

SUBJECT : ENGLISH

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TOPIC – **THE ANTI-SENTIMENTAL COMEDY**

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### **THE ANTI-SENTIMENTAL COMEDY**

With the end of the Stuart rule there was a strong reaction against the immorality and licentiousness of the Comedy of Manners .It resulted in the growth of Sentimental Comedy which offered powerful stories full of pathetic and touching scenes. Nicholas remarks, “In place of laughter they sought tears ; in place of gallants and witty damsels pathetic damsels and serious lovers”. The popularity of the sentimental comedy was not to continue for long as it lacked wit , humour,

verbal dexterity and skill in characterization and plot construction which are essential to great comedy.

The Anti-Sentimental comedy found this situation as an opportunity to come into existence as reaction against the Sentimental Comedy. Goldsmith and Sheridan came forward to pioneer the Anti-Sentimental Movement.

Goldsmith wrote two high spirited comedies –“ The Good -Natur'd Man” (1768) and “She Stoops to Conquer” (1773). “ The Good-Natur'd” man is marked by truth to nature, plenty of comic situations and excellent dialogues. The plot is ingenious and the reformation of the good natured man Honeywood is cleverly managed. But characterization is on the whole not remarkable. On the other hand, “She Stoops to Conquer” is a far better play and has been often revived on the stage. The stratagem is good, the dialogue is quick and gay, the humour broad and genial, the language racy and idiomatic to the last degree. Miss Hardcastle, the shy hero Marlow and other characters provide plenty of merriment. It is a comedy fit to take

its place beside the comedies of Moliere or Congreve. Goldsmith showed that laughter could be produced with coarseness.

Sheridan's comedies are of action, reversal, confusion, and verbal wit. Like "She Stoops to Conquer", they are also perfectly fit to be staged. His first play, "The Rivals", the farce, "St. Patrick's Day," and the 'comic opera', "The Duenna" were all written in his early twenties and were all produced on stage in 1775 with a view to dazzling audiences with a new talent. "The Rivals" confronts the authority of an older generation with the success of the stratagems of the young lovers, but it also allows for an extraordinary linguistic variety which deftly embraces the inventive oaths of Bob Acres, the inflated Irishisms of Sir Lucius O' Frigger, and above all, the wonderful misapplications of Mrs. Malaprop. If "The Trip to Scarborough" of 1777, a refashioning of Vanbrugh's "The Relapse" reveals the extent to which Sheridan responded both to the attractions of a good plot and to the needs to expunge what he recognized as indecorous expression and ambiguous motivation. "The School for Scandal"(1777) reveals his own mastery over language and complex plotting. It

is his most aphoristic and masterly constructed play . The basic moral fable is transformed by a clever exploitation of theatrical devices into an unmasking of bluffs, prejudices and disguises. “The Critic or, A Tragedy Rehearsed” of 1777 is a clever burlesque and “Pizarro” 1799 is an adaptation of Kotzebue’s German tragedy, “The Small -Town Germans”.

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