2:43)

Lord Hardy is very respectful of his servant, Trim, as a person, not just as a servant, which results in Trim's eager assistance in the plot to help Lady Harriot and Lady Sharlot escape from the clutches of Lady Brumpton. Trim is a very humorous and good-natured servant who, because of Lord Hardy's good temper, is unafraid to ask a favor from his master, even in the midst of offering a service to him. Trim's lover is a French seamstress

whom he offers to bring in to assist with the plot, but before he does, he asks the following favor of his master:

> But, 'faith, I have one scruple that hangs about me; and that is, look you, my lord, we servants have no masters in their absence. In a word, when I am with mademoiselle I talk of your lordship as only a particular acquaintance; that I do business indeed for you sometimes. I must needs say, cries I, that indeed my Lord Hardy is really a person I have a great honour for. (49)

Trim has not let on to his mistress that he is Lord Hardy's servant, but rather an acquaintance who works with him and would not want to appear unworthy or a liar in his mistress's eyes; thus in his roundabout way, Trim is asking for Lord Hardy to allow him to keep up this façade for the sake of his love. Lord Hardy obliges, willingly putting himself in the "Condition of the Persons below" him rather than trying to preserve his own status, as Steele suggests makes the ideal master.

Trusty, Lord Brumpton's servant, is the model servant who, as Steele suggests in *Spectator* no. 294 (February 6, 1712), "considers his Master as his Father, his Friend, and Benefactor upon the easy Terms, and in Expectation of no other Return but moderate Wages and gentle Usage" (3:49). The first words Trusty speaks are as follows: "'Twas fondness, sir, and tender duty to you, who have been so worthy and so just a master to me, made me stay near you" (17), and due to his nearness to Lord Brumpton's "corpse," Trusty was the only one there to witness his revival and thus devised the plan to reveal his lord's "widow's" true character by secret observance of her conversations. The source of this devotion is later further revealed when Trusty recalls the circumstances under

which he was hired: "After my poor father's death the good lord took me, because he was a captain in his regiment, and gave me education" (66). He reveals an unrestrained love and devotion to his master's son, Lord Hardy, as well, mentioning that he was 23 years old when Lord Hardy was born and christened. Trusty confesses: "I think 'tis now eight years since I saw him—he was not then nineteen—when I followed him to the gate and gave him fifty guineas, which I pretended his father sent after him" (66). Lord Hardy also separately recalls this incident: "I remember, indeed, when I was turned out of the house he followed me to the gate and wept over me, for which I've heard he'd like to have lost his place" (65). So dedicated is this servant to his master's family, that he even remembers Lord Hardy in his own will since Hardy has been unfairly disinherited: "I've often carried you in these arms that grasp you; they were stronger then, but if I die to-morrow, you're worth five thousand pounds by my gift—'tis what I've got in the family, and I return it to you with thanks" (67). Such is the devotion Lord Brumpton inspired in his servant, Trusty, by taking him in and treating him well in his time of need. These characters represent Steele's sentiments regarding both servants and masters as found in his essays, particularly *Spectator* no. 294 (February 6, 1712):

> A good Man might have a Knowledge of the whole Life of the Persons he designs to take into his House for his own Service, or that of his Family or Children, long before they were admitted. This would create endearing Dependencies; and the Obligation would have a paternal Air in the Master, who would be relieved from much Care and Anxiety from the Gratitude and Diligence of an humble Friend attending him as his Servant. (3:49)

In Steele's moral code, servants and masters may be close friends and still maintain their places when virtue and kindness on the part of the master creates an example for his servants to follow.

On the other hand, the wicked Lady Brumpton and her untrustworthy maid, Tattleaid, exemplify Steele's comment in *Spectator* no. 107 (July 3, 1711) that "the general Corruption of Manners in Servants is owing to the Conduct of Masters," or mistresses in this case (1:443). The first indication of this unhealthy relationship comes from Sable as he encourages Mr. Cabinet (who is actually already secretly married to the woman) to court her now that she has been widowed: "You'll best read your fate in the reception Mrs. Tattleaid gives you. All she says, and all she does, nay her very love and hatred, are mere repetition of her ladyship's passions. I'll say that for her, she's a true lady's woman, and is herself as much a second-hand thing as her clothes (14). This observation turns out to be much more astute than even Sable realizes, as Lady Brumpton praises Tattleaid to her face—"thou has ever been my comfort, my confidant, my friend and my servant; and now I'll reward thy pains" (18)—and scorns her behind her back: "How miserable it is to have one [that] one hates always about one, and when one can't endure one's own reflection upon some actions, who can bear the thoughts of another upon 'em? But she has me by deep secrets" (21). Lady Brumpton goes on to reveal the source of her hatred for Tattleaid: "This wench I know has played me false and horned me in my gallants. O Italy, I could resign all my female English liberty to thee, for thy much dearer female pleasure, revenge!" (21). Thus, like her mistress, Tattleaid is cunning and accomplished at being two-faced since she has apparently seduced some of her

mistress's previous lovers. Both women are not to be trusted in business, friendship, or love: each a mirror image of the other's corrupt virtue.

The Funeral is nevertheless rife with feminine exemplars—virtuous, reformed, and flawed examples, as well as the two aforementioned evil examples, which are not to be imitated at all. In the play, Lady Sharlot (Lord Hardy's love and one of his father's wards) is Steele's example of a good female role model, and Lady Harriot (Mr. Campley's love and the other ward of Lord Brumpton) is Steele's model for those young ladies who see the error of their ways. The "ladies" that come to call on the "widowed" Lady Brumpton are Steele's examples of serious flaws in the females of his society, and of course, Lady Brumpton herself embodies Steele's idea of all that woman should not be, yet he also uses her character to comment on and satirize several societal issues of concern to Steele as later voiced in his essays. Each of these women, through lighthearted, comedic exchanges, filter Steele's moral code through her character in an entertaining way, perhaps too entertaining for Steele's didacticism fully to emerge.

Lord Hardy describes Lady Sharlot before she is even seen by the audience, and the picture he paints of her can only clearly prove her to be representative of Steele's moral code, a lady of sense and sincerity and a role model to emulate. Lord Hardy exclaims to his friend, Mr. Campley, "But my Lady Sharlot, there's a woman—so easily virtuous! So agreeably severe! Her motion so unaffected, yet so composed! Her lips breathe nothing but truth, good sense, and flowing wit" (30). The first time the audience actually sees Lady Sharlot, she is described in the stage directions as reading at a table (37), thereby fulfilling Steele's mandate that a true lady will seek to educate her mind as much as she seeks to beautify her body. In her first scene, she makes several comments

that also contribute to the portrayal of Steele's code. First, in response to Lady Harriot's teasing and hinting at Lady Sharlot's feelings for Lord Hardy, Lady Sharlot remarks, "'Tis more excusable to admire another than one's self," making a reference to Lady Harriot, who is looking in the mirror when these lines are spoken (37). When Harriot asks her, "Are you not struck with secret pleasure, when you view that bloom in your looks, that harmony in your shape, that promptitude of your mien?" Sharlot responds, "Well, simpleton, if I am at first so silly, as to be a little taken with myself, I know it a fault and take pains to correct it" (38). Sharlot also comments that Lady Harriot would do well to understand her own faults, for "they that think it too soon to understand themselves, will very soon find it too late" (38). When Sharlot confronts Lady Brumpton with a brief flash of anger, Lady Brumpton asks her, "Is this the effect of your morning lectures, your self-examination, all this fury?" Sharlot responds with wisdom: "Yes it is, madam; if I take pains to govern my passions, it shall not give licence to others to govern them for me" (47). Thus, Lady Sharlot strikes the proper balance between self-control and self-expression as a feminine exemplar of Steele's code.

The final aspect that makes Sharlot a model young woman is her behavior in courtship. She chooses to favor a man for the right reasons, according to Steele's code, as shown in her exclamations as she is reunited with Lord Hardy at the end of the play: "How sweet applause is from an honest tongue! Thou lov'st my mind—hast well affection placed; In what, nor time, nor age, nor care nor want can alter" (87). She admires Lord Hardy for his honesty and his adoration for her mind as well as her body. Lady Sharlot also has avoided using flirtation to win Lord Hardy, making her fit for all young women to emulate: "Pure, I approach thee; nor did I with empty shows, gorgeous

attire, or studied negligence, or song, or dance, or ball, allure thy soul; nor want. Or fear, such arts to keep or lose it" (87). Lady Sharlot is not taken with her own beauty, though she is beautiful; she seeks to educate her mind, she corrects her faults, she has her passions under control, she chooses her lover based on virtue, and she avoids flirtation as a method to win or keep him. Lady Sharlot is Steele's moral code for women personified.

On the other hand, if a young woman in Steele's audience is looking for a more realistic, less perfect person to imitate, Lady Harriot's character provides a picture of a slight coquette who reforms her ways. In contrast to Lord Hardy's initial description of Lady Sharlot, Mr. Campley describes Lady Harriot thus: "Lady Harriot! There's the woman; such life, such spirit, such warmth in her eyes; such lively commanding air in her glances; so spritely a mien, that carries in it the triumph of conscious beauty; her lips are made of gum and balm. . ." (30). Clearly, Lady Harriot has been flirtatious enough with Mr. Campley for him to observe that she is aware of her own beauty and uses it to her advantage, even to the point of enhancing it with cosmetics. When the audience actually meets Lady Harriot for the first time, she is described in the stage directions as "playing at a glass to and fro, and viewing herself. . .looking at herself as she speaks" (37). In response to Lady Sharlot's comment about admiring others as better than admiring one's self, Lady Harriot admits, "No, sister, I don't admire myself, but I've a spirit of contradiction in me; I don't know I'm in love myself, only to rival the men" (37). She admits she loves herself only as much as she is in competition with men for herself. Lady Harriot even acknowledges that she enjoys playing hard to get and breaking hearts: "I shan't be so easily catched—I want but to be sure I should heartily torment him, by banishing him, and then consider whether he should depart this life or not. . . .The fellow

is not to be abhorred, if the forward thing did not think of getting me so easily. Oh! I hate a heart I can't break when I please" (38).

However, as time passes and Mr. Campley begins to win her over, Lady Harriot reforms with his help. He confronts her thus: "And I do design, before I leave this room, to hear you talk like a reasonable woman, as nature has made you. Nay, 'tis in vain to flounce, and discompose yourself and your dress" (41). Campley even goes so far as to point out flaws in her character:

> Do but consider, madam, I have long loved you, bore with your fantastic humour through all its mazes. Nay, do not frown, for 'tis no better. I say I have bore with this humour, but would you have me with an unmanly servitude feed it? No, I love you with too sincere, too honest a devotion, and would have your mind as faultless as your person, which 'twould be, if you'd lay aside this vanity of being pursued with sighs, with flatteries, with nonsense. (42)

Here begins Lady Harriot's reformation as she responds to this speech in an aside: "That is indeed very handsomely said. Why should I not obey reason as soon as I see it?" (42). She then goes on to tell Mr. Campley, "I can as ingenuously as I should then, acknowledge that I have been in an error" (43). As the couple goes to fetch her sister, Lady Harriot comments that Lady Sharlot will laugh to see her thus finally conquered by Mr. Campley, but Campley encourages her: "You may boast yourself an heroine to her, and the first woman that was ever vanquished by hearing truth, and had sincerity enough to receive so rough an obligation as being made acquainted with her faults" (43). Hence, Lady Harriot becomes Steele's example of a reformed coquette.

Other feminine examples in The Funeral are those questionable females who come to visit Lady Brumpton when she is in "mourning." These "ladies" are not inherently wicked as is Lady Brumpton, but they each represent flaws that Steele feels truly virtuous women would not have or would work to eradicate. Ironically, it is Lady Brumpton herself who comments upon all of them:

> Lady Riggle, Lady Formal—Oh! That Riggle, a pert ogler, an indiscreet silly thing, who is really known by no man, yet for her carriage, justly thought common to all; and as [Lady] Formal has only the appearance of virtue, so she has only the appearance of vice. . .Lady Wrinkle—oh, that smug old woman! There's no enduring her affectation of youth, but I plague her; I always ask whether her daughter in Wiltshire has a grandchild yet or not. Lady Worthy—I can't bear her company, she has so much of that virtue in her heart which I have in my mouth only. . .I've now an exquisite pleasure in the thought of surpassing my Lady Sly, who pretends to have out-grieved the whole town for her husband. (53-54)

Steele's sense that the ideal lady of virtue must not appear to be wanton even if she is chaste, must not appear to be something she is not, must be free of affectation, must not be overbearing in her virtue, and must be sincere in her emotions, comes across in this humorous description. These aforementioned women then proceed to launch a discussion rife with gossip about town jilts and flirts, about folks who claim to be genteel but in fact are not, and about how mourning clothes bring out one's beauty (56-57). The flaws of these "ladies" are quite noticeable and satirized as qualities not to be emulated as they are very much against Steele's moral code, which demands virtue, sincerity, and kindness.

Last but certainly not least among the female characters used in The Funeral to reflect the appropriate and inappropriate behavior in Steele's code is Lady Brumpton herself, reflecting the inappropriate far more than the appropriate. The one quality with which Lady Brumpton is endowed that is similar to Steele's true lady of virtue is a quick wit—a wise mind. However, she uses this treasure with intentions, motives, and goals far less virtuous than those Steele envisions for a good role model. Apart from the aforementioned various lovers she unwillingly shared with her maid, as well as her two-faced behavior toward her, Lady Brumpton has many other transgressions to her credit throughout the play, all of which stem from deception and a lust for wealth and attention. By the end of the play, the audience knows Lady Brumpton has deceived Lord Brumpton into believing she loves him, has convinced him to disinherit his deserving son, has plotted to compromise his ward's reputation so she can steal her inheritance as well, and has done all of this under the guise of his spouse when she was actually already married to another man.

Lady Brumpton speaks of her method of deceiving Lord Brumpton when she tells Tattleaid how women rule men by their affections, pointing out how her "good, dear, deceased" used to entertain her with his business adventures: "Which I, to relieve myself from, would lisp some silly request, pat him on the face—He shakes his head at my pretty folly, calls me simpleton, gives me a jewel, then goes to bed so wise, so satisfied, and so deceived!" (19). That this deception worked all too well is noted by Trusty when Lord Brumpton asks him why he never revealed Lady Brumpton's deception to his master: "Because you were too much in love with her to be informed; nor did I ever know a man that touched on conjugal affairs could ever reconcile the jarring humours but in a

common hatred of the intermeddler" (17). Trusty has recognized that his master would not be receptive to anyone speaking against his wife, deceived as he was, because he loved her. Lady Brumpton also reveals how she persuaded Lord Brumpton to disinherit his son when Tattleaid asks her:

> Why, Tatty, you must know my late lord—how prettily that sounds, my late lord! But I say, my late Lord Frible was generosity—I pressed him there, and whenever you, by my order, had told him stories to my son-in-law's disadvantage, in his rage and resentment I (whose interest lay otherwise) always fell on my knees to implore his pardon, and with tears, sighs, and importunities for him, prevailed against him. (19-10)

Using her feminine wiles to turn a man against his son would certainly remove any woman from eligibility as a positive representation of Steele's code of morals. Later on in the play, Trusty confiscates the letter meant for Mr. Cabinet (whom Lady Brumpton pretends is her brother), which reveals the plot to compromise Lady Sharlot so she cannot inherit her share of Lord Brumpton's estate. The letter reads:

> You must watch the occasion of the servants being gone out of the house with the corpse; Tattleaid shall conduct you to my Lady Sharlot's apartment—away with her—and be sure you bed her—
>
> Your affectionate Sister,
>
> Mary Brumpton. (75)

Trusty is also the one who reveals to Lord Brumpton the one way to reinstate his son's inheritance, which in turn discloses the worst blight on Lady Brumpton's character of all. Trusty tells Lord Brumpton how Mr. Cabinet, thinking he saw Lord Brumpton's ghost,

wrote him a letter "wherein he acknowledges a private marriage with [Lady Brumpton], half a year before you ever saw her" (90). Ironically, in spite of all these atrocious marks against her character, Lady Brumpton is the one who speaks to Steele's moral code in regard to marriage, sounding very much like one of his *Spectator* comments:

> He that is so mean as to marry a woman after an affair with her, will be so base as to upbraid that very weakness. He that marries his wench will use her like his wench. –Such a pair must sure live in a secret mutual scorn of each other; and wedlock is hell if at least one side does not love, as it would be Heaven if both did; and I believe it so much Heaven, as to think it was never enjoyed in this world. (21)

Clearly, Lady Brumpton knows whereof she speaks. Steele's remarks in *Spectator* no. 479 (September 9, 1712) are very similar to these of Lady Brumpton's:

> I must say therefore that I am verily perswaded, that whatever is delightful in humane Life, is to be enjoyed in greater Perfection in the marry'd, than in the single Condition...There is something in it that doubles Satisfactions, because others participate them; and dispels Afflictions, because others are exempt from them. All who are married without this Relish of their Circumstance, are either in a tasteless Indolence and Negligence, which is hardly to be attain'd, or else live in the hourly Repetition of sharp Answers, eager Upbraidings, and distracting Reproaches. In a word, the married State, with and without the Affection suitable to it, is the compleatest Image of Heaven and Hell we are capable of receiving in this Life. (4:200)

Steele's essays hold a very high standard for the ideal marriage, requiring the virtue and sincerity of the two individuals who make up that marriage; thus, he wrote his code not only into the female characters of his plays, but also into the males.

The male characters in The Funeral somewhat parallel the female characters in that they provide a range of models from virtuous to reformed, to flawed, to hopeless. Lord Hardy (Lord Brumpton's son and Lady Sharlot's suitor) is Steele's model for a true gentleman while Mr. Campley (Hardy's friend and Lady Harriot's suitor) portrays a slight rake who reforms his thinking. Lord Brumpton embodies a flawed gentleman, who actually sees the error of his ways as well, and Mr. Cabinet, of course, is Steele's male model who is not to be imitated at all.

Lord Hardy, as Steele's main reference for all that is gentlemanly within this play, displays several aspects of the moral code, in addition to being the aforementioned good master to his servant, Trim. The first time he appears before the audience, though it has been revealed that he has been disinherited for quite some time, he is debating what to do about his present poverty with the calmness of a true gentleman. His comments on tranquility in the midst of affliction come very close to some of Steele's in his later essays: "To expect an evil softens the weight of it when it happens, and pain no more than pleasure is in reality so great as in expectation" (27). In *Spectator* no. 312 (February 27, 1712), Steele makes similar observations: "Whenever Men have looked into their Heart for the idea of true Excellency in humane Nature, they have found it to consist in suffering after a right Manner and with a good Grace. . . It is certainly the proper Education we should give our selves, to be prepared for the ill Events and Accidents we are to meet with in a Life sentenced to be a Scene of Sorrow" (3:129). Even Hardy's

friend, Campley acknowledges this quality in his friend: "You are, my lord, the extraordinary man, who, on the loss of an almost princely fortune, can be master of a temper that makes you the envy, rather than pity, of your more fortunate, not more happy friends" (29). Lord Hardy is exemplary in the way he faces tribulation and poverty, vowing not to languish in self-pity, but rather to earn his way and pay his debts: "Shall I live at home a stiff, melancholy, poor man of quality, grow uneasy to my acquaintance as well as myself, by fancying I'm slighted where I am not. . . . No! We've a brave prince on the throne, whose commission I bear, and a glorious war in an honest cause approaching, in which this shall cut bread for me, and may perhaps equal that estate to which my birth entitled me" (27). Although he is yet unsure of any immediate income, Lord Hardy orders Trim to go to Mr. Cutpurse, and tell him "I'm resolved to pay my debts forthwith" (29). As soon as money makes its way into Lord Hardy's hands, even though it is not a large amount, Hardy immediately uses it to pay his debts. He commands Trim: "Be sure you take four score pounds, and pay my debts immediately," and he reminds Trim to "learn moderation" when Trim wants to spend it all at once (35). Even at the end of the play when Hardy has suddenly received everything he thought was lost, he still prays for moderation in his new found happiness: "A son, an heir, a bridegroom in one hour! Oh! Grant me, Heaven, grant me moderation!" (89). A true gentleman to the core, Lord Hardy is patient in affliction, unwilling to be lazy, pays his debts, and lives modestly even when blessed with wealth.

In addition to these genteel qualities, Lord Hardy is also a role model for Steele's code in his relationships with his father, his friend, and other women. He remains loyal to his father throughout this ordeal, recognizing that his father was misled. Upon hearing his

son make this declaration to Lady Brumpton at the end of the play—"Insolent woman! It was not me my good father disinherited; 'twas him you represented. The guilt was thine; he did an act of justice"—Lord Brumpton enters, exclaiming, "Oh unparalleled goodness!" (89). He embraces his son, knowing that he has been forgiven. In Lord Hardy's relationship with Mr. Campley, he rejoices in Campley's good fortune, rather than becoming envious of Campley's newly acquired fortune and newly acquired fiancé, when he states, "I forget my own misfortunes, dear Campley, when I reflect on your success" (63). In *Spectator* no. 19 (March 22, 1711), Steele observes that "the Envious Man is in Pain upon all Occasions which ought to give him Pleasure. . .The Condition of the Envious Man is the most Emphatically miserable; he is not only incapable of rejoicing in another's Merit or Success, but lives in a World wherein all Mankind are in a Plot against his Quiet, by studying their own Happiness and Advantage" (1:83). This horrible condition here described is certainly one that Lord Hardy has ably managed to avoid, despite his unfortunate circumstances at this particular point in the play.

Lord Hardy's final quality that recommends him as a gentleman of the highest order is his taste in and treatment of women. Several instances demonstrate how Lord Hardy views women in a manner concordant with Steele's code of morality. As Campley is dreaming aloud of Harriot's many pleasing physical attributes, Lord Hardy replies, "Methinks your head runs too much on the wedding night only, to make your happiness lasting; mine is fixed on the married state. I expect my felicity from Lady Sharlot, in her friendship, her constancy, her piety, her household cares, her maternal tenderness" (30-31). When during his visit to her, Lady Sharlot recalls his mentioning seeing a lady in Italy that reminded him of her and inquires as to whether he visited her often, Lord Hardy

responds, "Once or twice, but I observed her so loose a creature, that I could have killed her for having your person" (45). Lord Hardy's respect for a woman of virtue and his disgust at wanton female behavior shows him to be a man of honor and one worthy of representing Steele's moral code.

Mr. Campley, like Lady Harriot, is much more of a flirt and a slight rake where Lord Hardy is not; however, Campley retains some gentlemanly characteristics as well. Campley at first thinks of and admires Lady Harriot only for her beauty and fiery spirit: "Such life, such spirit, such warmth in her eyes; such a lively commanding air in her glances; so spritely a mien, that carries in it the triumph of conscious beauty. . .There's something in that dear girl that fires my blood. . .O that Harriot! To embrace that beauteous. . ." (30) Here Campley is interrupted by Lord Hardy telling him he thinks too much on the wedding night. Lord Hardy notes, "You think not of any excellence of your mistress that is more than skin-deep" (31). Campley acknowledges this and admits that he enjoys flirting with Harriot and making her laugh (31); however, the more he listens to Lord Hardy, the more he resolves not to let Harriot play her games anymore: "I, that know her better than she does herself, know she'd insult me, and lead me a two years' dance longer, and perhaps in the end turn me into the herd of the many neglected men of better sense, who have been ridiculous for her sake. But I shall make her no such sacrifice" (32). When he next sees Harriot, he confronts her after a flirtatious chase around the room, asking her to mend her ways and "lay aside this vanity of being pursued with sighs, with flatteries, with nonsense" (42). As he is thus berating her, he acknowledges how hard it is for him to do so: "Oh! My heart aches at the disturbance which I give her, but she must not see it. [Aside] Had I not better tell you of it now, than

when you are in my power? I should be then too generous to thwart your inclination" (42). Campley recognizes that it would be more prudent to point out her flaws now before he loses the courage and before she is fully his and he is completely lost in his love for her. He knows his generous nature, which is another of his gentlemanly qualities that filters Steele's moral code. (Campley, knowing Lord Hardy's dire financial situation, leaves a three hundred pound note for his friend discreetly in a supposed paper containing some written verses and asks Hardy not to open it until he, Campley, has gone [32-33]). Campley holds his generosity in check when dealing with Lady Harriot in order to rescue her from her own coquettish inclinations.

Lord Brumpton is a significantly flawed figure in The Funeral; it takes most of the play for him to see and accept his faults. However, he too, carries a few qualities of Steele's ideal gentleman. As previously mentioned, Lord Brumpton has been a kind master to his servant, Trusty, taking him in when Trusty's father died (66). However, this sort of open-hearted kindness also becomes Lord Brumpton's downfall as other characters begin to reveal how gullible and easily misled the old man can be. The first one to point this out (aside from Trusty who devises the plan for his master to remain "dead" and observe the schemes of his wife) is Puzzle, the lawyer, who confesses to having made use of the old man's naiveté: "The lord of this house was one of your men of honour and sense who lose the latter in the former, and are apt to take all men to be like themselves. Now this gentleman entirely trusted me, and I made the only use a man of business can of a trust—I cheated him" (22). Lord Brumpton's main character flaw is that he lacks one of Steele's main qualifications for a true gentleman—sound judgment and reason. Lord Brumpton recognizes this in himself and appoints Trusty to the task of

helping him conquer it: "Then since you see my weakness, be a friend, and arm me with all your care and all your reason" (26). As Trusty sets about proving to his master that his wife has deceived him and is a truly wicked woman, he finds it a difficult task to overcome Lord Brumpton's strong emotional attachment to her in view of his lack of discernment. After having proved that Lady Brumpton had no love for her husband and had tricked him into disinheriting his son, Trusty laments:

> My poor old lord is so strangely, so bewitchedly enamoured of her, that even after this discovery of her wickedness, I see he could be reconciled to her, and though he is ashamed to confess to me, I know he longs to speak with her. . .there's no middle-way, I must expose her to make a reunion impracticable. Alas, how is honest truth banished the world, when we must watch the seasons and soft avenues to men's hearts, to gain it entrance even for their own good and interest! (62-63)

Finally, after seeing the letter Lady Brumpton has written to her "brother" devising the plan for Mr. Cabinet to come in, steal Lady Sharlot away, and compromise her virtue, Lord Brumpton is finally convinced of her wickedness. He tells Trusty:

> I tell you, since you cannot be convinced but that I have still a softness for her—I say though I had so, it should never make me transgress that scrupulous honour that becomes a peer of England. If I could forget injuries done myself thus gross, I never will those done my friends. You knew Sharlot's worthy father—No, there's no need of my seeing more of this woman. I behold her now with the same eyes that you do; there's a

> meanness in all she says or does; she has a great wit but a little mind. (76-77)

Ever too kind-hearted for his own good, Lord Brumpton, even after his wife's plotting is exposed before all and he is reconciled with his son and wards, still wants to deal with his wife in an honest manner. When Trusty tries to tell him there is a way out of the document he signed, leaving her his estate, Lord Brumpton replies, "I would indeed disengage myself by any honest means, but alas, I know no prior gift that avoids this to her" (90). Thus, Trusty reveals Lady Brumpton's real marriage to Cabinet, yet even as the evil woman rants at her true husband, telling him he'll have to share in her poverty as he has ruined their chance of stealing the estate, Lord Brumpton still cannot completely rid himself of his feelings for her. He tells the others, "I cannot hate that woman; nor shall she ever want. Though I scorn to bear her injuries, yet had I ne'er been roused from that low passion to a worthless creature, but by disdain of her attempt on my friend's child" (91). Lord Brumpton admits that this one wicked action of hers finally caused him to see who she really is; however, he cannot bring himself completely to loathe her and plans to see that she is provided for in spite of everything—most likely another error in good judgment, as providing funds for her may enable her to find ways to cheat and deceive others! However, Lord Brumpton does seem to have learned his lesson enough to share it with the other gentlemen present as the final act closes: "Now gentlemen, let the miseries which I have but miraculously escaped, admonish you to have always inclinations proper for the stage of life you're in. Don't follow love when nature seeks but ease; otherwise you'll fall into a lethargy of your dishonour" (94). Thus, Lord

Brumpton finally acknowledges that lack of good judgment led him to pursue love with a younger woman in his old age, which led to his downfall.

The male model in The Funeral of how *not* to behave, according to Steele's code, is Mr. Cabinet. As Lady Brumpton is the example of wit and a good mind gone bad, so Mr. Cabinet is the example of a gentleman gone bad—he has become a coward. Mr. Cabinet reveals what led him to such a place when he is confronted by Trusty, to whom he has written about the secret of his marriage to Lady Brumpton. Mr. Cabinet pleads thus:

> I hope, sir, you'll believe it was not in my nature to be guilty of so much baseness, but being born a gentleman, and bred out of all roads of industry in that idle manner to many are, I soon spent a small patrimony; and being debauched by luxury, I fell into the narrow mind to dread no infamy like poverty, which made me guilty, as that paper tells you; and had I not writ to you, I am sure I never could have told you of it. (77)

The whole downward spiral that Mr. Cabinet here describes is one Steele repeatedly warns of in the essays of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Mr. Cabinet proves Steele's words in *Spectator* no. 137 (August 7, 1711)—"He who is not Master of himself, and his own Passions, cannot be proper Master of another [even of a wife]" (2:43). Since Cabinet had not been able to control himself, he sank to a new low—that of literally allowing his wife of less than a year to be with another man as his wife in hopes of gaining money. Lady Brumpton flings her disdain in his face as this truth is exposed: "Thou that coulds't tell me, good and ill were words, When though could'st basely let me to another. . .Thou voluntary cuckold:" (90-91). Not only does this particularly low crime

bespeak cowardice, but Cabinet also confesses solely out of fear and guilt, as Trusty relates to Lord Brumpton: "As he was prying about, he peeped into your closet, where he saw your lordship reading. Struck with horror, and believing himself (as well he might) the disturber of your ghost for alienation of your fortune from your family, he writ me this letter, wherein he acknowledges a private marriage with this lady, half a year before you ever saw her" (90). Thus Cabinet was not truly remorseful or repentant of his behavior but merely frightened into the truth, claiming to be a victim of his circumstance—a true coward and the opposite of all Steele finds virtuous and manly.

Therefore, Steele succeeded in writing an entertaining play where vice was unattractive and virtue appealing, unlike much of the previous comedies of his time; however, although The Funeral is full of characters who represent both excellent and poor examples of Steele's moral code, the light-hearted, comedic tone with which all these examples were written and thereby must have been performed made the play a less memorable, low impact venue for moral instruction. A comparable analogy to the present might be a televised, well-written situational comedy with a moral. The audience may sit and laugh at the characters in whom they clearly see all their own faults and follies; however, they will most likely remain uninspired to change their own ways. M. E. Hare attests to this when he writes, "The Funeral rehabilitated [Steele's] lost character. It has passages of quite delightful comedy, though . . . it is, on the whole, an undoubted farce. It is very little didactic till the last Act" (9). Thus, though Steele did succeed in restoring his popularity and instructing while entertaining, the pairing of the two remained unbalanced and without impact. Steele still needed to write a successful, entertaining play that would take his moral code "from the stage to the world."

## Chapter Three: The Lying Lover

Steele's next attempt to write such a play, The Lying Lover or, the Ladies' Friendship (1704), failed miserably, this time not for too lighthearted a tone, but for a too heavy-handed approach, which failed to please and entertain. In discussing this play, M.E. Hare quotes Professor Adolphus William Ward in his book, History of the English Drama, who maintains that "Steele, as a dramatist, came to mistake the true means and methods of the comic drama. His own comic genius lacked the sustained vigour which is required by the stage" (qtd. in Hare 16). This comment is certainly untrue as seen in the enthusiastic reception to The Funeral and its comedic wit. What critics like these have failed to take into account when analyzing Steele's work, and particularly The Lying Lover, is Steele's ultimate goal of writing a play that would simultaneously embody the whole of his moral code and yet please the audience in a lasting and memorable way. These critics all but ignore that this ever-present goal combined with Steele's more immediate influences at the time of writing is what gave birth to each play that he wrote. As George Atiken notes in responding to William Hazlitt's criticism of Steele's comedies: "Hazlitt says, 'It is almost a misnomer to call them comedies; they are rather homilies in dialogue.' Certainly The Funeral does not deserve the attack which Hazlitt has made upon it; but in The Lying Lover art is somewhat sacrificed to sentiment. . . . It [the type of comedy in The Lying Lover] is attempted to produce an effect, not by making vice and folly ridiculous, but by moving compassion" (94). Steele's intentions "to produce an effect" emerge clearly in the prologue of the play:

> To entertain the learned or the fair;
>
> Yet hopes that both will so much be his friends,

To pardon what he does, for what he intends;

He aims to make the coming action move

On the dread laws of friendship and of love;

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

He offers no gross vices to your sight,

Those too much horror raise for just delight;

And to detain the attentive knowing ear,

Pleasure must still have something that's severe.

If then you find our author treads the stage

With just regard to a reforming age;

He hopes, he humbly hopes, you'll think there's due

Mercy to him, for justice done to you. (103).

Hence, the "effect" Steele hopes to achieve and to which Aitken refers is clearly a moral effect, one "with just regard to a reforming age."

Thus, knowing that his moral code had been somewhat lost in his first entertaining and comedic attempt, and influenced by the call for reform in the theatre, Steele wrote The Lying Lover with a completely different approach. This time, rather than creating a variety of characters, some moral, some less so, some immoral, all of Steele's principal characters in The Lying Lover possess obvious and extreme character flaws—for which they suffer greatly until they repent, seeing before them the possibility of a joyous future if they change their ways. Bookwit, the title character, becomes Steele's example of poor behavior in regard to women, in the father-son relationship, and in life in general. Penelope (whom Bookwit pursues) stands as Steele's representation of

all a woman should not be both in love and friendship. Lovemore (Bookwit's rival for Penelope) is a lesser character but also a poor example in his dealings with both his rival and his love. The intricate plot of most of the play is based on Corneille's Le Menteur (1643) as mentioned in the introduction; however, at the end of the play, in the scenes which are entirely Steele's own work, both principal characters have enormously over-determined speeches of remorse and repentance that almost appear unrealistically contrary to their former behavior. Thus, Steele certainly succeeds in making his instruction more obvious than in The Funeral but, in so doing, sacrifices the level of entertainment needed to make the play itself a success.

The character of Bookwit and his dealings with others in The Lying Lover represents how a gentleman must not behave in regard to women, parental authority, and temptations in general, and it is clear from the consequences he endures that Steele would not have him emulated. Bookwit's approach to women is the complete antithesis to Steele's definition of a true gentlemen within his essays. Bookwit chooses the women he likes solely on the basis of their outward appearance, as he comments to his friend, Latine: "Here, ay here, I stood and gazed at high Mall, till I forgot it was winter, so many pretty shes marched by me. Oh! To see the dear things trip, trip along, and breathe so short, nipt with the season! . . .Oh! they were intolerably handsome" (110). Bookwit also will do whatever it takes to win the woman of his choice—in this case, Penelope—even if it means telling many layers of lies, which he does and then jauntily justifies:

> As to my lying to my mistress, 'tis but what all the lovers upon earth do. Call it not then by that coarse name, a lie. 'Tis wit, 'tis fable, allegory, fiction, hyperbole—or be it what you call it, the world's made up almost

> of nothing else. . . . But after all, to be serious, since I am resolved honestly to love, I don't care how artfully I obtain the woman I pitch upon; besides, did you ever know any of them acknowledge they loved as soon as they loved? No, they'll let a man dwell upon his knees—They're no fair enemy. Therefore 'tis but just that—
>
> We all use arts the fair to undermine,
> And learn with gallantry to hide design. (121-122)

In other words, in Bookwit's mind, the end justifies the means. This speech of his exemplifies Steele's quotation of one of Tillotson's sermons on sincerity in *Spectator* no. 352 (April 14, 1712):

> In the Places of Resort for Conversation, you now hear nothing but what related to the improving Mens Fortunes, without Regard to the Methods towards it. This is so fashionable, that young Men form themselves upon a certain Neglect of every thing that is candid, simple and worthy of true Esteem; an affect being yet worse than they are, by acknowledging in their general Turn of Mind and Discourse, that they have not any remaining Value for true Honour and Honesty: Preferring the Capacity of being Artful to gain their Ends. (3:313)

Even when both Penelope and her cousin Victoria discover his lies and mock him to his face, Bookwit continues to lie. Indeed, he has the audacity to expect Penelope's favor still: "Ah, madam! How can you use a man that loves you so unjustly? But call me what you will, liar, cheat, imposter—do but add, your servant, and I am satisfied. I have, indeed, madam, ran through many shifts in hopes to gain you, and could be contented to

run through all the shapes in Ovid's Metamorphoses, could I but return to this on my bended knees, of my fair one's humble servant" (153). Bookwit is, very simply, a chronic liar and a rake when it comes to his taste in and pursuit of women.

Bookwit's relationship with his father is also a source in the play for understanding, albeit negatively, Steele's moral code. Bookwit's first reference to his father, before the audience even meets the father, helps the audience understand why Bookwit is the way he is: his father has not taught him proper respect. In response to his friend's wondering aloud as to how Bookwit can be "so jaunty a town-spark in a moment, and have so easy a behaviour," Bookwit replies, "Why if you are serious in what you say, I owe it wholly to the indulgence of an excellent father, in whose company I was always free and unconstrained" (107-108). Having such a free hand from his father growing up has led Bookwit to feel so comfortable in his father's presence that he even lies to him unashamedly and without fear. When his father begins to tell him of plans to marry him to another, Bookwit tells his father that he is already married (138). When Bookwit's father finally learns of his son's habit of lying, he admits partial responsibility. Fredrick, a friend of both Lovemore's and Bookwit's from Oxford, disabuses Bookwit's father of the notion that his son has a wife back at school, to which the father replies, "I never could see anything in my son that's disingenuous, to put his aged father to this shame" (166). Saddened by the thought that he has overlooked such a large flaw in his son's character, Bookwit's father searches for Bookwit in order to correct it, but is too late, as Bookwit has since indulged in other vices with possibly dire consequences.

These other vices in which Bookwit indulges himself—namely dueling and drinking—are vices that Steele often decries in his essays, more so than others, perhaps

because he himself had experienced the negative results of both. When Lovemore challenges Bookwit to a duel, Bookwit rashly and even cheerfully accepts immediately, with no thought of future consequences. Frederick notes, "You're very pleasant, sir," to which Bookwit responds, "My good humour was ever challenge-proof. I will be very punctual" (142-143). After receiving this challenge, Bookwit discovers the ladies now know he is a liar, whereupon he gives up his pursuit of Penelope for the time being and decides to drink away his failure. He says to Latine: "Well, hang thinking. Let's to the tavern, and in every glass name a new beauty, till I either forget, or am inspired with some new project to attain her.

While in a lovely bowl I drown my care,

She'll cease to be, or I to think her, fair" (154).

After carrying out this plan to drink heavily, Bookwit, while wandering down the street to meet Latine who has snuck into Penelope's house with a letter from Bookwit, is still drinking and bumps into Lovemore. Lovemore, who is in a jealous rage, having just seen Latine sneaking out of his love's lodgings, picks a fight with Bookwit, who has liquor coursing through him and thus jumps right into the duel. Bookwit wounds Lovemore and runs off (162-163). All of Bookwit's vices combined present a picture of a rake and a liar, a man disrespectful of his father and fellow men, and a man who does what he wants, when he wants to, without regard to the consequences. This behavior is the utter opposite of Steele's gentleman of high virtue, sincerity, and sound judgment.

As Bookwit is the antithesis of Steele's ideal gentleman, so Penelope's character shuns all that Steele finds ideal for a lady of virtue. She plays the coquette in how she responds to and treats her suitors, and her friendship with Victoria is very much a matter

of concern, so much so that Steele incorporates it into the full title of the play—The Lying Lover: Or, The Ladies' Friendship. Penelope is first a coquette in the type of man she seeks, according to Steele's code. When first the audience hears anything from Penelope, it is to disparage Lovemore, her most earnest suitor of two years, for his virtues:

> He is indeed, a man of an honest character. He has my good opinion, but love does not always follow that. He is so wise a fellow, always so precisely in the right, so observing and so jealous; he's blameless indeed, but not to be commended. . . . Give me a man that has agreeable faults rather than offensive virtues. . . . They say he's learned as well as discreet, but I'm no judge of that. . . . his wisdom he should turn into wit, and his learning into poetry and humour. (111)

Thus, Penelope would rather have a suitor who is witty rather than one who is honest, blameless, and wise. She is following the way of the women Steele endeavors to warn his audience against in his later essays.

Penelope is also a coquette in her response to flattery. When Bookwit's father (unbeknownst to him) goes to ask Penelope to consider Bookwit for a husband, he flatters her with praise of her charms and beauty, and her response is so telling that Bookwit's father whispers in an aside, "I did not think I had such a memory. I find the women are now certainly daughters of the women before 'em: Flattery still does it" (124). In addition to her overt enjoyment of flattery, Penelope enjoys the thought of having three suitors at once and does not even want to lose one of them, regardless of whether she truly loves him or not. When for a time she believes she has Lovemore, Bookwit, and

"the man in the park" (who unknown to her is really Bookwit) for suitors, she says of Lovemore as he is coming up to confront her, "I will not wholly lose him; as bad as he is, he's better than no husband at all," then plots with her maid to torment him: "Stay in the room; I'll talk to you as if he were not present" (127-128). These plans are carried out as Penelope purposefully provokes Lovemore simply for the fun of it (128-129). This treatment incites Lovemore to anger; however, with one disdainful and haughty look from Penelope, he admits how completely in her power he is, to which she responds in an aside: "A little ill-usage, I see, improves a lover. I never heard him speak so well in my life before" (130). The final and greatest testimony to her coquettish behavior and taste in men is how, upon her discovery of his lies and deceit, she still decides to keep her meeting with Bookwit, even making sure she looks her best (145-146). When she and her cousin and friend, Victoria, meet up with Bookwit, he is trapped in more lies, yet Penelope *still* flirts with him while pretending to be finished with him, even offering him an opportunity for an assignation: "Sir, we have given ourselves the diversion to see you, and confront you in your falsehoods; in which you have entangled yourself. . .and therefore, sir, I so far despise you, that if you should come after me with your fiddles, I'll have a porter—[Aside] ready to let you in" (154). In short, Penelope is as much a coquette as Bookwit is a rake—in complete discord with Steele's code, she is attracted to the wrong sort of men, enjoys flattery and multiple suitors, one of whom she enjoys tormenting, and seeks to maintain a flirtatious relationship with a known liar.

Penelope's friendship with Victoria is the other area of Steele's feminine focus in this play, as revealed in the second half of its title. Their friendship is Steele's example of

the destructive force of jealousy and two-faced behavior as mentioned later on in *Spectator* no. 19 (March 22, 1711):

> The Envious Man is in Pain upon all Occasions which ought to give him Pleasure. . . . What a Wretched and Apostate State is this! To be offended with Excellence, and to hate a Man because we Approve him! The Condition of the Envious Man is the most Emphatically miserable; he is not only incapable of rejoicing in another's Merit or Success, but lives in a World wherein all Mankind are in a Plot against his Quiet, by studying their own Happiness and Advantage. (1:83)

Penelope and Victoria are both smitten with feelings for "the man in the park," so when Bookwit's father proposes Bookwit for a husband, Penelope decides to test Victoria—she thinks that if Victoria agrees to help her find out more about this Bookwit, that means Victoria wants the man in the park for herself. Neither woman knows they are one and the same man. The conversation goes just as Penelope suspects; Victoria mentions every possible reason why Penelope should consider this new match (133-134). Thus, when Victoria has gone, Penelope exclaims, "Thus does she hope to work me out of my lover, by being made my confident—but that baseness has been too fashionable to pass any more. I have not trusted her, the cunning creature. I begin to hate her so—I'll never be a minute from her" (135). This jealousy continues between the women, even after they discover Bookwit to be the same person and a liar as well. When Penelope decides to follow through with the meeting regardless, a humorous scene ensues during which each of them tries to make the other's appearance look worse under the guise of making it look better. For instance, Victoria says, "I'll wait upon you, my dear—[*Aside*] She's very

prettily dressed—But indeed, my dear, you shan't go with your hood so; it makes you look abominably, with your head so forward. There—(*Displacing her head*); that's something" (146). Penelope thanks her, then responds, "But alas, madam, who patched you today? Let me see. It is the hardest thing in dress. . . . Hold still, my dear, I'll place it just by your eye. –[*Aside*] Now she downright squints" (146). The scene continues, until they have powdered and patched and fixed each other out of their best looks. Thus it is that these two women—Steele would not call them ladies—continue for some time to allow jealousy to destroy the core of their friendship.

One other lesser character who bears examination in light of Steele's moral code and is given to the very same vice of jealousy is Lovemore. Though Penelope describes him as virtuous, she also mentions his jealousy and that he is "one of those who's never highly moved, except to anger" (111). Lovemore's main flaw is his tendency toward rash and hasty judgment when he is enraged or jealous. The first time Lovemore becomes jealous is while speaking with Bookwit in the park. Bookwit spins a story full of lies about how he has already wooed and won Penelope's favor with a feast, musical entertainment, and fireworks on the water (Lovemore and Frederick had witnessed such an event from afar the night before, but Bookwit in actuality had nothing to do with it). As they take leave of Bookwit after his tales, Lovemore exclaims, "Oh jealousy! Thou rack, jealousy!" Frederick tries to reason with him: "What reason have you to feel it? The circumstances of the feast nothing agree;" to which Lovemore responds, "In time and place they do; the rest is nothing" (119-120). Lovemore then rashly rushes off to confront Penelope without first trying to find out the truth, walking into Penelope's plan with her maid to ignore him (129-131). Further enraged, he finally turns to leave when Penelope

offers to tell him the truth. However, he demands her hand in marriage or nothing: "I'll hear nothing unless you will be married; unless you give me, as a present earnest of yourself, three kisses, and your word for ever" (131). At which unreasonable request, Penelope laughs at him and refuses. Filled with fury, Lovemore shouts, "Laugh at my sufferings! Slight my anger! Is this your base requital of my love?—Revenge, revenge! I'll print on thy favourite in his heart's blood my revenge. Our swords—our swords shall dispute our pretences. . .though perhaps what we shall dispute for is better lost," and flings out of the room to go issue his challenge to Bookwit (131-132). Lovemore's lack of emotional self-control renders him yet another of Steele's negative exemplars.

In the final Act of The Lying Lover, Lovemore's presumed death precipitates first Penelope's then Bookwit's individual scenes of remorse and repentance for their former ways. Both experience an almost unrealistic, sudden, and utter transformation from their former selves, as opposed to The Funeral, where Lady Harriot and Mr. Campley accept their flaws and gradually change them. Penelope's slightly overdone scene of remorse ensues when Frederick, accompanied by Lovemore in disguise, brings her word of Lovemore's demise. Penelope suddenly and dramatically expresses all manner of deep feelings for him now that he is gone as she clutches his "death" letter to her bosom: "Here, thou dearest paper, mingle with my life's stream; either the paper bleeds anew, or my eyes weep blood. So let 'em do for ever—Oh, my Lovemore! Did the vanity of a prating boy banish thy solid services and manly love?" (176). Lovemore's "offensive virtues" (as Penelope originally described Lovemore's attributes in Act I) have now become "solid services and manly love." When Frederick continues to describe Lovemore's "dying moment," Penelope suddenly repents of all her coquettish ways: "Oh,

the too generous man! Ungrateful I! . . .Simplicity's the dress of honest passion, Then why our arts, why to a man enamoured, That at her feet effuses all his soul, Must woman cold appear, false to herself and him?" (178). At the conclusion of this speech, Penelope swears to be dedicated to Lovemore's ashes and memory the rest of her life and exits. When Frederick moves to stop Lovemore from following her and revealing himself to her, one can almost hear Steele himself speaking: "Let her contemplate on the mischief of her vanity. She shall lament till her glass is of our side—its heart must heave and pant with perfect anguish before 'twill feel the sorrow of another's. Don't you know, pride, scorn, affectation, and a whole train of ills must be sobbed away before a great beauty's mortified to purpose?" (178-179). When Lovemore does eventually reveal himself as alive in front of all at the conclusion of the play, Penelope, astonishingly, does not appear to be angry at all in having been deceived and only commends Lovemore and pledges her life to him. These words are the only ones she speaks to Lovemore following his revelation: "You've shown your passion to me with such honour that if I am confused, I know I should not be, to say I approve it; for I know no rules should make me insensible of generous usage. My person and my mind are yours for ever" (184). Critic M. E. Hare notes that when "Frederick discloses the deceit and the [former] high-spirited Penelope consents to marry Lovemore without a word of surprise or any complaint that she should have been cheated into spending the best part of an hour in a perfect agony of grief, this is impossible psychology and imbecile comedy" (21-22).

Bookwit's repentance scenes are just as overdone and unrealistic, if not more so, than Penelope's. When he awakens in Newgate Prison, having been imprisoned for Lovemore's "murder," Bookwit's first words (more than likely due to a pounding

headache) are remorse for drinking: "How heavily do I awake this morning! Oh, this senseless drinking! To suffer a whole week's pain for an hour's jollity!" (171). Then for over sixty lines Bookwit goes on to moan and groan out his repentance for everything from his lies to his being so willing to duel. Again, one can almost hear Steele talking: "Oh, this unhappy tongue of mine! Thou lawless, voluble, destroying foe, That still run'st on, nor wait'st command of reason, Oh, I could tear thee from me" (172). He continues to lament, "but, I flushed with the thoughts of dueling, pressed on—Thus for the empty praise of fools, I'm solidly unhappy" (172). When Latine tries to comfort him by noting that his honor was at stake, Bookwit cries, "Honour! The horrid application of that sacred word to a revenge against friendship, law, and reason is a damned last shift of the damned envious foe of human race. The routed fiend projected this, but since the expansive glorious law from Heaven came down—Forgive" (173). Steele echoes these exact sentiments in the edict Prince Pharamond writes after Eucrates appeals to him in *Spectator* no. 97 (June 21, 1711) (Steele 1:411-412).

Bookwit's last scene of overwrought emotion and remorse centers on the grief he has caused his father, who actually swoons away. After nearly fifty lines of laments by father and son, Bookwit's father cries, "I have too much upon me, child, to speak. . . . When you have slept in your cradle, I have waked for you—and was it to this end! Oh, child, you've broke your father's heart [*Swoons*]" (181). Bookwit runs over to him and weeps:

> He's gone, and with his last breath called me parricide.
>
> "You've broke your father's heart!" Oh, killing sound!
>
> . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Oh, big unutterable grief—merciful Heaven!

I don't deserve this ease of tears to melt

With penitence—Oh, sweet remorse;

Now all my powers give way

To my just sorrow, for the best of fathers.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Why stay I after? But I deserve to stay,

To feel the quick remembrance of my follies. (181

This is actually a much shortened version of Bookwit's speech; nevertheless, it reminds one of Steele's words in *Spectator* no. 192 (October 10, 1711): "It is the most lamentable of all Reflexions, to think that the Heir of a Man's Fortune is such a one as will be a Stranger to his Friends, alienated from the same Interests, and a Promoter of every thing which he himself disapproved" (2:253).

These long passages of remorse in The Lying Lover have long been condemned by critics since it was performed in December of 1703. M. E. Hare describes them as "long rhetorical speeches, the language of which would pass very well in an Essay, but which appear awkward and involved on the stage" (21), and also as "curious and unreal moralizings, couched in language equally artificial and unreal" (17). Steele undeniably suffused his moral code throughout the play, but the new approach of using characters who only represent numerous vices, then having them repent near the end, was highly unsuccessful at pleasing or entertaining the audience of Steele's day, thereby making his second attempt to write a play that both equally pleases and instructs a failure.

## Chapter Four: The Tender Husband

In a pleasurably vivid and direct contrast to The Lying Lover, Steele's next play, The Tender Husband: Or, The Accomplished Fools (1705), is full of hilarity, physical comedy, verbal wit, and, of course, some moral instruction on the side. Since Steele wrote this next play with the sole purpose of redeeming himself after The Lying Lover, much like he used The Funeral to win back lost admirers after publishing The Christian Hero, The Tender Husband has a fair helping of Steele's moral code, yet much of it is overshadowed by the sheer comedy of the work. If The Funeral can be compared to one of the current well-crafted television sitcoms, then perhaps The Tender Husband may be compared to one of the current slapstick or parody films. Hare asserts that "Steele is at his best in it, and exhibits a great advance upon his former dramatic style; the heavy periods are gone, and an easy colloquial style of unforced witty writing has taken their place" (31-32). Nevertheless, Steele does manage to include glimmers of moral instruction scattered throughout the play in the behavior of various characters.

Both Mrs. Clerimont and Biddy Tipkin are Steele's examplars of the difficulties caused by vanity—Mrs. Clerimont's vanity caused by pride and Biddy's caused by her own imagination, which is under the influence of years spent reading romance literature. Steele's approach to describing and manifesting these particular vices is so humorous that the instruction in morality is nearly lost. Indeed, in stark contrast to the overt morality of The Lying Lover, the very first fact the audience learns about Mrs. Clerimont in the opening lines of the play is that her husband is planning to have his mistress, Lucy, disguise herself as a man to try to seduce Mrs. Clerimont because though she "has been constant to [her husband's] bed," she has been "careless of [his] fortune" (199). With

ironic humor resulting from his aim to entertain, Steele has one *admittedly* immoral character testing another immoral character for suspected potential immorality in the future. Mrs. Clerimont's vanity actually has manifested itself in several vices, including extravagance, gambling, a foppish addiction to fashion, a mouth that is never quiet, an overbearing self-love, and eventually a slide toward infidelity. Mr. Clerimont's fear is that his wife's pride and vanity, which has manifested itself in her extravagance, will soon lead her to infidelity, so he wants to put her to the test to see if he is right. Mr. Clerimont explains the source of his wife's vanity to his mistress as thus:

> She brought me a noble fortune, and I thought she had a right to share it; therefore carried her to see the world. . .where she learned to lose her money gracefully, to admire every vanity in our sex, and contemn every virtue in her own, which, with ten thousand other perfections, are the ordinary improvements of a traveled lady. Now I can neither mortify her vanity, that I may live at ease with her, or quite discard her, till I have catched her a little enlarging her innocent freedoms, as she calls 'em. (200)

One of Mrs. Clerimont's little "innocent freedoms" happens to be gambling as her husband and his mistress, Fainlove, soon reveal. Fainlove shows Mr. Clerimont five hundred pounds she won from Mrs. Clerimont the previous night, and Mr. Clerimont laments, "Oh the damned vice! That woman can imagine all household care, regard to posterity, and fear of poverty, must be sacrificed to a game at cards!" (201). The audience also discovers that Mrs. Clerimont is addicted to whatever the current fashion is for the society of her day. Mr. Clerimont explains, "She always had a great genius for knowing

everything but what it was necessary she should. The wits of the age, the great beauties, and short-lived people of vogue, were always her discourse and imitation" (201). Mr. Clerimont voices the reason for his elaborate scheme when he reveals that his wife is too popular: "I should have the whole sex on my back, should I pretend to retrench a lady so well visited as mine is. Therefore I must bring it about that it shall appear her own act, if she reforms; or else I shall be pronounced jealous, and have my eyes pulled out for being open" (202). Thus, Mr. Clerimont bides his time while his mistress in the guise of a male servant seduces his wife with flattering words and glances.

In the meantime, while waiting for this elaborate trap to work, the audience is treated to several hilarious glimpses of Mrs. Clerimont's vanity. In the beginning of the Third Act, Mrs. Clerimont enters, followed by Jenny, her maid, and Fainlove, carrying Mrs. Clerimont's lapdog, which she kisses at the end of every other sentence for the first few lines. She says to Jenny: "Your arms do but hang on, and you move perfectly upon joints; not with a swim of the whole person—But I am talking to you, and have not adjusted myself to-day: What pretty company a glass is, to have another self! To converse in soliloquy! To have company that never contradicts or displeases us! The pretty visible echo of our actions!" (228). Mrs. Clerimont goes on inform them that she looks best when she is talking, to which Jenny responds, "You always look well" (229). Mrs. Clerimont overlooks this sly insult and comments that her own face "is very prettily designed to-day" (229). She goes on talking about the hideous habits of the English (as she herself is French), particularly their dullness, then proceeds to announce: "I was t'other day at a visit, where there was a profound silence, for, I believe, the third part of a

minute," to which Jenny asks, "And your ladyship there?" (231). Clearly, her mistress feels she is superior to everyone around her in every way.

Finally, toward the end of the play, amid the varying twists and turns of the subplot, Mr. Clerimont's mistress succeeds in leading his wife down the road to infidelity. Fainlove shows Mr. Clerimont a note from his wife to Fainlove, the end of which reads, "I need say no more than that distance to a woman of the world is becoming in no man but a husband: an hour hence come up the back stairs to my closet" (249). Mr. Clerimont hides in the closet of the room where this meeting is to take place in order to listen in. As the two women, one in disguise, at first discuss the details of their previous flirtation, Mrs. Clerimont hints that she dislikes when Mr. Clerimont tries to display public affection. Fainlove starts to disparage him as well when Mrs. Clerimont cuts her short with a very startling statement: "Oh, young gentleman, you are mightily mistaken, if you think such animals as you. . .though I suffer you to come in, and play about my rooms, are any ways in competition with a man whose name one would wear" (251). She goes on to state that "a woman of sense must have respect for a man of that character; but alas! Respect has something too solemn for soft moments—you things are more proper for hours of dalliance" (251). Thus, Mr. Clerimont, listening in the closet, is shocked to learn that his wife actually does respect him! Peeping out of the closet, he exclaims in an aside, "How have I wronged this fine lady! I find I am to be a cuckold out of her pure esteem for me" (251). Just as Fainlove and Mrs. Clerimont are about to kiss, Mr. Clerimont jumps out of the closet, draws his sword, and threatens Fainlove, Mrs. Clerimont swoons when he hands her the assignation letter she wrote Fainlove. When she comes to, Mr. Clerimont sternly berates her:

> Well madam, are these the innocent freedoms you claimed of me? Have I deserved this? How has there been a moment of yours ever interrupted with the real pangs I suffer? The daily importunities of creditors, who became so by serving your profuse vanities: did I ever murmur at supplying any of your diversions, while I believed 'em (as you call 'em) harmless? Must, then, those eyes that used to glad my heart with their familiar brightness hang down with guilt? Guilt has transformed thy whole person; nay the very memory of it—Fly from my growing passion! (253)

Mrs. Clerimont begs forgiveness: "Is it possible you can forgive what you ensnared me into? You know I have only erred in my intention nor saw my danger, till, by this honest art, you had shown me what 'tis to venture to the utmost limit of what is lawful. . . . Therefore I kneel—I weep—I am convinced" (254). The two are immediately reconciled, and Mrs. Clerimont then insists, "I must correct every idea that rises in my mind, and learn every gesture of my body anew—I detest the thing I was," but her husband responds, "No, no; you must not do so. Our joy and grief, honour and reproach are the same; you must slide out of your foppery by degrees, so that it may appear your own act" (254). Mr. Clerimont then assures her that his mistress will now be out of their lives as well. Thus, one of the "ladies errant" from Steele's prologue of the play sees the error of her ways amid the humor of her husband's plan and the comedic scenes of the subplot.

The subplot of The Tender Husband revolves around Biddy Tipkin, the other "lady errant," who is subject to vanities of her own imagination. Biddy's uncle and guardian, Mr. Tipkin, is getting ready to marry her off to her country cousin, Humphrey

Gubbin, in a business deal with Humphrey's father, while Biddy dreams of a romantic suitor pursuing her favor just as it often happens in all the romantic stories she has read and re-read over the years. The first description the audience hears of Biddy is actually from Pounce, the lawyer hired by Mr. Clerimont to find his younger brother (a captain) a match with a fortune, and the very same lawyer hired by Biddy's uncle to make arrangements between himself and Humphrey's father. When Pounce describes Biddy, he is talking to Capt. Clerimont and hopes to match Biddy with him instead of Humphrey: "You must understand, the young lady, by being kept from the world, has made a world of her own. She has spent all her solitude in reading romances, her head is full of shepherds, knights, flowery meads, groves, and streams, so that if you talk like a man of this world to her, you do nothing" (205). The vices Biddy develops as a result of this condition are less dangerous than those of Mrs. Clerimont; nevertheless, they are vices according to Steele's moral code: she is dissatisfied with everything about herself and her condition, she feels a need to be flattered and pursued and she must be courted like her romance heroines.

Biddy's dissatisfaction encompasses both her name and her current and expected way of life. She tells her Aunt, "How often must I desire you, madam to lay aside that familiar name, cousin Biddy? I never hear it without blushing—Did you ever meet with a heroine in those romances that was termed Biddy?" (217). She answers her own question: "No, the heroine has always something soft and engaging in her name; something that gives us a notion of the sweetness of her beauty and behaviour; a name that glides through half-a-dozen tender syllables, as Elismonda, Clidamira, Deidamia, that runs upon vowels off the tongue" (217-218). Biddy's Aunt scolds her and reminds her that her

mother was a Bridget, "the daughter of her mother Margery, of her mother, Sisly, of her mother Alice," to which Biddy responds, "Since you will run on, then I must needs tell you I am not satisfied in the point of my nativity. Many an infant has been placed in a cottage with obscure parents, till by some chance some ancient servant of the family has known it by its marks" (218). Her Aunt advises her to be reasonable: "Come, you shall marry your cousin and live comfortably," at which Biddy complains, "Live comfortably! What kind of life is that? A great heiress live comfortably! Pray, aunt, learn to raise your ideas" (219). Biddy's dissatisfaction, humorously but undeniably, has invaded all areas of her life.

When Pounce contrives to run into Biddy and her Aunt on their afternoon walk, thereby introducing Capt. Clerimont to Biddy and pulling her Aunt aside to give them space, Capt. Clerimont soon discovers how Biddy must be pursued with romantic flattery and speech. He wins her over by mentioning how she ought to trade the last name she says she hates for his name: "If you will give me leave, I'll put you in possession of it. By very few words I can make it over to you, and your children after you," the captain suggests. Biddy responds,

> O fie! Wither are you running? You know a lover should sigh in private, and languish whole years before he reveals his passion; he should retire into some solitary grove, and make the woods and wild beasts his confidants. You should have told it to the echo half a year before you had discovered it, even to my handmaid. And yet besides—to talk to me of children! Did you ever hear of a heroine with a big belly? (225).

After this first meeting, Capt. Clerimont tells Pounce that Biddy is "a perfect Quixote in petticoats!" (226). He cautions Pounce, "You must have an eye on Mr. Humphrey while I feed the vanity of Parthenissa [his new pet name for Biddy]; for I am so experienced in these matters that I know none but coxcombs think to win a woman by any desert of their own—No, it must be done rather by complying with some prevailing humour of your mistress, than exerting any good quality in yourself" (227). Further into the play, once Biddy has had a chance to speak with her cousin, Humphrey, and they agree not to marry despite their parents, Capt. Clerimont returns disguised as a painter of portraits in order to carry Biddy off to be married. However, she must first be convinced through flattery to go along with the plan. As he sets up to paint her portrait, Capt. Clerimont flatters her beauty, then tells her a story of his "friend" who disguised himself as a painter in order to run away with the girl he loved (244-245) He sings her a song with the name Parthenissa in it, just so he is sure she knows who he is, then he begins to argue for the necessity to marry right away, comparing her case to that of some heroines in romances (246). However, Biddy's response is thus: "But I can't think of abridging our amours, and cutting off all farther decoration of disguise, serenade, and adventure" (247). Biddy has to be flattered into the action, which Clerimont finally recognizes as he cajoles, "Why, madam, you are a great fortune, and should not be married the common way. Indeed, madam, you ought to be stolen, nay, in strictness, I don't know but you ought to be ravished" (247). In the end, Biddy agrees: "It looks so ordinary, to go out at a door to be married. Indeed, I ought to be taken out a window, and run away with" (248). Although Biddy's vanity is quite humorous, her character does hold a slight moral message.

Though she never reforms her coquettishly odd ways, she is, at last, flattered into an agreeable marriage with a person of her own choosing and who chose her for himself.

The last element of Steele's moral code found in The Tender Husband relates to this very subject of parental roles and marriage. In the characters of Sir Harry Gubbin (Humphrey's father) and Mr. Tipkin (Biddy's uncle), Steele instructs his audience on how offspring should not be treated by their guardians or parents as pets or property to be commanded, bargained with, or sold. Sir Harry Gubbin is a horrible man and is described by Pounce as a "cruel" father to Humphrey (207). He reveals his method of disciplining Humphrey: "I never suffered him to have anything he liked in his life. . . . He has been trained up from childhood under such a plant as this in my hand [a crab-tree stick]. . . . It has been the custom of the Gubbins to preserve severity and discipline in their families: I myself was caned the day before my wedding" (209). Humphrey suffers various indignities at the hands of his father, such as being told what to wear: "I have dressed him in the very suit I had on at my own wedding," says his father (209). When Humphrey refuses to talk to Mr. Tipkin at first, Sir Harry says, "Do you see this crab-stick, you dog?" (210). Humphrey is disgusted: "This is always your tricks, to make a great fool of one before company," he says to his father, aside. "Don't disgrace me, sirrah, you grim, graceless rogue," Sir Harry hisses (210). Then the two "gentlemen" proceed to have Humphrey walk back and forth between them while Mr. Tipkin looks him up and down and Sir Harry measures his shoulder width, like some beast being sold to be bred (211). The two men bargain with each other, deciding the financial details of the marriage they are arranging between Biddy and Humphrey. During this exchange, Sir Harry refers to both children as business commodities. He says, "Look ye, brother Tipkin, as I told you

before, my business in town is to dispose of an hundred head of cattle, and my son" (208). Then, in response to a price Mr. Tipkin has named, Sir Harry claims, "Ay, but brother, you rate her too high, the war has fetched down the price of women; the whole nation is overrun with petticoats; our daughters lie upon our hands, Brother Tipkin; girls are drugs, sir, mere drugs" (208). Even much later in the play, when unbeknownst to the two "dealers," their children have gone off and married other people, these two are still planning their lives. Mr. Tipkin asks, "Do you design, Sir Harry, that they shall have an estate in their own hands, and keep house themselves, poor things?" Sir Harry condescendingly responds, "No, no, sir, I know better; they shall go down into the country, and live with me, not touch a farthing of money; but, having all things necessary provided, they shall go tame about the house, and breed" (255). Certainly, this sounds as if he has purchased a female dog for his hound. Thus Steele, in a profoundly humorous manner, admonishes the fathers and guardians in his audience to have a care in how they treat their children, considering a marriage of choice to have better chances than a marriage of arrangement, as he states in *Spectator* no. 149 (August 21, 1711):

> The [insipid marriage] is, when two People of no Genius or Taste for themselves meet together, upon such a Settlement as has been thought reasonable by Parents and Conveyancers from an exact Valuation of the Land and Cash of both Parties: In this Case the young Lady's Person is no more regarded, than the House and Improvements in Purchase of an Estate; but she goes with her Fortune, rather than her Fortune with her. . . . The happy Marriage, is where two Persons meet and voluntarily make Choice of each other, without principally regarding or neglecting the

> Circumstance of Fortune or Beauty. These may still love in spite of Adversity or Sickness. . . . When you have a true Notion of this sort of Passion, your Humour of living great will vanish out of your Imagination, and you will find Love has nothing to do with State. Solitude, with the Person beloved, has a Pleasure even in a Woman's Mind beyond Show or Pomp. You are there fore to consider which of your Lovers will like you best undress'd, which will bear with you most when out of Humour; and your Way to this is to ask of your self, which of them you value most for his own Sake? (2:87-88)

M.E. Hare says of The Tender Husband, "It is a delightful play. True, no philosophy of life can be derived from it; it is, one must confess, more farce than comedy, but it is perpetually witty" (31). This comment is only partially true. The play is certainly delightful, witty, and farcical; however, elements of Steele's moral code are present, merely overshadowed by the outbursts of laughter from the audience, but nevertheless waiting for the didactic kernels of truth to be gleaned and appropriated into the lives of those who are watching or reading. With The Tender Husband, Steele succeeded in recapturing his popularity in the theatrical world of his day. His favor thus restored, Steele, when he took to his pen to disperse his moral code four years later, attempted not another play, but an essay, *Tatler* no. 1 (April 12, 1709), the first of many to come that would entertain and instruct the masses little by little. However, in becoming an essayist, Steele did not forget his goal as a playwright. He had yet to write that one balanced, well-received play that would embody the whole of his moral code and take it "from the stage to the world."

# Chapter Five: The Conscious Lovers

The first essay of *The Tatler* appeared in mid-April of 1709, and a thorough examination of Steele's essays as well as other correspondence of his contemporaries during the following year demonstrates a strong probability that Steele was conceptualizing and perhaps even writing his final play, The Conscious Lovers, during the years he was writing essays for *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, though the play was not performed or published until 1722. John Loftis of the University of California, who has authored a book exclusively devoted to exploring Steele's impact on the theatrical society of Steele's day, notes that in Tatler no. 182 (June 8, 1710), Steele writes under the assumed name of Isaac Bickerstaff, the fictitious author of *The Tatler.* In this particular essay, Bickerstaff makes reference to a young man under his wing who is currently writing a comedy; Bickerstaff writes of arranging a special viewing of The Careless Husband for an unnamed playwright who plans to have Robert Wilks and Colley Cibber play the lead roles in his own work (186). The probability that Steele is this playwright and The Conscious Lovers is the play in question is heightened considerably by the fact that Bickerstaff continues in the essay to describe the play being written:

> His drama at present has only the outlines drawn. There are, I find, to be in it all the reverent offices of life, such as regard to parents, husbands, and honourable lovers, preserved with the utmost care; and at the same time that agreeableness of behaviour, with the intermixture of pleasing passions as arise from innocence and virtue, interspersed in such a manner, as that

> to be charming and agreeable shall appear the natural consequence of being virtuous. (qtd. in Loftis 187)

Certainly, this description mirrors the design of The Conscious Lovers as it seeks to revere all mentioned positions (parent, husband, and honorable lover) through the lead character of Bevil Jr. who honors his father, desires to be a husband rather than a user of women, and is the ultimate honorable friend and lover. The Conscious Lovers also attempts to be exemplary in nature, as does the play of this unnamed playwright. If The Conscious Lovers is indeed the play referred to, this is the earliest and best evidence that Steele was conceptualizing the play while writing his essays for *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.

Later evidence includes allusions in letters written by George Berkeley and in a poem by Jonathan Swift. The letters by Berkeley, which were written in January and March of 1713, make reference to Steele "writing a play" and reveal that "a play of Mr. Steele's, which was expected, he has now put off to next winter" (qtd. in Loftis 186). The poem by Swift, "The First Ode of the Second Book of Horace Paraphras'd; And Address'd to Richard Steele, Esq.," published in January of 1714, is most intriguing; Swift is chastising Steele for his preoccupation with politics:

> And when thou shalt have eas'd thy Conscience,
>
> Of Spleen, of Politics and Nonsense,
>
> And when thou'st bid adieu to Cares,
>
> And settled *Europe's Grand Affairs*,
>
> 'Twill then, perhaps, be worth thy while
>
> For *Drury-lane* to shape thy Stile:

"To make a pair of Jolly Fellows,

"The Son and Father; join to tell us,

"How Sons may safely disobey,

"And Fathers never shou'd say nay,

"By which wise Conduct they grow Friends

"At last—and so the Story ends." (qtd. in Loftis 185)

Swift perhaps is satirizing the quality of Steele's political meddling by poking fun at Steele's contradictory advice in other matters, but Loftis notes that the poem also has truth at its base: "Printed in the left-hand margin beside the summary of the play's action is a statement that Steele had been working on, or at least talking about, the play for some time. 'This is said to be the Plot of a Comedy with which Mr. St—le has long threatned the Town'" (185). Since this poem is addressed to Steele and the question of obedience for Bevil Jr. to his father is a undeniable theme in The Conscious Lovers, it is safe to assume that this is the play to which Swift refers in this poem. In light of the similarity in themes mentioned by these timely allusions to a play in Steele's mind or by his hand, it is clear that The Conscious Lovers was at the very least being conceptualized if not written during the years Steele wrote his essays for *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.

The Conscious Lovers would be Steele's first attempt at writing a comedy where all the principal characters were models for virtues upheld in his code rather than models of the vices that must be avoided. Steele may have been inspired to this idea from a tragedy he was asked to read, for which he wrote the prologue, and which he applauded in *Spectator* no. 290 (February 1, 1712), called The Distressed Mother by Ambrose

Philips (1712). Whether or not this tragedy inspired Steele's new method for The Conscious Lovers, he has only praise for the work and its author in the essay:

> In this Tragedy you are not entertained with the ungoverned Passions of such as are enamoured of each other merely as they are Men and Women, but their Regards are founded upon high Conceptions of each other's Virtue and Merit; and the Character which gives Name to the Play, is one who has behaved her self with heroick Virtue in the most important Circumstances of a female Life, those of a Wife, a Widow, and a Mother. . . . The Persons are of the highest Quality in Life, even that of Princes; but their Quality is not represented by the Poet with Direction that Guards and Waiters should follow them in every Scene, but their Grandure appears in greatness of Sentiments, flowing from Minds worthy their Condition. To make a Character truly Great, this Author understands that it should have its Foundation in superior Thoughts and Maxims of Conduct. (3:32)

Steele then reveals what is most attractive to him about this particular play: "What is further extraordinary in this Work, is, that the Persons are all of them laudable, and their misfortunes arise rather from unguarded Virtue than Propensity to Vice" (3:33). A play with the main characters as models of virtue appealed to Steele's sense of morality, and such is exactly what the prologue of The Conscious Lovers asserts that its author hopes to achieve—a new kind of comedy, not tragedy, that seeks to model virtue without making vice its focus:

> But the bold sage—the poet of to-night
>
> By new and desp'rate rules resolved to write;

> Fain would he give more just applauses rise,
>
> And please by wit that scorns the aids of vice. . . .
>
> No more let ribaldry, with licence writ,
>
> Usurp the name of eloquence or wit;
>
> No more let lawless farce uncensured go,
>
> The lewd dull gleanings of a Smithfield show.
>
> 'Tis yours with breeding to refine the age,
>
> To chasten wit, and moralize the stage. (439)

This speech, clearly intended as part revelation and part motivation, prepares the audience to encounter characters of true virtue—examples to be emulated and praised—rather than characters of vice to be mocked and ridiculed.

Despite using this method, Steele's plot for The Conscious Lovers is a captivating one, incorporating humorous disguises, arranged marriages, shipwrecks, long-lost relatives, chivalry, fortunes, and true love. The cast of characters still provides the audience with a hero and heroine to cheer for and villains to root against. Cleverly, Steele manages to accomplish this by using the players in the subplot as those who represent vice and who are vehicles for most of the strong comedy, while his principal players in the main plot are models of virtue and vehicles for gentle humor and touching sentiment. When combined, the whole presents a humorous, pleasing work that nevertheless embodies the entirety of Steele's moral code.

The cast of characters includes Bevil Jr. (the hero), Sir John Bevil (his father), Humphrey (servant to Sir John), Tom (servant to Bevil Jr.), Mr. Sealand (father of Lucinda), Mrs. Sealand (his wife), Lucinda Sealand (their daughter), Mr. Myrtle (Bevil

Jr.'s friend and Lucinda's suitor), Cimberton (Lucinda's suitor), Phillis (Lucinda's servant), and Indiana (the heroine). The subplot revolves around Mr. Myrtle's courtship of Lucinda and his intent to save her from the clutches of Cimberton, who is Lucinda's mother's match of choice for her. Lucinda herself does not appear much in the play, but she is mentioned as a lady of virtue, and her existence is vital to the intricacies of the plot and helps reveal the vices in those around her. Myrtle is also part of the main plot, and is therefore considered a principal character; however, his plan to win Lucinda requires the help of Tom and Phillis. Thus, the central characters of the subplot who represent vice are Tom, Phillis, Mrs. Sealand, and Cimberton.

Tom and Phillis, though they are servants of Lucinda and Bevil Jr. respectively, represent the rake and coquette vices of Steele's moral code. In a conversation between Humphrey, Sir John's servant, and Tom, Humphrey begins to scold Tom for his habits: "But the gang you have frequented since at chocolate houses and taverns, in a continual round of noise and extravagance. . ." (443) but is cut off by Tom who defends himself, then proceeds cheerfully and proudly to describe this "gang" of his: "We are false lovers; have a taste of music, poetry, billet-doux, dress, politics; ruin damsels; and when we are weary of this lewd town and have a mind to take up [reform], whip into our masters' wigs and linen, and marry fortunes" (443). When Tom encounters Phillis the first time, the audience sees her humorous coquetry:

> I wish I were generally carried in a coach or a chair, and of a fortune neither to stand nor go, but to totter, or slide, to be short-sighted or stare, to fleer in the face, to look distant, to observe, to overlook, yet all become me; and if I was rich, I could twire and loll as well as the best of them. O

> Tom! Tom! Is it not a pity that you should be so great a coxcomb, and I so great a coquette, and yet be such poor devils as we are? (444)

The flirtatious banter between these two throughout the play is one of its main sources of comedy. When they meet to carry on their superiors' business, Phillis must always be flattered and kissed, and Tom must have his fun provoking her before they fulfill their duties. On one such occasion, Tom sees her coming and notes:

> What a work have I to do now? She has seen some new visitant at their house, whose airs she has catched, and is resolved to practice them upon me. Numberless are the changes she'll dance through before she'll answer this plain question, videlicet, "Have you delivered my master's letter to your lady?" Nay, I know her too well to ask an account of it in an ordinary way; I'll be in my airs as well as she. (453)

He is correct in his assessment, as Phillis soon demands, "Tell me when you fell in love with me, how you fell in love with me, and what you have suffered or are ready to suffer for me" (454)—the mark of a "true" coquette! Tom's aside response to this is, "Oh the unmerciful jade! When I am in haste about my master's letter. But I must go through it" (254). Though the two are delightfully funny, Steele has their betters refer to them as a hussy (455) and a wild rogue (442), and scold them for their ways so that these vices do not go unrecognized as vices.

Mrs. Sealand, along with Cimberton, is the true villain of the play. She is Steele's epitome of undesirable parental behavior; she is selfish, treats Lucinda like annoying baggage, and could not possibly care less about her daughter's feelings or future. Before

the audience sees Mrs. Sealand, Lucinda laments to Phillis her mother's plans to sell her off to the highest bidder:

> Every corner of the land has presented me with a wealthy coxcomb. As fast as one treaty has gone off, another has gone on, till my name and person have been the tittle-tattle of the whole town. What is the world come to? No shame left—to be bartered for like the beasts of the fields, and that in such an instance as coming together to an entire familiarity and union of soul and body! Oh! And this without being so much as well-wishers to each other, but for increase of fortune. (455)

Mrs. Sealand's main concern is to rid herself of her daughter in the manner that best enhances the family bloodlines and fortune. She says to Cimberton when first entering with him, "How I do admire this noble, this learned taste of yours, and the worthy regard you have to our own ancient and honorable house, in consulting a means to keep the blood as pure and as regularly descended as may be" (456). In the following scene, she allows Cimberton to speak to her daughter in the most inappropriate way; he refers to Lucinda's bosom, her "forward chest," her shape, and his plans to have her pregnant every year, and all this right in Lucinda's presence (456-457). When Lucinda stomps off in an offended rage, Mrs. Sealand actually apologizes for *Lucinda's* behavior and then disparages her own daughter: "Sir, I cannot make her any other than she is, or say she is much better than the other young women of this age, or fit for much besides being a mother; but I have given directions for the marriage settlements . . . which, when executed, makes you capable of settling what is due to Lucinda's fortune. Herself, as I told you, I say nothing of" (457). In fact, Mrs. Sealand does not even care whether

Cimberton has even a small regard for her daughter. Phillis asks her, "But pray, madam, does your ladyship intend that Mr. Cimberton shall really marry my young mistress at last? I don't think he likes her," and Mrs. Sealand's response is, "That's not material. Men of his speculation are above desires" (465). The reason for this horrible excuse for parenting is soon made clear when Mrs. Sealand reveals her motivations as she goes off to confront her husband about his arrangements for Lucinda to marry Bevil Jr.:

> I'll live no longer in anxiety for a little hussy that hurts my appearance wherever I carry her, and for whose sake I seem to be not at all regarded, and that in the best of my days. . . . I'll no longer cut off the greatest pleasure of a woman's life—the shining in assemblies—by her forward anticipation of the respect that's due to her superior; she shall down to Cimberton Hall—she shall—she shall! (465)

Even at the end of the play, when all has been decided, Cimberton no longer wants Lucinda, and her father has promised her to Mr. Myrtle, Mrs. Sealand is still thinking of herself. Her final comment is, "Well! However, I'm glad the girl's disposed of, any way." (469). These words, her final lines in the play, clearly demonstrate that Mrs. Sealand remains unreformed. As Humphrey Gubbins' father and Biddy Tipkin's uncle barter their charges into a marriage arrangement for money, so does Mrs. Sealand, both for money and for the sake of her own vanity—what Steele would consider the two worst possible motives for marriage.

Cimberton, of course, is the other villain of the play, and his vices include his ill pursuit and treatment of women, in this case Lucinda, as already demonstrated, as well as his reason for pursuing her—money. Upon the discovery that Mr. Sealand's estate is to

be divided between Lucinda and his newly discovered other daughter, Cimberton says, "Why then, if half Mrs. Lucinda's fortune is gone, you can't say that any of my estate is settled upon her. I was in treaty for the whole, but if that is not to be come at, to be sure there can be no bargain" (469). All Cimberton is interested in is finding a wife to breed an heir and enlarge his fortune, and it matters not to him how he treats her in the process: he is clearly a man far afield of Steele's moral code.

In contrast to these four portrayers of vice in the subplot, the five principal players who figure into the play's main plot allow Steele to employ his method of making every lead a model of virtue. Mr. Sealand is Steele's antithesis to Mrs. Sealand's poor parenting, as well as Steele's exemplary model of a merchant. The very first piece of information the audience is told about Mr. Sealand comes from Sir John, Bevil Jr.'s father, who is telling his servant Humphrey that Bevil Jr.'s reputation is "so fair in the world, that old Sealand, the great India merchant, has offered his only daughter and sole heiress to that vast estate of his, as a wife for him" (441). This one statement reveals that Mr. Sealand cares enough for his daughter to seek a man with a good reputation for her and that he has been so successful as a merchant that he now has a "vast estate." In a later conversation with Sir John, Mr. Sealand even goes so far in his care for his daughter's welfare as to poke fun at Sir John's attempt to recommend his son on the basis of family genealogy and descent by listing names of known nobility, implying they are part of his daughter's heritage, then revealing they were really names of his father's pet birds used in cockfights. In defending his raillery, Mr. Sealand comments, "Yet, sir, I have made no objections to your son's family. 'Tis his morals that I doubt" (461). To Mr. Sealand's credit and in support of Steele's moral code, Sealand cares more about the moral

standards of the man his daughter may marry than about the man's family or money—the complete opposite of his wife. Sealand goes on to explain part of the reason he is so watchful of his daughter: "I lost, in my earlier years, a very fine wife, and with her a poor little infant. This makes me, perhaps, overcautious to preserve the second bounty of providence to me, and be as careful as I can of this child. You'll pardon me; my poor girl, sir, is as valuable to me as your boasted son to you" (462). When Mr. Sealand goes to visit Indiana to see just what kind of person Bevil Jr. has in his supposed keeping, to his joy he discovers a woman of virtue and the daughter he thought he had lost. The reunion is a touching one, and Mr. Sealand once again relishes the joy of fatherhood: "O my child! How are our sorrows past o'erpaid by such a meeting! Though I have lost so many years of soft paternal dalliance with thee, yet, in one day to find thee thus, and thus bestow thee in such perfect happiness, is ample, ample reparation" (468). This reunion and Sealand's care of his younger daughter align with Steele's observation in *Spectator* no. 449 (August 5, 1712):

> Certain it is, that there is no Kind of Affection so pure and angelick as that of a Father to a Daughter. He beholds her both with, and without Regard to her Sex. In love to our Wives there is Desire, to our Sons there is Ambition; but in that to our Daughters, there is something which there are no Words to express. Her Life is designed wholly domestick, and she is so ready a Friend and Companion, that everything that passes about a Man, is accompanied with the idea of her Presence. (4:79)

Thus, Mr. Sealand represents Steele's ideal of a parent's concerns in a child's marriage and a father's affectionate bond with his daughter.

Sir John Bevil, Bevil Jr.'s father, is an ideal master to his servant and has a relationship with his son that is almost too good, on both their accounts, for either of them. As the play opens, Sir John is conversing with his servant Humphrey and reminisces that it has been forty years since Humphrey was hired. Humphrey declares, "I thank you sir; it has been an easy forty years, and I have passed 'em without much sickness, care or labor," and Sir John acknowledges, "I have been a kind master to you. I have used you, for the ingenuous nature I observed in you from the beginning, more like an humble friend than a servant" (441). Such a master-servant bond is described in Sir Roger DeCoverley's household (one of the fictitious members of the Spectator Club) in *Spectator* no. 107 (July 3, 1711). Steele explains why Sir Roger's servants, rather than avoiding him, actually go out of their way to be near him:

> This proceeds from the human and equal Temper of the Man of the House, who also perfectly well knows how to enjoy a great Estate, with such Oeconomy as ever to be much beforehand. This makes his own Mind untroubled, and consequently unapt to vent peevish Expressions, or give passionate or inconsistent Orders to those about him. Thus Respect and Love go together; and a certain Chearfulness in Performance of their Duty is the particular Distinction of the lower Part of this Family. (1:443)

In *Spectator* no. 294 (February 6, 1712), Steele notes that a man would be wise to treat a servant so as to have "a paternal Air in the Master, who would be relieved from much Care and Anxiety from the Gratitude and Diligence of an humble Friend attending him as his Servant" (3:49). This is exactly the sort of relationship and feeling Sir John Bevil has inspired in Humphrey throughout the forty years they have lived as master and servant.

As for Sir John's father-son relationship, Humphrey testifies, "You have ever acted like good and generous father, and he like an obedient and grateful son" (441). Sir John explains how he has raised Bevil Jr. in the opening scene: "Now, I thought liberty would be as little injurious to my son; therefore, as soon as he grew towards man, I indulged him in living after his own manner: I knew not how, otherwise, to judge of his inclination; for what can be concluded from a behavior under restraint and fear?" (441). Thus, Sir John is a thoughtful father who has tried to determine how best to guide his son toward manhood. However, Humphrey lets the audience in on the fact that often father and son are almost too careful of each others' feelings: "Well, though this father and son live as well together as possible, yet their fear of giving each other pain is attended with constant mutual uneasiness. I'm sure I have enough to do to be honest and yet keep well with them both. But they know I love 'em, and that makes the task less painful" (442). After a discouraging conversation with Mr. Sealand, who has gone off to investigate Bevil Jr.'s mistress, Sir John confides in Humphrey: "My head and heart are on the rack about my son," and after trying to pump his servant for information, laments, "To be a father is to be in care for one whom you oftener disoblige than please by that very care. Oh, that sons could know the duty to a father before they themselves are fathers! But perhaps you'll say now that I am one of the happiest fathers in the world; but I assure you, that of the very happiest is not a condition to be envied" (462-463). Humphrey attempts to reassure his master, telling him, "You are overfond—nay, give me leave to say you are unjustly apprehensive from your fondness," implying that perhaps Sir John's deep care for his son causes needless worrying on his part (463). Regardless of his

worries, Sir John's relationship with his son certainly demonstrates the care and affection Steele advocates between parent and child in his essays.

Mr. Myrtle, though he is really a large part of the subplot, is also Bevil Jr.'s good friend. He serves as a somewhat flawed yet virtuous and well-intentioned model of two aspects of Steele's code for a gentleman; he treats Lucinda respectfully and pursues her for the right reasons, and he can listen to reason and change course when he is headed for trouble. The audience first learns of Myrtle's love for Lucinda when he visits Bevil Jr. early in the play. Bevil Jr. innocently asks Myrtle to help him "escape" his father's arranged match with Lucinda, thinking to put Myrtle's mind at ease, but Myrtle takes offense: "Escape? Sir, neither her merit or her fortune are below your acceptance. Escaping, do you call it?" (448). This at once reveals two things about Myrtle that are to his credit—he is pursuing her based on her merit, not just her wealth, and he does not like to hear anything said that may come close to disrespecting her. The latter is confirmed a moment later when Myrtle says, "I can't bear to hear her spoken of with levity or concern" (448). As this gentlemanly quality stems from his love, so does the flaw of jealousy noted by Lucinda in her letter to Bevil Jr.: "Mr. Myrtle has a jealousy in his temper which gives me some terrors; but my esteem for him inclines me to hope that only an ill effect which sometimes accompanies a tender love, and what may be cured by a careful and unblameable conduct" (459). Lucinda's instinct is proven correct when Myrtle rashly challenges Bevil Jr. to a duel after wrongly assuming that something of significance has developed between Lucinda and his friend; however, Bevil Jr. is able to appeal to Myrtle's sense of reason and sound judgment and talk him out of the duel. When he comes to his senses, Myrtle says, "Dear Bevil, your friendly conduct has

convinced me that there is nothing manly but what is conducted by reason and agreeable to the practice of virtue and justice" (461). Myrtle displays that quality of sound judgment so lauded by Steele in his essays perhaps a bit later than he should have, being in the height of his love for Lucinda. He shows just remorse for his actions, as he is still thinking about his error later in the play while he prepares to disguise himself and win Lucinda: "But I am so mortified at this conduct of mine towards poor Bevil. He must think meanly of me—I know not how to reassume myself and be in spirit enough for such an adventure as this" (464). This genuine regret, along with his noble defense and pursuit of Lucinda, marks Myrtle as a model for the fine gentleman of Steele's essays.

Indiana, Bevil Jr.'s true love, is the heroine of the play and represents Steele's ideal young woman. She is beautiful and poised, suffers affliction with grace, is void of coquetry, loves Bevil, Jr. for all the right reasons, values and displays virtuous behavior, seeks to enlighten her mind, and is unselfish to the core. The first description of Indiana is actually given by Sir John Bevil as he tells Humphrey of observing an encounter between his son and this woman of mystery at a masquerade ball: "Her uncommon air, her noble modesty, the dignity of her person, and the occasion itself, drew the whole assembly together; and I soon heard it buzzed about that she was the adopted daughter of a famous sea-officer in France" (442). Thus, Indiana is certainly a striking yet modest young woman whom the audience soon learns has suffered through much in her young life. Bevil Jr. relates her story to Humphrey, telling how Indiana's father, a merchant, went to the Indies to seek his fortune. When he sent for his wife, sister, and baby daughter to join him, they were taken captive on the sea by a privateer, and her mother became ill and died while a prisoner at sea. The captain of this boat took Indiana and her

aunt under his care and was kind to them, taking them back with him to his estate in Toulon. However, he was killed at sea sometime later, and his brother took control of all he owned, including Indiana, whom the brother tried to seduce. When she refused him, he cruelly seized her fortune left by her mother and threw Indiana herself into prison, which is where Bevil Jr. found her and rescued her (447). To suffer with grace is a quality of which Steele writes highly in his essays and which Indiana consistently has displayed through her afflictions. She says to Mr. Sealand, not knowing he is her father, "No 'twas heaven's high will I should be such—to be plundered in my cradle! Tossed on the seas! And even there an infant captive! To lose my mother, hear but of my father! To be adopted! Lose my adopter! Then plunged again in worse calamities!" (467). Steele praises this attitude in *Spectator* no. 312 (February 27, 1712): "Whenever Men have looked into their Heart for the idea of true Excellency in humane Nature, they have found it to consist in suffering after a right Manner and with a good Grace. Heroes are always drawn bearing Sorrows, struggling with Adversities, undergoing all Kinds of Hardships" (3:129). Indiana exemplifies his concept of a heroine who suffers with grace.

Indiana also displays exemplary behavior in her dealings with Bevil Jr.; she is far from coquettish as she loves him for his sincerity and honor, never flirts or manipulates, and despises any form of flattery. Indiana tells her aunt, who tries to convince her for safety's sake that Bevil Jr. must have a hidden agenda, her true feelings for Bevil Jr. and their basis: "When he is present I look upon him as one to whom I owe my life and the support of it—then, again, as the man who loves me with sincerity and honor" (450). She describes "his hidden bounty, his respectful conduct," and "his careful provision" for her as the bases for her deep affection for this man who has rescued her and cares for her

without asking anything in return (450). She disagrees with her aunt and says of Bevil Jr., "His actions are the result of thinking, and he has sense enough to make even virtue fashionable" (450). It is for this reason that Indiana hopes to win his heart, not for what wealth he may bring her or for how he might cater to her person. In fact, when Bevil Jr. pays her a compliment, Indiana replies, "Should I think I deserve this, 'twere enough to make my vanity forfeit the very esteem you offer me," and she goes on to explain that "esteem is the result of reason, and to deserve it from good sense, the height of human glory" (451). She says, "I had rather a man of honor should pay me that [esteem], than all the homage of a sincere and humble love" (451). In other words, she acknowledges that "esteem rises from a higher source—the merit of the soul," and thus is worth more than love which may only be based on "external merit" (451). Even when Indiana tries to determine if Bevil Jr. has any feeling for her, she does not approach the conversation in a manipulative way—she merely questions him using a hypothetical situation that mirrors their own and tries to gauge from his answers but is unsuccessful. She accepts, nevertheless, that she is (452-453). She says, "In the mean time I'll wrap myself up in the integrity of my own heart, nor dare to doubt of his. / As conscious honor all his actions steers, / So conscious innocence dispels my fears" (453).

Two final qualities that make her the perfect model for Steele's ideal woman are her delight in enlightening her mind and her unselfish behavior toward the end of the play. When Bevil Jr. first visits her, they discuss the opera together, at the end of which Indiana comments, "All the pleasure the best opera gives us is but mere sensation. Methinks it's pity the mind can't have a little more share in the entertainment. The music's certainly fine, but, in my thoughts, there's none of your composers can come up

to old Shakespeare and Otway," and, startled, Bevil Jr. exclaims, "How, madam! Why if a woman of your sense were to say this in the drawing room. . ." (452). They are interrupted, but clearly Indiana's comment puts her out of the league of ordinary, drawing room conversations of the times. Indiana's unselfishness in matters of the heart, however, is certainly a rare quality in any woman. She demonstrates self-denial at the end of the play when Mr. Sealand comes to see her, thinking that she is Bevil Jr.'s kept mistress who is preventing him from marrying Lucinda. When Indiana realizes she has the opportunity to say something that may prevent Bevil Jr. from marrying another, she does not take it, choosing rather to keep his reputation intact than serve her own interests. She unselfishly corrects Mr. Sealand's false impression with these words:

> Let me not me, miserable though I may be, do injury to my benefactor. No, sir, my treatment ought rather to reconcile you to his virtues. If to bestow without a prospect of return; if to delight in supporting what might, perhaps be thought an object of desire, with no other view than to be her guard against those who would not be so disinterested—if these actions, sir, can in a careful parent's eye commend him to a daughter, give yours, sir—give her to my honest generous Bevil! What have I to do but sigh and weep. . . (467)

In effect sacrificing her long cherished hopes, Indiana does what she thinks is right, best, and most honorable rather than what she really desires. Steele's description in *Spectator* no. 4 (March 5, 1711) of a woman he admires fits well with his characterization of Indiana in this play: "Behold the Beauty of her Person chastised by the Innocence of her Thoughts. Chastity, Good-Nature, and Affability are the Graces that play in her

Countenance; she knows she is handsome, but she knows she is good. Conscious Beauty adorn'd with Conscious Virtue!" (1:20-21).

As Indiana is the female model of virtue, so Bevil Jr. exemplifies Steele's view of all that is truly manly and moral as expressed in his essays from *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. In fact, Sir John's initial description of his son sounds as if it were almost lifted right out of one of Steele's essays: "His carriage is so easy to all with whom he converses, that he is never assuming, never prefers himself to others, nor ever is guilty of that rough sincerity which a man is not called to and certainly disobliges most of his acquaintance" (441). Furthermore, in Bevil Jr.'s first appearance, Steele has him sitting in his lodgings, reading *Spectator* no. 159 (September 1, 1711) by Addison. Bevil Jr. praises Addison thus: "This charming vision of Mirza! Such an author consulted in a morning sets the spirits for the vicissitudes of the day better than the glass does a man's person" (445). Clearly, Steele has him marked for the "Man of Knowledge and Virtue" to whom he refers in *Tatler* no. 89 (November 3, 1709) (McDonald 34).

Bevil Jr. demonstrates the proper filial obedience to his father that Steele demands in his essays, particularly *Spectator* no.192 (October 10, 1711) when he observes that "an insignificant Trifle has its Weight when offered by a dutiful Child" (2:255). In his first scene with his father, Bevil Jr. greets his father with these words: "Sir, you are the most gallant, the most complaisant of all parents," and when his father asks if Bevil Jr. will really marry Lucinda, Bevil Jr. replies, "Did I ever disobey any command of yours, sir?—nay, any inclination that I saw you bent upon?" (445). Nevertheless, however dutiful he is, Bevil Jr. is also balanced in how he follows his father's expectations. He later tells Humphrey, "You may assure yourself I never will marry without my father's consent.

But give me leave to say, too, this declaration does not come up to a promise that I will take whomsoever he pleases" (446) Bevil Jr. then asks Humphrey's assistance: "Honest Humphrey, you have always been an useful friend to my father and myself; I beg you, continue your good offices and don't let us come to the necessity of a dispute; for, if we should dispute, I must either part with more than life, or lose the best of fathers" (446-447). Even Indiana acknowledges Bevil Jr.'s devotion to his father when she is defending him to her aunt: "I know his virtue, I know his filial piety, and ought to trust his management with a father to whom he has uncommon obligations" (450). As Steele asserts in *Spectator* no. 192 (October 10, 1711), "It is the most beautiful Object the Eyes of Man can behold, to see a Man of Worth and his Son live in an entire unreserved Correspondence. The mutual Kindness and Affection between them give an inexpressible Satisfaction to all who know them. It is a sublime Pleasure which encreases by the Participation. It is as sacred as Friendship, as pleasurable as Love, and as joyful as Religion" (2:255).

One of Steele's requirements for a true gentleman is decency of speech, of which Bevil Jr. is an excellent example. In *Spectator* no. 65 (May 15, 1711), Steele openly expresses disgust for Dorimant, the lead character in Sir Etherege's play, The Man of Mode, stating that, far from being refined in his speech as a fine gentleman should be, Dorimant is a "Clown in his language" as seen in the way he verbally abuses the Orange Woman (1:278-279). In no. 75 of *The Spectator* (May 26, 1711), Steele goes even further, stating, "When a Gentleman speaks Coarsly, he has dressed himself Clean to no purpose. . . .To betray in a Man's Talk a corrupted Imagination, is a much greater Offence against the Conversation of Gentlemen, than any Negligence of Dress

imaginable" (1:324). Later on, in *Spectator* no. 100 (June 25, 1711), Steele maintains that, "It is a Degree toward the Life of Angels, when we enjoy Conversation wherein there is nothing presented but in its Excellence; and a Degree towards that of Daemons, wherein nothing is shewn but in its Degeneracy" (1:422). Clearly, Steele believes that a true gentleman is one whose speech avoids any kind of coarse talk or verbal offensiveness.

Bevil Jr., in his conversation with Sir Myrtle regarding Cimberton, displays just such a refined use of language, more so than does Sir Myrtle, who ultimately reveals Cimberton's bad example of refined language. At the mention of Cimberton's suit of Myrtle's darling Lucinda, Sir Myrtle begins to verbally bash Cimberton, stating, "Hang him, a formal philosophical, pedantic coxcomb!" then proceeds to call him a "sot" who is "under the direction of great vanity and very little judgment" (448). Bevil Jr., on the other hand, refrains from saying anything negative about Cimberton: "Are you sure that is not affected?" and goes on to suggest that some women are "set on fire" by the way Cimberton is said to treat women (449). However, Myrtle, carried away by his own passions, cries "No, no! hang him, the rogue has no art. It is pure simple insolence and stupidity" (449). Even still, Bevil Jr. carefully remains neutral: "Yet with all this, I don't take him [Cimberton] for a fool" (449). Finally, Myrtle calms down enough to acknowledge that Cimberton is indeed no idiot; in fact, "he [Cimberton] says many things that want only the circumstances of time and place to be very just and agreeable" (449) This statement is a much more refined, positive way of saying something essentially negative about Cimberton and also shows how far Cimberton himself is from being a true gentleman, lacking discernment of when certain issues should or should not be discussed.

Thus, Bevil Jr., out of the three men in the scene, epitomizes Steele's ideal of refined speech in a true gentleman.

In *Spectator* no. 65 (May 15, 1711), Steele not only requires refined language from a "fine Gentleman" but also expects that a gentleman "should be honest in his actions"; Steele derides the negative example Dorimant sets in his numerous lies to Mrs. Loveit and others (1:278). In contrast, Steele's Bevil Jr. is honest in all his relationships, with the exception of his father, for which small deception he provides an acceptable reason. Bevil Jr. is honest about his true feelings for Indiana with both his friend, Myrtle, and with Lucinda, to whom Bevil Jr. is formally engaged. In fact, when the audience first meets Bevil Jr., he has just sent a letter to Lucinda confessing his true feelings for another, which provides his justification for deceiving his father: "Well, then, with the assurance of being rejected, I think I may confidently say to my father that I am ready to marry [Lucinda]. Then let me resolve upon—what I am not very good at, though it is—an honest dissimulation" (445). Bevil Jr. admits he is not very good at being dishonest and calls his little deception an "honest dissimulation." This is Steele's means of keeping Bevil Jr. as his spotless model of integrity while maintaining the conflict in the plot, a flawed yet effective tactic.

Early on, in no. 21 of *The Tatler* (May 28, 1709), Steele insists upon another quality for a true gentleman—good judgment: "The most necessary Talent therefore in a Man of Conversation, which is what we ordinarily intend by a Fine Gentleman, is a good Judgment. He that hath this in Perfection, is Master of his Companion, without letting him see it" (qtd. in Allen 8). Bevil Jr. shows every indication of having good judgment, discernment, and sensitivity where others are concerned. Amid the stress of attempting

to keep his father happy, to escape his arranged marriage, and to avoid angering his friend, Bevil Jr. thinks of Indiana and how she must be handling the news of his engagement to another since she is financially dependent on him: "But all this while poor Indiana is tortured with the doubt of me. She has no support or comfort but in my fidelity, yet sees me daily pressed to marriage with another. How painful, in such a crisis, must be every hour she thinks on me! I'll let her see at least my conduct to her is not changed" (449). Bevil Jr. also shows good judgment in the observation he makes about Myrtle's request for a duel prior to Myrtle's entrance: "Well, I am resolved upon my carriage to him [Myrtle]. He is in love, and in every circumstance of life a little distrustful, which I must allow for" (459). This is an extremely discerning observation, and Bevil Jr.'s ability to make such judgments results in just what Steele suggested—Bevil Jr. becomes "master of his companion," in this case master of Myrtle, because he recognizes exactly why Myrtle is behaving the way he is and therefore knows how to handle him. Thus, Bevil Jr., endowed with great discernment and good judgment, becomes Steele's positive example of another quality of a true gentleman; yet such displays of virtue, rather than hindering the play, manage to push the plot forward toward its happy resolution.

Another quality Steele insists should be found in a fine gentleman is the quality of good humor or good nature—the ability to maintain a steady pleasant disposition in the face of varying circumstances. In no. 75 of *The Spectator* (May 26, 1711), Steele applauds the man who does "all Things with a graceful unconcern, and a Gentleman-like Ease;" Steele says, "He that governs his Thoughts with the everlasting Rules of Reason and Sense, must have something so inexpressibly Graceful in his Words and Actions, that

every Circumstance must become him" (1:325). In no. 100 of *The Spectator* (June 25, 1711), Steele comments that "this portable Quality of good Humour seasons all the Parts and Occurrences we meet with in such a Manner, that there are no moments lost," and adds that "when a well corrected lively Imagination and good Breeding are added to a sweet Disposition, they qualify it to be one of the greatest Blessings, as well as Pleasures of Life" (1:421). In two instances, Bevil Jr. indicates that he considers maintaining a pleasant disposition in the face of unpleasant circumstances to be of utmost importance as well. When the audience first sees him, Bevil Jr. is not looking forward to the next few hours: "But what a day have I to go through! To put on an easy look with an aching heart" (445). Bevil Jr. reveals his intentions to face what he has to go through with as pleasant an outward appearance as he can muster—another necessary "honest dissimulation." Later, when he first receives Myrtle's challenge to a duel and sends his servant Tom from the room to wait for Myrtle, Bevil Jr. admits, "I put on a serenity while my fellow was present; but I have never been more thoroughly disturbed" (459). Bevil then vents a little but settles down and proceeds to consider calmly and logically just how he should handle this challenge from his friend. In these two instances, Steele uses Bevil Jr. as the means to draw the audience into the emotions of the plot, while at the same time instructing them on the quality of good humor.

Of course, Steele has much to say on the subject of duels between "gentlemen," particularly in no. 25 of *The Tatler* (June 7, 1709); Steele there suggests that dueling is a "fatal folly" and is an entirely ridiculous activity for true gentlemen (qtd. in McDonald 19). In this essay, Steele makes five astute observations about the circumstances surrounding a duel, all of which are borne out in The Conscious Lovers where Bevil Jr.

and Myrtle nearly engage in a duel themselves. In his first observation, Steele refers to dueling as a "Custom which all Men wish exploded, though no Man has Courage enough to resist it," referring to the fact that no one really likes this tradition but is afraid to speak out against it for fear of being judged a coward (qtd. in McDonald 20). Steele notes, "I am pretty well acquainted by great Opportunities with the Nature of Man, and know of a Truth, that all Men fight *against their Will*" (qtd. in McDonald 20). When presented with Myrtle's challenge to a duel, Bevil Jr. would much rather explain the misunderstanding than fight but voices the truth of Steele's observation: "But then this duelling, which custom has imposed upon every man who would live with reputation and honor in the world—how must I preserve myself from imputations there? He'll, forsooth, call it or think it fear, if I explain without fighting" (459).

In his second observation regarding dueling, Steele openly mocks the custom's tradition of demanding "satisfaction" when issuing a challenge. Steele says a country gentleman once commented thus on an acquaintance who had challenged him to a duel: "Last Night he sent me away cursedly out of Humour, and this Morning he fancies it would be a Satisfaction to be run through the Body" (qtd. in McDonald 20). To further illustrate the complete lack of logic in a demand for satisfaction through a duel, Steele pens the following satirical challenge:

> "Sir,
>
> Your extraordinary Behaviour last Night, and the Liberty you were pleased to take with me, makes me this Morning give you this, to tell you, because you are an ill-bred Puppy, I will meet you in Hide Park an Hour hence; and because you want both Breeding and Humanity, I desire you

> would come with a Pistol in your Hand, on Horseback, and endeavour to shoot me through the Head; to teach you more Manners. If you fail of doing me this Pleasure, I shall say, You are a Rascal on every Post in Town: And so, Sir, if you will not injure me more, I shall never forgive what you have done already. Pray Sir, do not fail of getting every Thing ready, and you will infinitely oblige,
>
> *Sir,*
> *Your most Obedient, Humble Servant."* (qtd. in McDonald 21)

In the confrontation between Bevil Jr. and Myrtle, once Bevil Jr. recovers his momentary loss of composure and offers to explain, Myrtle says, "I am sure Mr. Bevil cannot doubt but I had rather have satisfaction from his innocence than his sword" (460). In light of Steele's observations in the abovementioned essay, Myrtle's use of the word "satisfaction" is by no means accidental. This entire statement is intended to show the absurd irony in obtaining satisfaction from killing or being killed.

The third point Steele makes in reference to the nature of dueling is its complete trampling of the law—the law that makes killing illegal. Steele notes that it "occasions very frequently that a brave Man falls by a Hand below that of the common Hangman, and yet his Executioner escapes the Clutches of the Hangman for doing it" (qtd. in McDonald 20). In trying to dissuade Myrtle from his course of action in this scene, Bevil Jr. says, "Sir, you know I have often dared to disapprove of the decisions a tyrant custom has introduced, to the breach of all laws, both divine and human" (460). Bevil Jr. notes, as does Steele, that it is against both God's law and human law to take another's life, but dueling has become the exception. In recognizing this truth, Bevil Jr. again upholds Steele's standard for a true gentleman.

Steele's fourth observation concerning dueling is that its basis entirely ignores all sense of logic or reason. Steele says, "this Resentment neither has its Foundation from true Reason, or solid Fame; but is an Imposture, made up of Cowardice, Falsehood, and Want of Understanding" (qtd. in McDonald 20). In the duel scene of The Conscious Lovers, it is Myrtle who voices this observation: "Let me reflect how many friends have died by the hands of friends, for want of temper. . . . What had become of one of us, or perhaps both, had you been as weak as I was, and as incapable of reason!" He continues noting, "And yet how many have been sacrificed to that idol, the unreasonable opinion of men! Nay, they are so ridiculous in it that they often use their swords against one another with dissembled anger and real fear" (461). Again, Steele uses this scene and its characters to teach what he feels is a valuable lesson, while adding to the conflict level of the play.

The fifth and final observation Steele notes regarding dueling is that it is usually fought over some type of misunderstanding that could be resolved: "Most of the Quarrels I have ever known, have proceeded from some valiant Coxcomb's persisting in the Wrong, to defend some prevailing Folly, and preserve himself from the Ingenuity of owning a Mistake" (qtd. in McDonald 21). To close the "duel" scene in The Conscious Lovers, Steele has Myrtle utter this sad truth: "Betrayed by honor and compelled by shame, / They hazard being to preserve a name: / Nor dare enquire into the dread mistake, / Till plunged in sad eternity they wake" (461). In this scene, Bevil Jr. and Myrtle become the mouthpieces through which Steele's views are taught amid the tense scene of two friends about to fight to the death—a very effective method for pleasing the audience

by building suspense up toward a possible fight yet modeling truths that will stay with the audience long afterward.

Another personal quality Steele advocates for a true gentleman is benevolence, and true benevolence does not seek its own glory. Steele writes in *Spectator* no. 172 (September 17, 1711), "But those Men only are truly great, who place their Ambition rather in acquiring to themselves the Conscience of worthy Enterprizes, than in the Prospect of Glory which attends them. These exalted Spirits would rather be secretly the Author of Events which are serviceable to Mankind, than without being such, to have the publick Fame of it" (1:180). This passage certainly describes Bevil Jr. In telling of how he rescued Indiana, Bevil Jr. recounts how her captor, in an act of compromise, agreed to release her for payment, which Bevil Jr. generously paid: "The disappointed advocate, finding she had so unexpected a support, on cooler thoughts descended to a composition, which I, without her knowledge, secretly discharged" (447). Bevil Jr. could have revealed his actions on her behalf to Indiana to put himself more in her favor, or could have even revealed this to all in order to be hailed a hero, but chose to do the act for the pure rightness of it. He also brings Indiana back to England safely and chooses to keep supporting her and caring for her financially without ever asking any favors of any kind in return, as Indiana attests (452). This kind of benevolence is rare, and Steele liberally bestows it upon his leading character in hopes of teaching by Bevil Jr.'s gracious example.

Bevil Jr.'s careful treatment and pursuit of Indiana, occasioned by all the right motives and behavior, is the final quality he demonstrates as Steele's perfect model of gentlemanly virtue. When explaining to Myrtle why he has no desire to marry Lucinda,

Bevil Jr. claims, "Though I allow Lucinda to have good sense, wit, beauty, and virtue, I know another in whom these qualities appear to me more amiable than in her," speaking of Indiana, of course (448). His motives for seeking a way to marry her are based on truly important qualities, according to Steele, as well as beauty. His intentions are ever honorable, and he never attempts to seduce her or even mislead her at all; he sees to her every need with pure motives at heart. He tells Indiana, "If pleasure be worth purchasing, how great a pleasure is it to him who has a true taste of life, to ease an aching heart, to see the human countenance lighted up into smiles of joy, on the receipt of a bit of ore which is superfluous and otherwise useless in a man's own pocket? What could a man do better with his cash. . . . What then must it be when we serve an object of merit, of admiration!" (453). Thus Bevil Jr.'s thoughts and expectations regarding marriage fit Steele's code to perfection. Bevil Jr. admits pleasure in "seeing a virtuous woman that is the pure delight of [his] eyes and the guiltless joy of [his] heart," yet concedes that "the best condition of human life is but a gentler misery. To hope for perfect happiness is vain, / And love has ever its allays of pain" (449). Thus, it is that Bevil Jr. is *the* key character for the success of Steele's goal of writing a play that embodies his code, representing all that Steele views as truly manly. As critic John Loftis notes, "Steele provides in Bevil Jr., a direct model for emulation, endowing him with the qualities of filial obedience, faithfulness and generosity in love, nobility in friendship, and reasonableness in affairs of honor, all of which were recommended time and again in the *Tatler*, the *Spectator*, and the *Guardian*" (183).

Bevil Jr. and Indiana's philosophies about marriage also dovetail nicely with Steele's. In *Spectator* no. 268 (January 7, 1712), Steele writes of the rarity of such couples:

> How rare is it for a Man, when he engages himself in the Thoughts of Marriage, to place his Hopes of having in such a Woman a constant, agreeable Companion? One who will divide his Cares and double his Joys? Who will manage that Share of his Estate he intrusts to her Conduct with Prudence and Frugality, govern his House with Oeconomy and Discretion, and be an Ornament to himself and Family? Where shall we find the Man who looks out for one who places her chief Happiness in the Practice of Virtue, and makes her Duty her continual Pleasure? Now as for the Women; How few of them are there who place the Happiness of their Marriage in the having a wise and virtuous Friend? One who will be faithful and just to all, and constant and loving to them? Who with Care and Diligence will look after and improve the Estate, and without grudging allow whatever is prudent and convenient? (2:546)

When Sir John closes The Conscious Lovers by addressing the newly engaged couples, "Now ladies and gentlemen, you have set the world a fair example. Your happiness is owing to your constancy and merit," Steele suggests they will all find that happiness described in *Spectator* no. 490 (September 22, 1712):

> I cannot be perswaded but that the Passion a Bridegroom has for a Virtuous young Woman, will, by little and little, grow into Friendship, and then it is ascended to an higher Pleasure than it was in its first Fervour.

> Without this happens, he is a very unfortunate Man who has enter'd into this State, and left the Habitudes of Life he might have enjoy'd with a faithful Friend. But when the Wife proves capable of filling serious as well as joyous Hours, she brings Happiness unknown to Friendship it self. (4:239)

Steele successfully employed a new method of comedy by creating principal characters of virtue in order to convey his moral code in its entirety in an entertaining and memorable way. That The Conscious Lovers succeeded not only in instructing, but also in pleasing its audiences is evidenced by its popularity. George Aitken reports that "the play was a great success, enjoying what was then considered the long run of eighteen nights, with eight performances before the end of the season, and on the 1st December it was published—with the date 1723 on the title page—with a dedication to the King, for which Steele is said to have received five hundred guineas" (276). George Nettleton submits that "its endurance is attested by 491 performances during the remainder of the century. It became a standby for benefit performances (110), was played 'By command' 10 times, and was called for 'By the Desire of Several Persons of Quality' on 39 occasions" (Nettleton 436). Steele himself wrote in a letter to Colley Cibber that The Conscious Lovers "had brought more money to Drury Lane 'than any play was ever known to do'" (Connely 424). Henry Montgomery, in his memoirs of Steele, acknowledges:

> After having for such a long series of years relinquished his dramatic pursuits, in consequence of the undeserved reception of one of his last efforts in that line, [Steele] had once more reverted to them in the full

> maturity of his powers with renewed and heightened brilliancy in the result, and a reward in the reception which must have equaled, if it did not surpass, his most sanguine expectations. The success of this celebrated comedy was immense, but not beyond its merit. (265)

Not only was the play a great success, but it also had a noticeable impact on the theatrical community and Steele's society at large as he had hoped it would. Aitken attests that "Numerous poems in praise of the good effect his writings had had on the society of his day were sent to Steele upon the production of this play—'the last blaze,' as Victor puts it, 'Sir Richard's glory'" (279). John Loftis records:

> Few plays have attracted more attention on their first appearance than The Conscious Lovers. . . .The production of the play marked the virtual end of Steele's attempts to reform the English stage. . . .In the play he presented his final plea for a reformed drama—a plea that was not without great effectiveness, as the comedy of the later part of the century bears witness. . . . [Steele] accomplished one of the theatrical objectives he had set for himself in providing the stage with an enormously successful play that was without moral offense. (212)

The Conscious Lovers was the realization of one of Steele's lifelong goals, his final crowning achievement. At long last, Steele had clearly and effectively fulfilled his desire to write a play that was both entertaining and instructive, one that would take his moral code "from the stage to the world."

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