

## A Pragmatic Analysis of Two *Proviso* Scenes

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### Abstract

The present paper investigates language as it was employed in the Restoration comedy of manners, being it refined and elevated thanks to the so-called witty language – that is, the brilliant and clever speech. Pragmatics proves to be a suitable arena to shed light on the richness of the scripts staged from 1660 onwards. To provide with an example, this contribution draws from the playtext *The Careless Lovers* (1673) by Edward Ravenscroft and explores the utterances spoken in the *proviso* scene (Act V, pp. 76-77) by Careless and Hillaria – the main characters of the comedy – in light of Impoliteness theory. Furthermore, the pact will be compared with the verbal contract signed in Act 4 Scene 1 by Mirabell and Millamant, the gay couple of Congreve's *The Way of The World* (1700), in order to demonstrate that, although the *provisos* share the same pragmatic strategies, the libertinage of Ravenscroft's lovers staged in the early Restoration is dimmed in the late Restoration masterpiece, being this latter qualified by a 'reformed' version of the rakish behaviour.

**Keywords:** Congreve, gay couple, Impoliteness, Ravenscroft, Restoration Theatre