

Unlike 'Shakespearean Comedy', 'Restoration Comedy' is a genuine reflection of the temper and as such it has a sociological as well as a literary interest. After the death of 'Oliver Cromwell', there was a reflection of season in every genre of literature. In drama, manners of men and women were presented. The main purpose of the playwrights was to portray the distinctive features of their own culture — the drawing rooms, the fashionable parks and coffee - houses of London of the time of 'Charles II .'

The Restoration comedy was shaped both by native and French influences. It drew its main inspiration from the native tradition which had flourished before the closing of the theatres in 1642. In particular it was indebted to Beaumont and Fletcher and to Ben Jonson. It was also influenced by Moliere and Calderon. The single aim of his comedy is to show the manners of upper ranks of Contemporary society. The Restoration dramatists were far more realistic. They drew their characters and copied their situations from the life they saw around them. Therefore, their comedy is lighter, more spining, the action is brisker, the working sharper and more épigrammatic. The most brilliant and amusing statement of the experiment is given in Dryden's 'Marriage a la mode', more laughter provoking in Wycherley's 'Country Wife' and cōngreve's 'The Way of the World.'

Restoration comedy laid much importance to manners, sophistication of life and verbal wit — polished and refined conversation. In sexual morality it is a completely emancipated world. Profligacy is fashionable and is freely professed and practised. Of course, there was licentiousness, but it was rationalized, argued and made subject to scientific tests. The woman is treated neither as a goddess, nor as a plaything or an object of pleasures of man but as the companion of man with her own enchanting personality. Nothing should be in excess, neither passion nor indifference, neither boldness in men, nor coyness in women.

In the plot of the Restoration Comedy of manners, conflict and intrigues occupy an important place. Conflicts between youth and age, between parents and children distinguish these comedies. There were flippant remarks about marriage, intrigues informed by intelligence and witty gallantry. There was a good deal of deceit and contrasts between sophisticated and naive characters from city and country respectively.

'A careless frank' and debonair 'wit' marks the advent of the comedy of manners. The greatest pleasure it provides is that is the 'chase of wit' between a gallant and his mistress and it is kept up on both sides and is swiftly managed. Men of 'pleasure of wit' and women of 'quality' equilly witty in their turn 'meet and clash' in Restoration comedy.

Congreve brought elegance and pleasure in his plays. His 'Double Dealer' is a sombre play, ;'Love For Love' is wholly comic from start to finish, 'The Way of the World' is considered by common consent a work of art and as a pure comedy of manners. Sir George Etherege produced 'The Man of Mode' which displayed in all its elegance the amorous life of witty ladies and gentlemen. In 'The Country Wife' Wycherley as a harsh realist exposed hypocrisy, debauchery, foppery, pretentious of his class of society. Horner, the protagonist and arch-gallant is able to debauch his way through his master trick of making it publicly known that he has become physically infirm. The so called elites of the society allow their wives to be seduced by Horner as they feel their- wives safe at his command. Characters lock up their wives inside the house but flirt with other women outside.

In this way, the basic themes of comedies of manners were exposition of hypocrisy, Love, sex. marriage, aristocracy, refinement, foppery of different characters. These have been criticised for their dullness, triviality and lack of human experience. Though Restoration Comedy provided cheap entertainment, served a serious social function. Whatever be the criticism, we find a moral and intellectual vitality in Restoration comedy. According to T.S.Eliot manners presented in 'The Way of The World' are not imaginary. They have been taken from real life.