

English B. A. (Hons.) IV Semester

British Literature - 18th century

Content: A Recapitulation of earlier lectures on Congreve's 'Way of the World'

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- Comedy & the Comic Spirit
- Comedy operates between the serious and the absurd which Aristotle calls 'ludicrous'. It is an area which excludes nobility of character, painful consequences and the consummation of any events which are likely to offend our moral sensibilities.
 - Comedy enables us to be joyous survivors in an acceptable and accepting world.
 - Our forefathers in Theocratic society of Greece in medieval Europe, in Elizabethan England knew how to laugh for they had before them in the ideals and attitudes of their societies a requisite for true comedy!
 - With a sense of order, a knowledge of the nature of things, they could see clearly the incongruity of man's deviations from the norms and natural laws of a sensible universe.

RESTORATION COMEDY

Diverse elements went to the making of Restoration Comedy. Although dramatists and critics alike agreed that moral instruction through social criticism was the aim of literature and that comedy as a corrective of vices and follies, undoubtedly laughter and entertainment; and not Moral Improvement was the true objective of Restoration Comedy.

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Restoration Comedy

The manners of court were highly corrupt and the comedy that the court patronized was unblushing, hard, cynical and immoral.

Restoration Comedy is rather an anatomy of life, not more a representation than a commentary on life and on various social schematisms.

The characters are specialised in type or function: the inelegant country squire, the rake as hero, the male leaud, the furious rejected mistress - here is no end to the obvious "type" characters, habitually used. The class pattern is conspicuous.

In the Restoration Plays, the plots were Doubled or tripled and there was seldom any unity of action.

Most of the comedies were in prose and realistic rather than romantic or idealistic.

Repertoire was much valued and frequently plot was neglected for discussion of proper conditions for marital happiness, of cuckoldry

and very commonly, of the nature of wit. In 'Way of the World' tone and practice are both largely those of satire that is, derision of pretense.

Satire is directed comically. Mating is central and marriage, though barely illustrated by others is richly concerned by the lovers.

Mirabell converts the looseness of his philandering ways into premarital experience