

The Way of the World as the Restoration comedy

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The Way of the World is a restoration comedy of manners in five acts written by William Congreve, the leading practitioner of the group. Although the trend of Restoration comedy was on the decline when Congreve wrote his drama dramatic composition, the full flowering of Restoration drama finds expression in his drama. The plot of the drama revolves around the theme of love and marriage involving Millamant and Mirabell to obtain the permission of the former's aunt Mrs. Wishfort to this effect. The play, which is considered Congreve's masterpiece ridicules the assumption that governed the society of his time, especially those concerning love and marriage. The plot concerns the efforts of the lovers Millamant and Mirabell to obtain the permission of Millamant's aunt for their marriage despite a skim that goes awry and after several misunderstandings and other complications are cleared up and they finally joined the company of each other.

The title of the play signifies the behaviour of society which Congreve has portrayed in a very hilarious manner and satirises the life practiced by restoration people or the world of wealthy in London. The Restoration dramatists portrayed a fraction of life confining themselves basically to the urban life which figures prominently in their dramas showing a stern detestation for the countryside or the

rural populace. Congreve presents the real picture of contemporary society of its time. The drama is a fine flower of restoration comedy. The entire play is set in London. Restoration comedy does not represent every strata of society. It basically represents metropolitan aristocratic society. It makes fun of human follies and silly human behaviour. The play transcends the time and remains a timeless comedy. It is full of many sexual and vulgar joke scenes. The act one begins in the chocolate house where many people come to enjoy. It clearly shows that restoration people take serious things lightly. In the play male characters pursue women. Everyone plots against everyone and deceives everyone. Mirabel pretends to love lady Wishfort in order to remain in touch with Millamant, the single heir of the property. Mr. Final, the fortune hunter is also committed to get Millamant's fortune. The characters disguise

their real identity and pretend themselves to be that which they do not appear in reality. The gap between appearance and reality has been largely vitiated. To pretend to be what one is not is the way of the world. The title itself suggests the manner of Restoration urban aristocrat.