

**María José MORA / Manuel J. GÓMEZ LARA, eds. 2023.**  
***Thomas Durfey's Love for Money (1691). A Critical Edition.* Peter Lang**

**Eneas CARO PARTRIDGE, ed. 2024. *Edward Ravenscroft's Mamamouchi, or The Citizen Turned Gentleman (1672). A Critical Edition.* Peter Lang**

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The publication of two carefully crafted critical editions coming from members of the Restoration Comedy Project is another piece of evidence of the excellence of this research group, based out of the University of Seville, who have since 1995 been unremittingly working on this dramatic form in the late seventeenth century. Volumes 2 and 3 of Peter Lang's specialized series *Restoration Drama: Texts and Contexts* have now been published: Thomas Durfey's *Love for Money, or the Boarding School*, edited by María José Mora and Manuel J. Gómez-Lara, and Edward Ravenscroft's *Mamamouchi, or the Citizen Turned Gentleman*, by Eneas Caro Partridge. These two outstanding studies bring to light Restoration comedies that, following the tendency of the series, either have not gathered much critical attention or have largely been forgotten by readers and academia since their original publication, despite their cultural, literary, or comedic worth. The editors produce modern-spelling and fully-annotated editions that attract both the specialized scholar and a more general audience.

*Love for Money, or the Boarding School (1691)* follows the publication of the critical edition of another play by Durfey, *The Marriage-Hater Matched*, in 2014, in which farce and masquerade played a central role, very much as they do here. The playwright's choice of this comedic form to satirize social conventions – particularly marriages of convenience – in the Williamite period and the reformation of manners imposed thereafter, preserves echoes of the old comedy of wit (23). Yet in this new panorama the look cast upon the recent past is ironic and full of mockery. Durfey's focus is masculinity and, accordingly, different character types become objects of scrutiny and sometimes derision,

like the figure of the old rake, Sir Rowland Rakehell, the extravagant Jack Amorous, or the witty gentleman Will Merriton. Not only that, the play, which sometimes verges pleasurable on the absurd, features very different heroines, from the virtuous Mirtilla, an heiress worth 3,000 pounds a year, to Betty Jiltall, whose craftiness matches Amorous's extravagance. While Jack is easily duped by his sly mistress, he plans to cheat his uncle by making Jiltall impersonate his ward, Mirtilla, and robbing him of his money. Fate, but also good intentions and gallant behavior, protect the young lady, who had been placed by Old Merriton at a boarding school in Chelsea, where she meets Will and falls in love with him. Although, as Durfey's prologue claims, "nothing but diversion is designed" (59), the playwright aligns with the anti-Jacobite spirit prevalent in other genres at the time, William Congreve's *Incognita, or Love and Duty Reconcil'd* (1692) being a case in point.

The introduction to Durfey's edition is concise but exactly what would be expected from Gómez-Lara and Mora's vast editorial experience; every single word counts, and all the relevant information that the avid reader needs for the comprehensive and detailed view of the play is included. They begin with a thorough and entertaining account of the author's biography and literary framework, the product of exhaustive research, seasoned with useful information that highlights Durfey's dramatic accomplishments. This is followed by a section that focuses on the play itself, providing the key points to interpret it. The editors aptly demonstrate that *Love for Money* is the corollary of Durfey's literary evolution and of his gradual adaptation to comedic models and political vagaries: from the mid-1670s, when Restoration comedy drew on the laxity of libertine morality, to the early 1690s, the post-Revolutionary years in which Durfey was helping to redefine the genre by unashamedly questioning vice on stage. Gómez-Lara and Mora take us on an amusing tour around the subtleties of the plot, the text, and its characters, distinguishing between old and new, between "the ugliest face" of libertinism, embodied by Rakehell, and the "misguided and unwise" (27) profligacy of Amorous, his nephew, while the exemplary figures of Old and Young Merriton, by aspiring to love, inadvertently preserve both. One of the greatest merits of this edition is the careful attention paid to stage history, thanks to which the reader can become fully acquainted with the intricacies of the Restoration backstage. Their speculations about the evidence provided by the prologue and epilogue as to how, when, and how long *Love and Money* was performed to reconstruct the play's reception (32) and the detailed description of the cast

and the impact that the choice of actors might have had on the audience are worth mentioning. The introduction concludes with a final section on the publication history of Durfey's play that speaks to the editors' systematic editorial work.

Eneas Caro Partridge's critical edition of Edward Ravenscroft's *Mamamouchi, or the Citizen Turned Gentleman* (1672) is the first contemporary reappraisal of the text since its original publication. As in Durfey's case, Ravenscroft's plays have traditionally been derided and undervalued for being the work of a hack, but Caro Partridge refutes the idea by convincingly presenting the playwright as a skillful writer with a keen eye for comedic effect and a broad knowledge of foreign dramatic trends. Following French models, and more specifically three comedies by Molière – *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670), *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1669), and, sparingly, *L'Avare* (1668) – Ravenscroft renounces the musical content proper to *comédie-ballet* in favor of farcical effects. As the editor persuasively argues, the most hilarious and eccentric scene in the play, taken from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, occurs at the *cérémonie des Turcs*, a highly ludicrous episode mimicking the Turkish ambassador's contempt upon meeting Louis XIV in 1669. The scene became so popular among the English audience that the title of the play was changed to *Mamamouchi, or the City Turned Gentleman* in the revised edition of 1675. The target of Ravenscroft's parody is not the episode with Suleiman Aga, which might be lost in the adaptation, but the foolish aspirations of those, like Old Jorden and Sir Simon Softhead, who dream of upward social mobility. As is customary in Restoration comedies of wit, amorous intrigue involves two pairs of lovers: Young Jorden and Marina, who Old Jorden had intended for himself, and Cleverwit and Lucia, meant for Sir Simon. After much trouble, Cleverwit and a trio of tricksters work their magic in making the old man believe that he will be made into an ostentatious Turkish paladin if his daughter marries the Great Sultan and also that Jorden himself could marry a German princess, Betty Trickmore in disguise. The reference to Mary Carleton would have not escaped the English audience, familiar with the history of the fake princess through her autobiography, *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton* (1663), as Caro Partridge explains (32). Carleton would be centerstage again in 1673, when Francis Kirkman published *The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled*.

The critical edition is preceded by an explanatory scholarly introduction that opens with an overview of the author's biographical and bibliographical context, which helps the reader reconstruct how Ravenscroft's production was regarded at the time, for example, in light of Dryden's

adverse opinion of his adaptation but also in relation to the undeniable theatrical potential of his play (17). One of the great achievements of this section and the next one about the playwright's controversial status in the tradition of Restoration drama is Caro Partridge's insightful assessment of Ravenscroft's borrowings. He remarks on the complex structure of the play and on the sophisticated nature of its characterization, pointing out that Ravenscroft's dexterity lies precisely in the successful combination of "heteroclite elements" (25), which provide its most brilliant comic moments. As is sagaciously argued, the play represents an original combination of sources and dramatic trends that the playwright manages to craft anew. The editor's conclusion about the comic value of this play reminds us of Durfey's intent in *Love for Money*: to please the audience. As in the former edition, ample attention is paid in the introduction to staging details, which lead to information about the mixed cast of the play, in the whole a very balanced troupe. The introduction ends with a final section on the text, listing in a systematic way his editorial decisions, especially those concerning the collation of Q1 and Q2 and the choice of the new title, since this change explains the lasting life of the play. The references to Frenchified terms used by Maître Jacques, the French master have been judiciously retained in this edition.

The publication of these two much-needed additions to the *Restoration Drama* series deserves to be congratulated as it bears witness to the indefatigable research of the Restoration Comedy team in bringing to readers' attention the inexhaustible wealth of the period's drama. These examples testify to the benefits of close reading and the joys of editorial work and leave the reader wishing for more.

## References

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**How to cite this review:** Villegas López, Sonia. Review of María José Mora / Manuel J. Gómez Lara, eds. *Thomas Durfe's Love for Money, or The Boarding School (1691). A Critical Edition* (Peter Lang, 2023) – Eneas Caro Partridge, ed. *Edward Ravenscroft's Mamamouchi, or The Citizen Turned Gentleman (1672). A Critical Edition* (Peter Lang, 2024). *SEDERI* 35 (2025): 117–121.

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