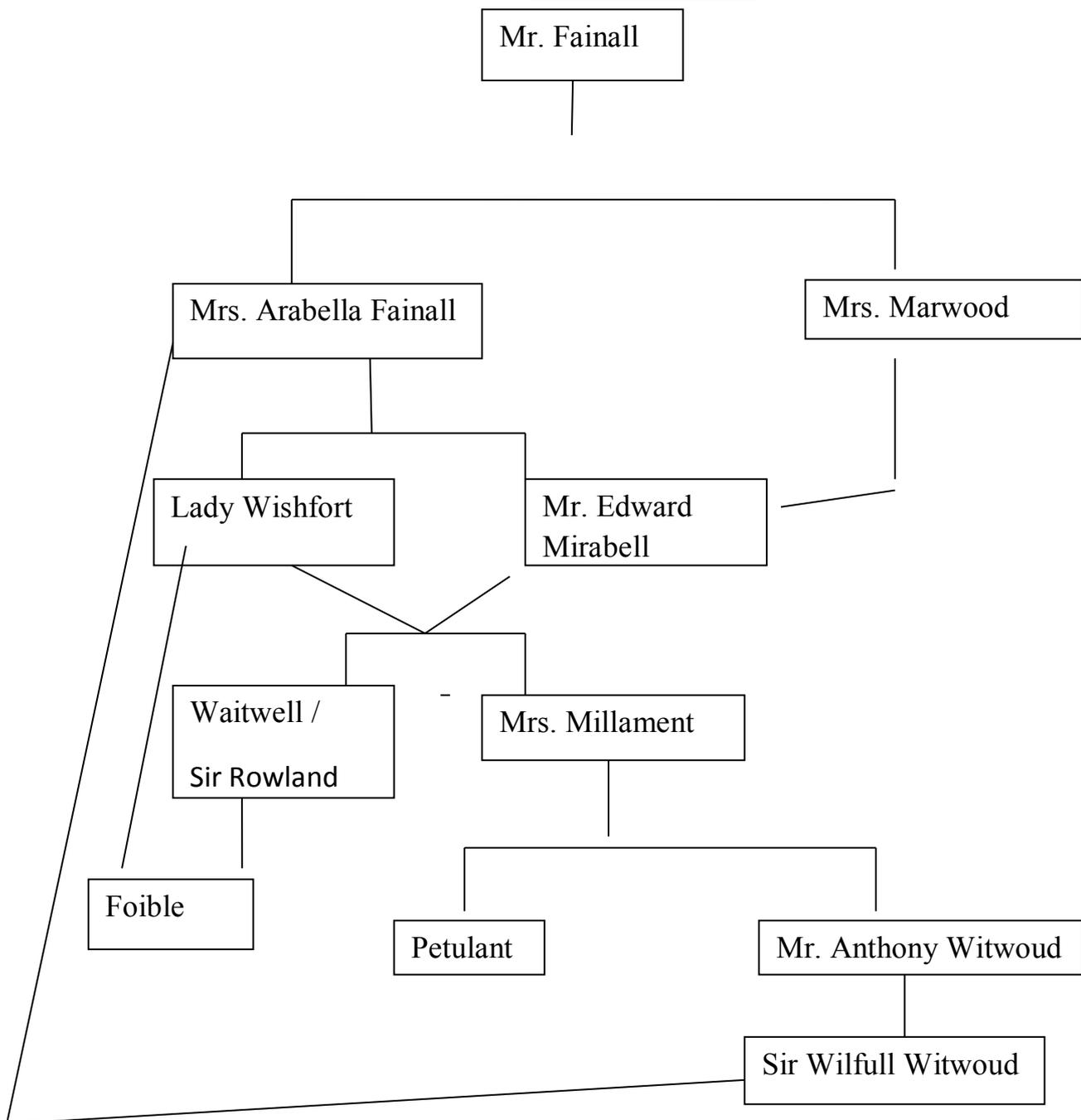


# The Way of the World

- One of the best *Restoration Comedies*
- Written by *William Congreve*
- Premiered in 1700 at London's theatre in Lincoln's Inn Field

## FLOW CHART OF CHARACTERS AND THEIR RELATION TO ONE ANOTHER



## **Character in the Play and their Connections- (as described in the flow chart)**

### **Mr. Fainall (Fainall/Fain.)**

- A married man
- Yet having closest relationship to his mistress, Ms. Marwood.
- He plots to get money out of his wife's mother, Lady Wishfort, when he is told by Marwood about Mrs. Fainall's pre-marital relation with Mirabell.

### **Mr. Edward Mirabell (Mirabell/Mir.)**

- A young man, once a womanizer, is now honestly in love with Mrs. Millamant.
- Plots to get Ms. Millamant's aunt, Lady Wishfort's approval for his marriage with Ms. Millamant.

### **Anthony Witwoud (Withwoud/Wit.)**

- A suitor of Ms. Millamant and half-brother to Sir Wilfull Witwoud.
- A supporting, comic character.

### **Petulant (Pet.)**

- Another suitor of Ms. Millamant
- Supporting, comic character

### **Sir Wilfull Witwoud (Sir Wil.)**

- Half-brother to Anthony Witwoud and nephew to Lady Wishfort.
- Comes to town to prepare to go abroad, but is swept up in the plot because Lady Wishfort wishes him to marry Ms. Millamant.
- Hence attempts to pursue Ms. Millamant romantically.

### **Waitwell (Wait.)**

- Mirabell's servant
- Marries Foible, Lady Wishfort's servant, and pretends to be a well-bred man named Sir Rowland to trick Lady Wishfort into wooing- at Mirabell's directions

### **Lady Wishfort (Lady Wish.)**

- A mean, witty, wealthy, old lady.
- Aunt of Miss Millamant and controls half, 6,000 pounds, of Millamant's inheritance.
- Uncomfortable with her age and looks , hence falls easy prey to deceitful Rowland

### **Mrs. Millamant (Miss Millamant/Mrs. Mil)**

- The young lady whom Mr. Mirabell and many others love.
- Has a large inheritance of 12,000 pounds, but is attempting to secure half of it which is held by her aunt, Lady Wishfort.
- Lady Wishfort wants her to marry Sir Wilfull Witwoud.

### **Mrs. Marwood (Miss Marwood/Mrs. Mar.)**

- Mrs. Marwood is the mistress of Mr. Fainall, a married man.
- Bitter because her love for Mirabell is not returned
- This leads her to reveal Mirabell's scheme to Fainall after overhearing it.

### **Mrs. Arabella Fainall (Mrs. Fain.)**

- Wife of Mr. Fainall
- Had a relationship with Mirabell before marrying Fainall, and is still a friend and aid in his scheme.
- Daughter to Lady Wishfort.

### **Foible (Foib.)**

- Foible is servant to Lady Wishfort
- Helps in Mirabell's plot
- Marries Waitwell

## **Major Themes**

### ***Social Etiquette and Reputation***

A Comedy of Manners is named so because of its focus on manners, or social etiquette. The comedy is caused because of the insistence of the upper class on

preservation of repute in society. For example, what Lady Wishfort seems to fear most is a loss of good reputation for herself and her daughter.

### ***The State of Women***

The question of a woman's role in society is brought to light in the play. They appear to be progressive but are caught in illicit or deceitful relations. The freedoms a woman can have in and out of marriage are also shown and discussed in the play.

### ***Marriage, Adultery, and Inheritance***

Marriage and adultery are of course main themes in *The Way of the World* and it seems that all the characters are caught in these some way or the other.

### ***Futility of Friendship***

Same-gender and opposite gender friendships are called into question in this play, as it is demonstrated that none of these relationships is particularly strong or trusting. Certainly, friendship is as falsely fashionable and tactical as anything else in the play.

### ***Importance of Money***

Money and love are tied closely in *The Way of the World*, and perhaps as much as reputation, Lady Wishfort's fate after the play rests on her being able to dole out inheritances appropriately.

### ***Two Social Classes***

The presence of two main classes in the play - upper class and servants - calls attention to social class as a theme in the play. With the satirical eye Congreve concentrates on upper class' behaviour alone.

## **Plot at a Glance-**

- ❖ When the play opens, Mirabell is impatiently waiting to hear that Waitwell is married to Foible. During Mirabell's card game with Fainall, it becomes clear that the relations between the two men are strained. There are hints at the fact that Fainall has been twice duped by Mirabell:

- ❖ Mrs. Fainall is Mirabell's former mistress, and Mrs. Marwood, Fainall's mistress, has been in love with Mirabell. In the meantime, although Millamant quite clearly intends to have Mirabell, she enjoys teasing him in his state of uncertainty.
- ◆ Mirabell seems to succeed in his plot until, unfortunately, Mrs. Marwood overhears Mrs. Fainall and Foible discussing the scheme, as well as Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall's earlier love affair. Since Mrs. Marwood also overhears insulting comments about herself, she is vengeful and informs Fainall of the plot. He had already suspected that his wife was once Mirabell's mistress.
- ◆ The two conspirators now have both motive and means for revenge. In the same afternoon, Millamant accepts Mirabell's proposal and rejects Sir Wilfull Witwoud, Lady Wishfort's candidate for her hand.
- ⌘ Fainall now dominates the action. He unmasks Sir Rowland, the false uncle, (Waitwell pretended to be Sir Rowland) and blackmails Lady Wishfort with the threat of her daughter's disgrace.
- ⌘ He demands that the balance of Millamant's fortune as well as the unspent balance of Mrs. Fainall's fortune. In addition, he wants assurance that Lady Wishfort will not marry so that Mrs. Fainall is certain to be the heir.
- This move of Fainall's is now countered; Millamant says that she will marry Sir Wilfull to save her own fortune. Fainall insists that he wants control of the rest of his wife's money and immediate management of Lady Wishfort's fortune.
- When Mirabell brings two servants to prove that Fainall and Mrs. Marwood were themselves guilty of adultery, Fainall ignores the accusation and points out that he will still create a scandal which would blacken the name of Mrs. Fainall unless he gets the money.

- ✚ At this point, Mirabell triumphantly reveals his most successful plan. Before Mrs. Fainall married Fainall, she and Mirabell had suspected the man's character, and she had appointed her lover trustee of her fortune.
  - ✚ Fainall is left with no claim to make because Mrs. Fainall does not control her own money. He and Mrs. Marwood leave in great anger.
  - ✚ Sir Wilfull steps aside as Millamant's suitor; Lady Wishfort forgives the servants and consents to the match of Mirabell and Millamant.
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Web source :

1. <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/w/the-way-of-the-world/about-the-way-of-the-world>
2. <https://www.gradesaver.com/the-way-of-the-world/study-guide/themes>