

Subtle Social Critique in Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*

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Abstract

Oliver Goldsmith's, She Stoops to Conquer is one of the most popular comedies in England's 18th Century. This is due to the dramatist's witty usage of satire and humour as a means to ridicule and burlesque society's vices, shortcomings and false manners of the age. Yet, as the research explains, the play's comical effects extend far beyond mere social laughter and entertainment. The play in fact delivers subtle radical criticism with regard to important issues such as intergenerational conflicts, gender discrimination, and marriage. The main objective of Goldsmith's subtle criticism is to revoke and debunks prejudices, misconceptions and false opinions about marriage and woman's strife for selfhood in Eighteenth-Century England. The research is significant for it brings into focus the dramatist's artistic techniques in delivering subtle criticism in the comedy of manners.

1. INTRODUCTION

Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771) has been popular on the English stage during the Eighteenth century, and still is staged occasionally in the present day. This is due to the play's witty language and its significant themes. The dramatist uses satire and humour as a means to ridicule and burlesque society's vices, shortcomings and false manners of the age. Together with Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the dramatist in fact contributed to reviving the 'Comedy of Manners'; which is a kind of comedy that satirizes the trivial manners and attitudes of the high-class society. "In his Essay on the Theatre, Goldsmith called the sentimental comedy that had come to dominate the British stage "a false tragedy", unworthy of the name "comedy." (Dupre, 2008, p.151). Goldsmith and other significant dramatists of that era objected to the sentimental mode in restoration drama for many reasons. While this type of drama pretended to "be critical of the licentious manners of a hypocritical society, yet "they displayed more sympathy for the vices they decried than for the virtues they praised. Contrary to the sentimental comedy, Goldsmith introduced a new type of comedy which as "he called "laughing comedy". (Ibid). The "laughing comedy" has its root in "plays written in a satirical tradition of Terence and Moliere", whose comedies ridiculed the vices of "low" characters (Burney, P.316. 2002). Nonetheless, the dramatist's main objective in such kind of drama is far from merely eliciting laughter in the audience through witty and humorous speeches. As the current research displays, there is always subtle and hidden criticism" or critical components in William Goldsmith's comedies. As Clark (2007) stated, the dramatist's criticism of the sentimental comedy was due to "its lack of a critical component."(p.126). Notably, Goldsmith

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artistically intermixed comic elements with serious critical discourse in his comedies. Comic elements in the play, for instance, are instigated either through witty 'funny' dialogues or through multiple dramatic confusions and misunderstandings among the conflicting characters. The female protagonist's verbal skill, particularly, plays an essential role in producing comic effects. The main objective of the play's comic elements, as the research indicates, is to deliver subtle criticism of controversial social issues, particularly parental authority over marriage and courtship, as well as woman's quest for selfhood.

2. Intergenerational Conflict and Parental Strife

Goldsmith's play reflects on many significant themes, among others, parental strife, woman's struggle and intergenerational conflict. Both Mr. Hardcastle and Mrs. Hardcastle, as typical examples of patriarchal figures, hold unrealistic views about social costumes and manners. The first exchange of speeches between the two characters reveals the extent each character has been deceived by false appearances. Mrs. Hardcastle in the beginning of the play complains about her current situation for, as she describes it, living in "an old rambling mansion, that looks for all the world like an inn", and they "never see company" (Wood, 2007. 1. 1.11-13). Mr. Hardcastle, on the contrary, expresses his affection for "everything that's old: old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine, " and "old wife" (1. 1.18-19). Ironically though, both characters are mistaken and deluded in their perspectives about costumes and manners. They both represent old-fashioned authoritarian parent who try to impose their will upon their children's choices in life. Mr. Hardcastle already hatched a scheme to forge an arranged marriage between her son and Miss Neille since the latter inherited a good deal of fortune. Though Tony detests the arranged marriage, Mrs. Hardcastle nonetheless forces her son to undergo such arranged marriage because she believes it secures her son a good future. Mrs. Hardcastle's greed to take hold of a fortune also affects the destiny of two other lovers, Hasting and Miss Neville, since the arranged marriage might disrupt their genuine love relationship. So, fortune and wealth play crucial role in securing successful marriages according to authoritarian parents. For instance, when Mr. Hardcastle laments Tony's uneducated and ill-mannered personality, Mrs. Hardcastle replies that "Tony Lumpkin has a good fortune, and that is why he "is not to live by his learning" (Wood, 2007. 1. 1. 33-34). Tony tries to release himself from the parental bondage through villainous schemes and trickeries. The conflict between Mrs. Hardcastle and Tony represents an example of intergenerational conflict. Another example of intergenerational clash is the conflict between Mr. Hardcastle and his daughter Kate. As typical example of conventional patriarchy, Mr. Hardcastle desperately tries to enforce his opinions and views upon his daughter. He complains that "the fashion of the times have almost infected her too" (Wood, 2007. 1. 1. 83-84), since she has changed her costume and attitude in the household. Goldsmith critically reflects on the drastic changes which affected English society during that age like the decline of parental authority over their children, and new generation's aspiration for more liberty. As Ossowska (2016) stated , "the decline of parental authority over children has often been attributed to quick technical development" in England during the Industrial revolution."(p.46).

Notably, Mr. Hardcastle's attitude toward Kate is quite different from Mrs. Hardcastle's attitude toward Tony. Regardless of his reserved and conservative ideas, Mr Hardcastle has given his daughter a margin of freedom in the household. To a certain degree, he is less rigid in his opinions than that of Mr. Hardcastle, and more willing to accept Kate's ideas and opinions that

are different to his own. Mr Hardcastle's reconciling attitude is apparent in the agreement upon which Kate has been allowed "to dress 'in her' own manner during the day, and in the evening", she "puts on (her) own housewife's dress to please (her) father" (1. 1.91-92). The agreement lays the ground for further understandings in the future between Kate and Mr Hardcastle, particularly when Mr Harcastle tells Kate about "a young gentleman" he "has "chosen" to be "her husband from town". (1. 1.96-97). Mr Hardcastle's lenient attitude is more obvious when he asserts that he "well never control Kate's choice". This partial arranged marriage will be a subject of humorous discussion. As Swindells (2014) stated, Kate "and her father negotiate from a position of mutual agreement about her arranged marriage." (p.361). Another example of parental conflict and intergenerational clash is reflected in Sir Charle's attempt to forge a union between his son Marlowe and Kate. Marlowe lacks free will and is incapable of deciding whom he will marry. Hastings, who has an independent personality, finds Marlowe's dilemma quite amusing. When he asks Marlowe 'How can you ever expect to marry!', Marlowe in a sarcastic tone replies:

Never, unless, as among kings and princes, my bride were to be courted by proxy. If, indeed, like an eastern bridegroom, one were to be introduced to a wife he never saw before, it might be endured. (2. 1.108-111).

The above speech demonstrates Marlowe's helplessness in choosing a future bride since everything has been arranged previously by his parents. Furthermore, the speech indicates that Marlowe views courtship more as a social obligation than an emotional attachment. Here, the play delivers a subtle satire against arranged marriage where courtship and marriage are parts of social consume to be performed by young people merely to satisfy authoritarian parents. Moreover, the ceremonial costume of arranged marriage is subtly satirized in an exchange of speech in which Hastings questions Marlowe how he would 'behave to the lady ' at the request of ' his ' father':

As I behave to all other ladies. Bow very low -answer yes, or no, to all her demands; but for the rest, I don't think I shall venture to look in her face till I see my father's again. (2. 1.117-119).

Marlowe's speech indicates that he values traditional conventions like ceremonial and arranged marriage more than genuine love relationships. The forthcoming meeting between Marlowe and Kate will display Marlowe's split personality with regard to marriage. So, the main conflict of the play concentrates on Kate's witty schemes in bringing about changes in Marlowe's personality, as well as causing a radical change in the old generation's mentality.

3. Female Protagonist's Path Toward Selfhood

The conflict of opinions is evident in the first exchange of speech between Mr Hardcastle and Kate with regard to the future suitor. To Mr. Hardcastle, Marlowe represents an idealistic suitor because he is, as he describes him, "young, brave" and "very generous"(1. 1.112-114). Moreover, he has "been bred a scholar", and "with great " accomplishments" (1. 1.108-109). What attracts Mr Hardcastle most about Marlowe being "one of the most bashful and reserved young fellows in all the world" (1. 1.119-120). Whereas Kate finds some of the qualities described by Mr Hardcastle about Marlowe's personality quite appealing, she nonetheless

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expresses real concern at other qualities, particularly his reserved and bashfulness, “a reserved lover” as she describes it, “always makes a suspicious husband” (1. 1.122-123). Whereas Mr Hardcastle considers the suitor’s reservedness for the meaning of ‘virtue’ and ‘modesty’, Kate nonetheless interprets the word for the lack of sociability; and worse of all, arrogance and hypocrisy. Most of the play’s main plot, interestingly, centres around the conflicted opinions between Mr Hardcastle and Kate about how to judge Marlowe’s personality. Notably, Mr Hardcastle’s assertion of having a timid and reserved suitor for his daughters is a reflection of those stereotypical norms and manners expected to be displayed by young aristocratic gentleman of that age. Within England’s 18th century context, the play reflects on changes in views about gentlemanly manners among aristocratic young men. During that era, qualities such as ‘reserved, self-control, impudence, timidity, self- discipline and bashfulness were praised as true representations of good-mannered young English aristocrat. In contrast, qualities such as ‘sentimentality ‘unreserved, and ‘ bashfulness’ regarded as socially unfavourable, and as “challenges to aristocratic masculinity” (Arrab, 2011, p.17).

On multiple occasion, Kate displays wit and reasoning when judging people and making decisions. Unlike Mr Hardcastle’s judgmental and hasty personality, Kate wisely calculates every move she takes and thinks wisely before taking decisions. This is evident when she answers Mr Hardcastle’s suggestion that there is possibility that the new suitor might not accept her as his future bride:

well if he refuses, instead of breaking my heart at is indifference, I’ll only break my flass for its flattery , set my cap to come newer fashion, and look out for some less difficult admirer. (1. 1.133-136).

Moreover, Kate displays wisdom and rationality when she hears Mis Neville’s description of Marlowe’s dual personality: " Among women of reputation and virtue, he is the modest man alive, but his acquaintance give him a very different character among creatures of another stamp” (1. 1.164-167). Without taking hasty decision about Marlowe’s personality, Kate reconsiders her choices and stays optimistic about the forthcoming suitor. She believes Marlowe’s negative personality traits are not so grave and can “be cured” (1. 1.143). That is the reason she sets up a cunning plan to reveal his real personality.

4. Kate’s Verbal Reasoning During the first Meeting

During the first meeting with Marlowe, Kate acts by the rules and manners of a modest high-class woman to be courted by a young aristocratic gentleman. In the wooing scene, Marlowe appears confused and bashful. Unlike Marlowe’s reserved and timidness, Kate initiates most of the talking. Marlow justifies his reserved and timid personality by blaming his upbringing as he has “kept little company , and has “ been but observer upon life.” (2. 1.389-390). This is the reason, as he claims, that that he can “ converse only with the more grave and sensible part of the sex” (2. 1.419-420); a n implicit reference to thigh class women. The wooing scene provides a subtle satire of the courtly love convention in which the female lover becomes a silent, somehow passive object, of male lover 's romantic intend. Symbolically, Kate in the wooing scene does not represent “ the entrenched trope of the idealized, unobtainable, and silent lady of courtly love convention.”(Anne, 2019. p. 126). Contrary to Marlowe’s silent personality, Kate cunningly enquires about the suitor’s double personality. He compares his bashfulness and anxiety in the company of the women to “ disease of the mind” (2. 1.426) , an

implicit reference to his dual personality in front of women in different classes. Kate sarcastically blames the “age of hypocrisy” (2. 1. 439), for as she explains: “there are few that do not condemn in public what they practise in private, and think they pay every debt to virtue when they praise it.” (2. 1.445-447). Marlowe bewildered by Kate’s witty replies, and he can’t justify his bashful manners, and “he can’t help observing.” (2. 1. 432).

Throughout the interview, interestingly, Marlow struggles to explain what he means by the word “observing”. Even on multiple occasions he reiterates the word ‘observing’. As he puts it, there are things that he can’t explain “what (he) was going to observe”. (2. 1.437). Kate wittingly reiterates the word ‘observing’ whenever Marlowe faces difficulty in expressing his feeling. Historically, the word ‘observing’ has been associated with reason and knowledge, and to some extent, refrainment from excessive indulgence in sentiment. To Marlowe, in other words, excessive feeling and too much sentimentality are unnecessary faculties for a man of reason like himself. Here, Goldsmith delivers subtle criticism at common notions prevalent during the time which gives reason and knowledge superiority over emotion and sentimentality. Within the historical context, privileging reason over sentimentality has a historical root in western civilization. Enlightenment in Europe’s 18th century, for instance, “stressed the supreme importance of science, knowledge, reason, method, objectivity, logic, impersonal observation and experiment” (Maxwell, 2017, p.17). Contemporary thinkers of the time emphasized the significance of critical thinking and logical enquiries in understanding the world, and even human relationship. “Central to contemporaries’ interests and work was their belief that the application of critical reason based on careful observation of the world. (Ibid). Privileging reason and logical observation over feeling and sentimentality, remarkably, are part of larger paradigm of dichotomous categories prevalent within western philosophical thinking: “Plato used the categories reason/ emotion and universal/ particular; for Hegel and Rousseau public/ private, male/ female and reason/ nature proved useful.” (Maclaran, 2013, p.4). It is by such rigid categorizations that notions of excessive emotion and too much sentimentality have been associated with effeminateness. There is even a historical root for this assumption; for instance, there is the “Enlightened point of view the emotions can be defined as dangerously feminine and detrimental to social progress”. (Schlaeger, 1999, p.100). Feminist critics criticized western dichotomous categories which privilege logic over feeling, and give superiority of reason over sentiment because, as they argue, they “operate in a way that privileges one of each pair so that, for example, reason, mind, and male are deemed superior to emotion, body and female.” (Maclaran, P.4). Within the 18th century context, Goldsmith’s play criticizes the common notion which prioritizes reason and observation while downgrading human affection and feeling. The play, symbolically also, reflects on the growing fear and anxiety, particularly among high class society, with regard to “foreign costumes” and manners which might undermine the superior class’s prestigious status like too much sentimentality and excessive indulgence in affection. Not surprisingly, “effeminacy in the early eighteenth century had become associated, at least for the bourgeois, with the aristocracy, a class that adopted “foreign” customs, weakening essential Englishness. (qtd. at Winkler, 2006. p.180). By implication, Marlowe’s assertion of ‘observation’ stems from a patriarchal value system which privileges logical observation over feeling, reason over sentiment, and consequently masculinity over femininity. Such rigid notion about superiority of reason over feeling is

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deeply rooted in aristocratic culture. That is why Marlowe as true representation of his class refrains himself from displaying the sentimental side of his character.

5. Female Protagonist's Stopping as Lower-Class Woman

The first meeting has provided Kate with good perception about Marlowe's split personality. Through her quick wit and wise calculation, she noticed Marlowe's excessive bashfulness which had prevented him from revealing his true personality. Unlike Marlowe's unawareness of his double personality, Kate consciously played by the role she assigned for herself, and she was fully aware of her own acting. To cure Marlowe's malady, Kate has set up a cunning scheme which requires her to shift roles and play different personalities. Kate nonetheless has positive opinion about Marlowe. As she describes him, "he has good sense, but then so buried in his fears, that it fatigues one more than ignorance". (2. 1. 471-472). Remarkably, Marlowe's conflicting manners causes a rift between Kate and Marlowe, for each of them has received uniquely different perception about Marlowe during the first meeting. Mr. Hardcastle observed so many acts of his ill manners that he is determined to dismiss him from his house. Kate, however, feels there is still an opportunity to find more about Marlowe's personality before judging him. The two opposite accounts given by two characters can be outlined in the following exchange of speeches:

Kate : He met me with a respectful bow, a stammering voice, and a look fixed on the ground.

Mr. Hardcastle He met me with a loud voice, a lordly air, and a familiarity that made my blood freeze again.

Kate .He treated me with diffidence and respect; censured the manners of the age; admired the prudence of girls that never laughed; tired me with apologies for being tiresome; then left the room with a bow, and, madam, I would not for the world detain you.

Mr. Hardcastle. He spoke to me as if he knew me all his life before. Asked twenty questions, and never waited for an answer. Interrupted my best remarks with some silly pun, ..(3. 1.40-51).

Mr Hardcastle as representative of a class which values social manners and decorum judges Marlowe's personality upon his manners. He tells Kate that Marlowe's "first appearance has done" his "business", (3. 1.67) and proudly asserts that he is "seldom deceived in that". (1. 1.389-390). That is why he decides dismissing Marlowe as a suitor for his daughter. Unlike Mr Hardcastle's judgmental character, Kate does not judge Marlowe through his appearance ; rather , she proposes a conciliatory solution. Upon such solution, Mr Hardcastle will accept Marlowe as a suitor if he exhibits less "impudent and more respectful" (3. 1.62-63). manners. On the part of Kate, she will accept Marlowe if he displays more sociable, and less timid personality. Kate's next cunning scheme is significant for two reasons; firstly, it gives Kate more time to evaluate Marlowe's personality more objectively, and secondly; it will provide her with an opportunity to prove Mr Hardcastle's false judgment. Moreover, Kate's "art of reconciling contradiction" (3. 1.78) latter on becomes an effective tool through which she could influence stronger patriarchal figures like Mr Hardcastle as well as Sir Charles Marlowe.

6. Kate's Role-Playing as Lower Class Maid

After securing a deal with her father to examine Marlowe's personality, Kate set up a new scheme for the next meeting with Marlowe. She is resolved to keep "Marlowe in the state of "delusion" (3. 1.26-27). Marlowe's shyness in the first meeting had made it difficult to see Kate's face, which gives her the privilege to play another personality without being recognized by Marlowe. Notably, Kate stoops with her own free will just to reveal the other side of Marlowe's personality" (McCord , 1995, p.134). Symbolically, Kate's role-playing as a lower-class woman can be viewed as an act of self-hood since it marks a playful disruption of her current social class. Kate's role-playing, moreover, offers Marlowe a sense of security to reveal the other side of his character. This is evident when Kate describes her reason for playing a different role:

In the first place I shall be seen, and that is no small advantage to a girl who brings her face to market. But my chief aim is, to take my gentleman off his guard, and, like an invisible champion of romance, examine the giant's force before I offer to combat. (3. 1.239-245)

By acting like a lower -class maiden, Kate cunningly lures Marlowe into an open conversation, knowing that he on certain occasion displays personality traits quite opposite to his former personality. Unlike previous meeting, Marlowe's manner and attitude is quite different from previous meeting. Instead of acting like honourable, modest and upright gentleman, Marlowe acts in rude and vulgar manner. Then, Kate uses her wit and verbal skill to enable Marlowe to express his feelings freely. Mistaking Kate for a bar maid, Marlowe starts flirting and praising her beauty. As the dialogue proceeds, she uses her witty verbal skill to encourage Marlowe express his feelings. Mistaking Kate for a bar maid, Marlowe starts flirting and praising her beauty, for which she reminds him of his contradictory manners:

I'm sure you did not treat Miss Hardcastle that was here a while ago in this obstropolous manner. I'll warrant me, before her you looked dashed, and kept bowing to the ground, and talked, for the world, as if you were before a justice of peace. (3. 1. 303-307)

Kate's witty speech encourages Marlowe to confess that he did not take the previous meeting with Kate so seriously: "I laughed, and rallied her a little, but I was unwilling to be too severe" (3. 1.310-311). Kate then wittingly takes advantage of Marlowe's openness and encourages him to talk more freely. He proudly boasted that he had been " a great favourite, " among the ladies" (3. 1.315). Marlowe's open and unreserved talking, even rude manners, carry significant implications for how people of high class during that age, particularly aristocracy, had broken conventional moral codes and acted in hypocritical manners. The dramatist, through Marlowe's contradictory sides of character, critically reflects on the hypocrisy and double standard of high class people , or as Kate names it as the " hypocritical age" where "there are few that do not condemn in public what they practise in private". (2. 1.445-447). Within the historical context, Goldsmith in the play delivers a subtle criticism at aristocracy's double-morality during the 18th century since high class people followed " their own unacceptable separate code of morality, in which adultery took pride among several other vices." (Bailey , 2003, p.143). Moreover, Goldsmith in the play not only delivers a subtle criticism at high class's double standard of morality , but also implicitly criticizes the legal institution of that era:

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the privileged morality of the upper class, found its way in both legal legislations and social practices. Male adultery with servants and lower - class women was therefore seen as normal , although some women protested the double standard". (Perrot, P.80,1992).

After Kate's second interview of Marlowe, a conflict of opinions come to arise between Mr. Hardcastle and Kate about the suitor's contradictory manners. After seeing too much rudeness and unreserved manners by Marlowe, Mr Hardcastle has decided to dismiss Marlowe from his household. He angrily tells Kate that he had "expected a well -bred modest man , as a visitor , but now he find him no better than a coxcomb and a bully" (4. 1.168-169) As the speech indicates, Mr Hardcastle is more concerned with the young man's manners and attitudes than Marlowe's true personality. His judgement then is based on Marlowe's appearance , than his true character. In Contrary, Kate appears more logical as she is more cautious in rejecting the suitor. She once again uses her witty linguistic skill to convince her father not to judge Marlowe hastily but rather giving him another chance:

But if I shortly convince you of his modesty, that he has only the faults that will pass off with time, and the virtues that will improve with age, I hope you'll forgive him.

7. Marlowe's Path to Self- Discovery

Marlowe's discovery that he had mistaken Mr Hardcastle's household for an inn brings him into a state of confusion. Upon that discovery, he is determined to leave Mr Hardcastle's household. Kate, nonetheless, is determined to continue her cunning scheme in testing Marlowe because she thinks "its too soon quite to undeceive him" (4. 1.177-178) To keep Marlowe in a state of confusion, Kate acts a different role by pretending "to be a poor relative who acts as a servant" (Morehead, 1963, p.1095).The meeting between Marlowe and Kate reveals Marlowe's noble and gentle side of personality. He genuinely expresses his regret because he, as he remorsefully explains, "mistook (her) assiduity for assurance, and (her) simplicity for allurements" (4. 1.205-206). Kate on her part is impressed by Marlowe's gentlemanly manners and considers his speech as a genuine sign of civility and gallant nobility. Nonetheless, Marlowe finds it difficult to express his true passion for Kate. This is mostly due to misconceptions and prejudices he has about lower-class women which prevents him from confessing his true passion:

The difference of our birth. Fortune and education, make an honourable connection impossible, and I can never harbour a thought of seducing simplicity that t trusted in my honour, or bringing ruin upon one whose only fault was being too lovely. (4. 1.217-221).

The speech is significant for it reveals the extent Marlowe has changed due to Kate's witty and sentimental sides of personality. In a way, Marlowe's change of perception about lower class women, remarkably, is in stark contrast with what he had previously told Hasting about lower class woman in Mr. Hardcastle's house: " there is nothing in this house, I shan't honestly pay for." (4. 1.52-53). Moreover, the above speech implicitly exposes those forces that prevent Marlowe from expressing his feeling freely such as wealth, education and class. Thus, Marlowe is facing insoluble dilemma between his personal aspiration for liberty and parental obligations. This internal conflict within Marlowe's character manifests itself through the personality split he suffers from whenever meeting women from different classes. Here Oliver Goldsmith, through Marlowe's dilemma, reflects critically of the question of marriage, class and parental

obligations in England's 18th century. During that era, there were growing concerns about social changes which had undermined parental authority over their children with regard to marriage and courtship. The tense conflict between old patriarchal authority and new generation's aspiration for more liberty had become a subject of parliamentary debate in mid-eighteenth's century. Hardwicke's Marriage Act (1753), for instance, " made it a requirement to gain parental consent to marry under the age of twenty-one." (Crosbie, 2029, p.140). Crucial changes, however, happened in the English society which contributed in shift in perspectives with regard to parental authority:

The autonomy and individualism that was becoming a more common aspect of life facilitated a change toward marriage being a choice, something one entered into voluntarily and with a person of one's own choosing. Affection and love became more important as the basis for the marriage, rather than the wishes of the family. The role of parents, relatives, and townspeople became less important as autonomy and individual choice became more important. (Rutherford, 2010, p. 29).

Symbolically, characters in Goldsmith's play like Kate, Mrs Neville, and even Tony " need to be seen within the context of a more general undermining of patriarchal authority that was specific to the mid-eighteenth century."(Crosbie, 2020, p.140). In contrary to Kate, Marlowe apparently has little or none authority over whom he would choose to marry. The main problem, apparently, is the issue of wealth or fortune which hinders a real companionship between the two lovers. Kate who emotionally freer and less concerned about parental authority outspokenly declares that it is possible to have a dignified life without having a great fortune:

But Im sure my family is as good as Miss Hardcastle's, and though I'm poor , that's no great misfortunate to contended mind, and, untill this moment , I never thought that it was bad to want fortune". (4. 1.223-226).

Kate's above speech implies a progressive opinion which contradicts the common concept of the time which prioritized wealth and fortune in marriage over love and compassion. She even proudly declares that she values true individuality than material gains : "I have no fortune but my character". (4. 1.212-213). Within the historical context, Kate's progressive ideas can be seen as new mode of thinking, particularly among women, about marriage and partnership England's 18th century. Moreover, Kate's above speech, brings into focus the role wealth and fortune played in marriage settlement. Remarkably, Marriage settlement during that periods, particularly among the elite, " looked increasingly like the signing of a business contract." there was a " financial implications" of marriage and partnership among high class society. In other words, marriage and partnership had been " used by the elite to cement political or social bonds and to enhance family wealth." (Tague, 2002, p.37). Thus, any marriage settlement, like the ones arranged by patriarchal figures such as Mr. Hardcastle, Mrs. Hardcastle and Sir Charles , ought to have taken into consideration the financial aspect of it. Particularly, "among the nobility and gentry, it was expected that both the husband and wife would contribute to the family income, and that the woman would therefore bring with her a dowry commensurate with her husband's income." (Ellen , 2002, p.25). By implication, in Goldsmith's play, reflected on difficulties faced by young lovers due to financial reasons. Beside Kate and Marlowe, Mis Neville and Hastings are having difficulty in overcoming the rigid constraints imposed by patriarchal conventions since they can't marry according to their free will. Tony also is facing similar problem with Mrs Hardcastle as he can't marry a lower-class woman. The dramatist, through Kate's progressive ideas about marriage, delivers a subtle social criticism at legal law

which requires that woman's property should be prioritized over affection or emotional attachment.

8. Tony and Kate's Final Schemes in Major-Minor Plots

Parallel to Kate's schemes to test Marlowe's personality in the major plot, Tony hatches another deceitful scheme against Mr. Hardcastle in the sub-plot. The casket scheme fails when Marlowe unknowingly delivers the casket back to Mrs. Hardcastle through his servant. Mrs. Hardcastle's discovery of Tony's trick further complicates Hasting and Mrs. Neville's plan for elopement. Structurally, the complication in the subplot would not be resolved unless the confusion in the main plot is resolved. In a certain way, Tony and Kate share similarities in the way they challenge parental authority. Through witty trick, Tony tries to avenge himself against Mrs. Hardcastle's cruel treatment. His trickery, ironically, reveals Mrs. Hardcastle's greedy and arrogant personality. Kate, too, uses tricks to influence Mr. Hardcastle's opinion with regard to marriage. However, Kate is more rational and calculative in her scheming.

Both Kate and Tony in the final Act hatch two different deceptive schemes to bring about changes of opinions in Mr. Hardcastle's household. Mrs. Hardcastle has set up a plan to punish Miss Neville by sending her away to a distant aunt. Tony cunningly deceives her mother through another villainous scheme. He takes her mother into supposedly the designated destination, while deceptively moving them around the house. In the meantime, Sir Charles Marlowe has arrived Mr. Hardcastle's house. Fortune and wealth once again become a crucial issue during their discussion. Both gentlemen agree that the expected union between the two "families will make (their) personal friendship hereditary, even though (Kate's) fortune is but small" (5. 1.22-23). Mr. Charles' reply , nonetheless, provides assurance that Marlowe " possess of more than a competence already" (5. 1.225). Contradictory opinions about Marlowe's manners, nonetheless, startles Sir. Charles, and that is why Mr. Hardcastle calls Kate to clarify the confusing situation. Sir. Charles is bewildered by what he hears from both Mr. Hardcastle and Kate about Marlowe's unreserved and impudent manners. He first questions Marlowe about Mr. Hardcastle's claim , and the young man apologises for his prior " strange conduct" at the household by confusing Mr. Hardcastle for an inn keeper. As expected, Marlowe debunks Mr. Hardcastle's claim about any affectionate relationship with Kate: " nothing has past between us but the most profound respect on my side, and the most reserve on (Kate)" 's side. (5. 1.47-48). In Contrary, Kate proclaims that Marlowe indeed expressed his "profession and affection" 214. And they even had " "several" interviews(5. 1.91-94)..

Ironically, both Kate and Marlowe have given two truthful accounts of their meetings. Mistaking Kate for the first modest lady he had seen on the first occasion, Marlowe gives a truthful statement that he "never gave Miss Hardcastle the slightest mark of (his attachment)". Kate also tells the truth when she describes Marlowe's reserved side of personality on certain occasion, while on other accession, he indeed did "profess" his "attachment" to her. (5. 1.97). Sir. Charles, on his part, asserts Marlowe's "modest and submissive" (5. 1.110). manners, and flatly rejects Kate's claim about his son's " forward canting ranting manners". (5. 1.111). Sir Charles' denial that Marlowe might have displayed an affectionate side of character can only be explained by the assumption that it contradicts his perception of him as a reserved and self-disciplined gentleman. The dramatist through such dramatic confusion critically reflects

on conflicting attitudes about gentlemanly manners by young aristocrats in England during that era. Within a historical context of England's 18th century, there was fear and anxiety "of an aristocratic lack of masculine self - control, of excessive self – indulgence". (Schlaeger, 1999. p.101). Such fear and anxiety over male aristocrat's manners were common among both intellectual and legal elites throughout Europe. "As critic J.G.A. Pocock explained in his book , *Virtue , Commerce and History* " , " there was a fear of effeminateness , which might possibly undermine the emasculate vigorous societies."(Ibid). Consequently, lack of gentlemanly manners and, effeminateness' were viewed as "negative marker , and " effeminacy generally connoted self-indulgence in luxury and unmanly behavior". (Clark , 2013. p.13). By implication, patriarchal figures in Goldsmith's play viewed Marlowe's display of sentimentality as negative social manners which might undermine the young man's current social status and his masculine identity; and consequently, a challenge to the patriarchal power and authority.

Conflicting opinions about Marlowe's manners causes a rift between Mr Hardcastle and Sir Charles. Kate once again proves herself to be wiser and wittier when she suggests a testing scheme to be played on Marlowe; upon which, should Marlowe display an affectionate side of character toward Kate, then Sir Charles would give his approval for future marriage. On the other hand, should Marlowe display reserved manners and indifference towards Kate, as Sir Charles expects from his son, then the marital arrangement would be cancelled altogether. Kate's trick appeals to both Mr Hardcastle and Sir Charles. Accordingly, Mr Hardcastle and Sir Charles " place " themselves " behind the screen," (5. 1.115). and they "shall hear Marlowe declare passion to " her " in person". (5. 1.116).

9. The Significance of the 'Screen Scene' in the Play

The screen scene marks the play's major turning point as it brings major confusions and misunderstandings in the major plot into solution. As recommended by Kate, both Mr. Hardcastle and Sir Charles hide themselves behind a screen, and Marlowe will be set under a test as to whether or not he will display his sentimental side of character. Like previous meeting, Kate has " to pretend to be ' common' in order to win Marlowe's affection." (Smith, 2013. p. 130). Mistaking Kate for lower class woman, Marlowe is more open to express his feelings. His first lines indicate the extent he has changed, as well as the extent he struggles controlling his affection for Kate:' "Though prepared for setting out, I come once more to take leave/...know the pain I feel in the separation" (5. 1.8-10). Kate, wittingly, tries to find out whether or not his compassion is genuine, for which he outspokenly declares his deep feeling:

My very pride begins to submit to my passion. The disparity of education and fortune, the anger of a parent, and the contempt of my equals, begin to lose their weight; and nothing can restore me to myself but this painful effort of resolution. (5. 3.17-20).

The above speech indicates a deep inner- conflict within Marlowe's personality between his affection for Kate, and his sense of parental obligation. The speech identifies those forces such as wealth, rank and education that hinder him from expressing himself. Kate on her part senses a transformation in Marlowe's personality but she thinks he hasn't yet overcome his prejudice and misconceptions about woman and love. She wittingly refutes Marlowe's claims about the

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importance of wealth and rank by implicitly referring to her true personality: ‘ though my family be as good as (Marlowe), ..and my education, I hoped, not inferior.’ (5. 3.22-23). Here, Kate bluntly rejects that her worth be valued by the ‘ fortune’ only. She rather demands to be viewed as equal, and she accepts nothing less than that. Marlowe finds Kate’s witty reply confusing, and tries to assure her that he had never given ‘fortune’ a serious consideration, but it was Kate’s personality which impressed him more than anything else : “fortune was ever my smallest consideration. Your beauty at first caught my eyes, for who could see that without emotion” (5. 3.30-32).. Clearly, Marlowe’s assurance falls short of the assurance Kate seeks, for she demands to be viewed equal than to be ‘inferior’. The scene brings into focus the contrast between appearance and reality . Sir

Charles is ‘amazed’ at Marlowe’s display of sentimental side of character since it contradicts his expectation of him as reserved and timid gentleman. He views his son’s display of sentimentality of character as sign of weakness, lack of masculine self -control, and even ungentlemanly manner. In a symbolic way, Marlowe’s display of sentimentality is a clear challenge to the norms of convention of his class.

The final part of the dialogue is significant since it empowers Marlowe to clearly and without any hesitation declares his love for Kate . This occurs when Kate wittingly challenges Marlowe that his passion is ‘ transient, for which Marlowe assures her that his compassion is rather everlasting, and he will never ‘ feel repentance’(5. 3.49), before winning her affection. Kate’s reply , however, implies that Marlowe’s assurances lack sincerity since he hasn't yet displayed genuine compassion and willingness to view her equal beyond her social class:

Do you think I could ever submit to a connection, where I must appear mercenary, and you imprudent?
Do you think I could ever catch at the confident dresses of a secure admirer(5. 3. 57-59).

Contrary to expectation, Marlowe in a dramatic move kneels in front of Kate and dresses her ‘ Does this look like security ? Does this look like confidence?’ (5. 3. 60-61). Here, Marlowe’s kneeling act, symbolically, can be viewed as a symbolic projection of the transformation he underwent due to Kate’s witty language as well as her strong personality. Symbolically, Marlowe’s act of kneeling down indicates a revocation and debunking of the patriarchal rigid moral system upon which young lovers were forced to undergo marital union upon financial grounds than emotional attachment. Amazed by Marlowe’s unreserved manners, Sir Charles cannot hide himself any longer, and angrily demands explanation: “ is this your indifference, your uninteresting conversation” (5. 3. 65). Mr Hardcastle, on his part, takes this opportunity to sarcastically criticize seemingly Marlowe’s two sides of character : “ That (he) can address a lady in private, and deny it in public.” (5. 3.71). A shocking revelation occurs when Kate reveals her true identity. In a speech filled with puns and sarcasm, Kate pokes fun at Marlowe’s double personality; one who converses with woman: “as the mild , modest, sentimental man of gravity, and the bold forward agreeable rattle of the ladies.” (5. 3.78-80). Kate’s subtle criticism of Marlowe’s split personality can be taken as symbolic attack on double morality of the parental authority. Ashamed and confused, Marlowe expresses regret for prior misjudgement of woman and his ill-mannered behaviour. He openly and without fear from parental constraints asks Kate to marry him. Moreover, as a result of Kate’s trick, Mr Hardcastle and Sir Charles acknowledge their mistake of judging Marlowe upon his manners, and they are more open to

accept Marlowe and Kate as two free individuals who could decide their own destiny freely. So, the screen scene ultimately has provides an opportunity for a better a understanding between the old and new generations in the future.

The outcome of Kate's witty trick in the major plot, noticeably, contributes in solving complications in the sub-plot. Mr Hardcastle and Sir Charles are more willing to accept Hasting and Mrs Nellie into the new community. The young couple already had abandoned the plan to elope, and they are now seeking the consent of authoritarian figures. Mrs. Hardcastle no longer poses a threat against the young couple, but she tries desperately to hold grip on Mrs Nevielle's fortune by any means. She still has authority on Tony since he hasn't reached the age to decide for himself. Mr. Hardcastle nonetheless intervenes on behalf of the young couple and declares that Tony in fact has reached the age to decide for himself. In a symbolic gesture, both Mr Hardcastle and Sir Charles offer their approval and their blessing to young couples. Mr. Hardcastle's tells the young lovers that he is "proud of the connection" (5. 3. 100). Multiple marriage ceremony at the play's final Act marks a joyfully union among the conflicting characters which symbolically implies intergenerational reconciliation.

10. Conclusion

Overall, Oliver Goldsmith has been pioneer in producing a different type of comedy. In *She Stoops to Conquer*, particularly, the dramatist delivers subtle social criticism with regard to crucial issues such as intergeneration conflicts, marriage, and woman's struggle for selfhood. As the research pointed out, the dramatist used multiple dramatic techniques to deliver its critical messages such as contrasts and oppositions among the conflicting characters, dramatic confusions and misunderstandings, and most importantly, through witty usage of verbal skill by the female protagonist. The play, for instance, provided multiple examples of intergenerational conflicts where powerful authoritarian figures made attempts to forge union between the patriarchal families through intermarriages between young individuals. These arranged marriages so often led to confusions, delusion, and misunderstandings, or even complicating conflicts. The contrast between 'Fortune' or 'Money' against 'Love' or emotional attachment in securing successful marriage has been the main theme in the play. Major intergenerational conflicts and misunderstandings occurred due to conflicting opinions, prejudices, and misconceptions about marriage and courtship. Here, the female protagonist played crucial role in resolving major confusions and misunderstandings in the play. Through witty and logical rhetoric, the female protagonist has been able to cure the male protagonist from his malady of split of personality. That malady caused by his inner conflict between parental obligation and personal aspiration for liberty. The dramatist, by implication, critically reflected on major intergenerational conflicts in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England due to misconceptions about marriage, courtship and woman's strife for selfhood.

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