TRADITION OF COMEDY OF MANNERS IN ENGLISH DRAMA

İNGİLİZ TİYATROSUNDA TÖRE KOMEDİSİ GELENEĞİ

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

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Tez Jürisi Üyeleri

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Tez Sınavı Tarihi .................................
INTRODUCTION

Aristotle says comedy originated in the improvisations of the leaders of the phallic rites. (Aristotle, 1963:346) As for the derivation of the word, ‘komos’ is considered as the source. ‘Komos’ means ‘revel’; several kinds of ‘komoi’ took place in festivals in Ancient Greece, particularly of Dionysus, ‘fertility divinity’, and consisted of a procession of revellers, singing, dancing, bantering the onlookers and satirizing and criticising famous Attic figures.
Ancient Greek comedy covers a period of 250 years, beginning in 486 B.C., when comedies were officially allowed to be performed at the festivals of Dionysus along with tragedies, and ends in 250 B.C., when Menandros, the last great playwright died. (Duckworth, 1952: 21) During this time, Greek comedy goes through two main and one transitional phases: Old Comedy, Middle Comedy, New Comedy.

Old Comedy is the product of Athen’s Golden Age (480-430 B.C.), during which Athens enjoyed great political and intellectual vitality and afforded democracy. (Lever: 1956, 63)

Old Comedy is one of the ‘sports’ of literature. Formality in all its aspects and plausibility were the governing forces in the development of tragedy; in contrast, informality and fantasy ruled Old Comedy. Here as almost nowhere else in Greek literature the imagination runs riot, pure fiction is esteemed, and no idea can be too extravagant. The Old Comedy was a curious blend of religious ceremony, serious satire and political, social, and literary criticism, wit and buffoonery. The subject was some simple story or fable, imaginary, novel, amusing and at the same time satirical, involving a dispute on some subject of current interest, as a result of which the poet’s opinion was made known. The characters, whether they were taken from real life or were the personification of abstract ideas (such as Peace or the People), were mere caricatures or symbols, not morally responsible human beings. The comic chorus numbered probably twenty-four and were often divided into two half-choruses, e.g. of men and women. They wore masks and grotesque dresses to suit their parts (e.g. as birds or wasps), but took off their outer cloaks for the purpose of their dances. (Harvey: 1952, 116) Accordingly, the structure of Old Comedy is ideally suited to polemics. The prologue, often quite elaborate, outlines the situation or dilemma to be solved and proposes, by way of solution, a fantasy whose logic lies in its absurd illogic. The chorus then enter, sometimes in support of the scheme, but more often in opposition to it. The choristers are often, but not always, costumed as animals. After their parodos (‘entrance’) the all-important agon (‘contest’) begins, in which the hero overcomes all opposition by whatever means, and his ‘happy idea’ wins. The action is now interrupted by the parabasis (‘stepping forward’), in which the chorus, partially abandoning their dramatic role, step forward and address the audience in the name of the poet. When complete, a parabasis has seven parts, two being lyrical, the rest spoken lines comprising everything from the airiest whimsy to sharp personal invective or a direct bid for the prize. After the parabasis the action is resumed in a short series of scenes (episodes), separated by choral songs, as the hero’s scheme works itself out, each triumph being greater and more absurd than the last. Sometimes there is a second, shorter parabasis. The finale is regularly a ‘celebratory
feast’, often a marriage feast, though the marriage is more certain to be consummated than consecrated. (Dalven: 1969, 384)

Of the authors of Old Comedy, other than Aristophanes, we know little. Crates was the first to substitute in comedy themes of general for lampoons on individuals. (Harvey: 1952, 116) Cratinus (c. 520-423 B.C.) wrote plays on a wide range of subjects, including mythological travesty and literary and especially political satire. Eupolis (c. 445-410 B.C.), the principal rival of Aristophanes, dealt less in fantasy than did his contemporaries and concentrated more on personal, social, and political invective. He was admired for his polished wit and satirical dexterity. (Dalven: 1969, 384-385) Aristophanes, combining what Cratinus and Crates did, produced the most outstanding examples of Old Comedy. (Yüksel: 1990, 561) His themes are those of Old Comedy in general: politics, war, education, and literature. Aristophanes saw the erosion of human values in the late fifth-century Athens, but the comic answer was to take the lost helpless individual and set him, by fantasy, trickery, and miracle, in triumph over everything. (Dalven: 1969, 385)

Middle Comedy seems to have lasted too long to be a transitional phase. (405-336 B.C.) After the defeat and financial ruin of Athens in 404 B.C. there developed a type of comedy much less political and much less poetic, in which the chorus became almost wholly an interlude chorus, having little or no connection with the action. The favourite type of subject matter was now mythological travesty, including travesty of romantic and erotic adventure. Except for the last two plays of Aristophanes, Ecclesiazusae and Platus, no complete Greek play has been preserved from the period of Middle Comedy. (Harsh, 1944: 257)

By the time the Macedonian ruler of Alexander the Great died, (323 B.C.) New Comedy was a fully developed form and one that was to persist as a model for centuries to come. (Dalven: 1969, 389) Athens had ceased to be a free state and had come under Macedonian dominion. (Harvey: 1952, 116) The Greek had travelled a long way from the freedom enjoyed by Aristophanes. Absolute freedom of speech can only exist when the state is secure. The Athenian democracy at the peak of its power could afford to tolerate public criticism of the state, its leaders, institutions and gods. This was a mark of strength. Weak and unstable governments could not risk being laughed at. Less tolerant because less secure, they drove the old freedom from the stage. So, beginning with the period of Middle Comedy, comedy had sought new channels. It played for safety by using domestic themes and abandoned its virulent attack on current problems. (Arnott, 1961: 156-157) The theme of New Comedy is romantic love, and the action consists of surmounting obstacles to a marriage, or marriages (there may be two or
even three pairs of lovers). The obstacles may be lack of money or parental opposition, or the heroine may be supposedly a slave or of low rank, in which case the regular solution is a revelation, by tokens, that she is really wellborn and free. Intrigue bulks large in the development of the action, which falls regularly into five parts, with choral interludes unconnected with the plot and designated as a rule simply by the stage direction ‘chorus’. The prologue is of the playbill type, frequently spoken by a personified abstraction, such as Misapprehension. The language is simple, meant to reflect everyday middle class speech. The characters are an elaborate series of stereotypes: stubborn father, parasite, boasting soldier, the young girl, the young boy, the cunning or stupid slave, the mad doctor, the courtesan and the shrew. (Dalven, 1969: 389) A pupil of Aristoteles, Theophrastus, wrote a book in which he defines twenty-eight characters. Some of them are; ‘the ironical man’, ‘the toady or the flatterer’, ‘the chatterer’, ‘the boor’, ‘the outcast or the demoralized man’, ‘the talker’, ‘the shameless man’. It is certain that the great poet of New Comedy, Menander, who was at the same time a pupil of Theophrastus, was inspired by these characters in his plays. (Yüksel, 1990: 566) Other chief poets of New Comedy are Philemon and Diphilus. (Harvey, 1952: 116)

Through the journey from Old Comedy to New Comedy; imagination gives place to observation, fantasy to realism. The predicament of humble obstinate humanity in the organized State, protesting against wars and taxes and regulations and the power of money, is replaced by the predicament of the ordinary husband, son or lover, who in a world complicated by multifarious division into hostile camps- rich and poor, slave and free, old and young, native and foreign, and above all male and female- struggles through mischance and bewilderment to be in some degree faithful both to himself and to his neighbour. (Vellacott, 1967: 13) The contrast between Old Comedy, written for the day and hour, and New Comedy, which is much more generalized in subject and in appeal, is most striking. The sons and fathers of New Comedy are very much like sons and fathers of any age, and its milieu of family life is perhaps the richest mine of comic material to be found. (Harsh, 1944: 317)

Faced with the finished products of Greek culture on its conquest Roman tradition quickly succumbed and Greek influence pervaded the arts of the Roman Empire for centuries. (Arnott: 1961, 156)

George E. Duckworth, in *The Nature of Roman Comedy*, writes that ‘in the early days of the Republic the Romans were too busily engaged in the mastery of their environment to give much thought to cultural pursuits’ (1952: 3) It seems logical, then, that the Romans were the first to discover the stage through expansion. By the time native Romans began to write, the form had already been mastered by the Greeks. Thus, it seemed only natural to look to Greek works for guidance and as a satisfactory model. (Fort, 1935: 84-86) Plays of Attic New
Comedy were taken and adapted by Roman poets like Plautus, Terence, and Statius. In rewriting, while retaining their Greek settings and a great deal of the Greek characterization, they became full of allusions to Roman affairs and customs. The slaves of Roman Comedy, for example, address their masters with a freedom common enough for the Greeks, but which any Roman slave-owner worthy of his name would not have tolerated. A usual device of Roman writers was to combine the plots of two Greek comedies into one of their own, a process known as contaminatio. The plagiarism was mitigated by occasional ‘credits’ in the prologue- the original works and authors were sometimes mentioned. (Arnott, 1961: 159-160)

Plautus, (c. 254-184 B.C.), the earlier of the two great Roman playwrights, was of humble birth and is said to have supported himself as a stage-carpenter and wrote his plays in the intervals of manual labour. Twenty of the one hundred and thirty plays, which are attributed to him have survived. They are adapted from Athenian comedies such as those of Menander, Diphilus and Philumon. While reproducing Greek life and Greek character in his plays to avoid offending Roman taste, Plautus introduced elements from Roman life and environment. Plautus’ comedies are Amphitruo, Aulularia, Bacchides, Captivi, Menaechmi, Mostellaria, Miles Gloriosus, Pseudolus, Rudens, Trinummus, Asinaria, Casina, Cistelleria, Curculio, Epidicus, Mercator, Persa, Poenulus, Stichus, and Truculentus. (Harvey: 1952, 333)

We are going to take a closer look at the play Casina, which helps to throw light on the characteristics of New Comedy, in this study because it is a typical play by Plautus. A libertine father of Athens and his young son have both taken a fancy to Casina, a young slave girl, who has been rescued from exposure as a baby and was brought up in their household. Neither of the men can have her through legal ways; the father (Lysidamus) is already married and the young boy (Euthynicus) is freeborn while Casina is not. Therefore, both men launch their intrigues to get her; the father (Lysidamus) wants to have her married to his bailiff (Olympio) while the son (Euthynicus) wants to have her married to his own bailiff (Chalinus).

The omniscient prologue is typical in these plays; although the element of surprise was lifted, it was necessary to hold the attention of the uneducated crowd. Besides, having been informed about the end, the audience watched the play not for ‘what’ happened but ‘how’ it happened. Regarding the fact that these plays abounded in the use of intrigues and disguises, how the plot resolved creates an element of suspense. In Casina, as the audience is told in the prologue, the father has sent his son away to get him out of the way. Moreover, the bridge on his way
back has collapsed and made his return impossible. Aware of her husband’s interest in Casina, the wife (Cleostrata) takes the side of her son and carries out his plan. Recourse to draw lots to determine which bailiff will marry Casina favours the father. His plan would operate smoothly if the son’s bailiff (Chalinus) had not overheard their conversation about the arrangements: the father will pretend to accompany the couple to their village after the wedding. In fact, he will spend the night with Casina in the neighbour’s house. This overheard brings about another intrigue. Having learned about the old man’s plan, the wife and the son’s bailiff prepare a counter-plot; at the wedding the father and his bailiff are fobbed off with the son’s bailiff disguised as a bride. (Disguise is one of the characteristic elements of New Comedy). After the wedding, both the bailiff and the father rush out of the neighbour’s house in turn to be told off and are eventually forgiven by the crowd waiting outside. Plautus’ comedy is ebullient and robust; his primary object is to evoke the greatest possible volume of hearty laughter, and he will sometimes descend to clowning in order to gain his end. (Hadas, 1965: XII) In the final scene, both men willingly start a physical contact with the disguised bride and to their surprise they find a man beneath the wedding dress. The bailiff describes his experience as ‘I was afraid she had a sword…’ (Duckworth, 1942: 315) This adds a highly farcical tone to the play.

In the epilogue, it is announced that Casina is discovered to be the long lost daughter of the neighbour and being a freeborn citizen can marry the young son. Here it must be remembered that ancient society recognized the double standard: respectable young men were allowed latitude: respectable young women were not. Girls involved in relationships that we should regard as illicit are not of the sort whom their lovers could marry: respectable girls eligible for marriage are never involved in such relationships. That is why young and girls in the plays had to be restored to their chastity to marry the young boy, thus the play reaches the happy end. (Hadas: 1965, IX)

The incidents of New Comedy are often highly improbable. As we stated above, the resolution of a play of New Comedy must be a happy one. Not infrequently this solution leans heavily upon the long arm of coincidence and chance. (Harsh, 1944: 317) Young slave girls are discovered to be the long-lost daughter of a freeborn man. The revelation usually comes at a very critical moment and solves the problem in the play leading to the reunion of lovers or parents. In the introduction to Roman Drama, Hadas argues that the freeborn children being brought up in slavery is not merely a dramatic convention; in the Hellenistic world poverty and war were endemic; many infants were, in fact, exposed, and many persons displaced. (1965, X)
Plautus’ characters belong to a familiar and limited cast, and the plots in which they are involved are similarly limited in range; Men want to marry the girl who at first appears to be of lower background, and live happily ever after; and this, in most of the plays, is what they do. (Hadas: 1965, XII)

The second important poet of Latin comedies is Terence. He was born in Phoenician Africa and brought to Rome in early youth as a slave by the Roman senator, Terentius Lucanus, who gave him a good education and finally freed him. On account of his witty conversation and graceful manners, Terence became a favourite in the fashionable society of Rome. His work consists of two sorts: fairly close translations of Menander, and contaminations, which is the method of working up several Greek pieces into one. (Fort, 1935: 84-86) Terence’s plays are: *Andria, Heauton Timorumenos* or The Self-Tormentor, *Eunuchus, Phormio, Hecyra* or *The Mother-in-Law,* and *Adelphoe* or *The Brothers.* (Harvey, 1952: 416)

Terence is a literary artist, quiet and refined in tone and polished in language. His neat aphorisms have become part of common speech: ‘A word to the wise’, ‘Fortune favours the brave’, ‘While there’s life there’s hope’, ‘Many men, many minds’, and most characteristic of Terence himself, ‘I am a man; whatever pertains to man concerns me’ (Hadas, 1965: XIII)

His humour is subtle and he avoids the farcical situations and exaggerated characterizations of his predecessor Plautus. Terence seeks to arouse thoughtful laughter. (Dalven, 1969: 840)

Plautus chooses his pieces from the whole range of the New Attic Comedy, and by no means disdains the more popular comedians; Terence restricts himself almost exclusively to Menander, the most elegant, polished and chaste of all the writers of the New Comedy. Comparatively speaking, Plautus was the untutored genius, Terence the conscious artist; Plautus the practical playwright, Terence the elegant literary craftsman. Plautus wrote for the crowd, Terence for the aristocracy. (Dalven: 841)

*Andria (The Woman of Andros)* is the earliest of Terence’s plays, produced in 166 B.C. It is adapted from two plays by Menander. Terence was able to create surprise rather than anticipation by omitting from the prologue the usual plot summary. Besides, he changed the nature of the prologue by using it to defend himself against charges of plagiarism and contamination. (Dalven: 840)
The poet (Terence) admits that he has transferred such passages as suited him from The Perinthian to The Andrian, and used them both as his own. His enemies blame him for having done this, and maintain that it is wrong to mix plays together... When they blame him, they are blaming Naevius, Plautus, and Ennius, whom our poet can appeal to as having done the same thing. (Duckworth, 1942: 143)

Terence was especially fond of the double plot, in which two young men are involved in two closely interwoven and interdependent love affairs. (Dalven, 1969: 840) In Andria, the young boy (Pamphilus) is in love with a young girl (Glycerium) who is the sister of a courtesan from Andros. The opening scene between the stern father (Simo) and his freed slave (Sosia) limpidly exposes the young girl (Glycerium) as a lady of unusual beauty and modesty, which prepares for her recognition later in the play. Incidentally, the young boy (Pamphilus) is here well characterized as a typical weak and love-struck man of New Comedy, his slave (Davus) is equally typical; a clever and an unscrupulous one. The father (Simo) has arranged a match for him with the daughter of his friend (Chremes). However, having heard of the relationship between Pamphilus and Glycerium, Chremes withdraws his consent to the match. The father (Simo) conceals this, pretends to go on with the preparations for an immediate marriage in order to test his son’s obedience to him. The cunning slave discovers that no preparations are actually being made and induces the young boy to obey his father so that he can gain his favour. Thus the young boy temporizes and offers no objection to the arranged match. Hence, the slave launches his trick.

Pamphilus’ scene with the girl’s slave (Mysis) is important not because it passes on the information about the girl’s (Glycerium’s) trepidation of childbirth but also it forces him to promise that he will remain faithful to her. He relates the story of the death of the girl’s -supposed- sister and his promise to her, as well. However, the father (Simo) later persuades the other girl’s father (Chremes) to withdraw his objection, in which case not only Pamphilus but also another young boy (Chalinus) who loves Chremes’ daughter is reduced to despair. Thus, in The Woman of Andros, the complication rests on the union of the two couples. Pamphilus can not marry his loved one (Glycerium) because she is the sister of a courtesan, the other young boy (Chalinus) can not marry his loved one (Philumena) because she is already matched with another young boy (Pamphilus) by her father. The second young boy (Chalinus) is relying on Pamphilus’ promise that he will not marry Philumena despite the fathers’ match. The first young boy (Pamphilus) has very reluctantly consented to it with mental reservations, thinking that he will not be called upon to fulfill this promise. Nevertheless, all these promises are made, and only
the resourcefulness of the slave (Davus) can save them. In these plays, slaves are usually employed as tricksters and they use their dexterity in favour of the sons more often than the fathers. In *The Woman of Andros*, the second young boy’s slave (Byrria) stands in contrast to the quick-witted and resourceful slave (Davus). The second boy’s slave (Byrria) is depicted as a crude, mundane and sceptically realistic person. He does not hesitate to suggest that if his master (Chalinus) accomplishes nothing else till the unwanted wedding, he can become bride’s paramour. (Harsh, 1944: 382) Although his first trick has not worked and made the problem even more intricate, the cunning slave (Davus) promises to settle the problem by another intrigue. Both young boys rely on the slave’s intelligence to resolve the problem.

Not to lose the father’s (Simo’s) trust in him, the slave (Davus) pretends to be on his side; he informs him that a newborn will be exposed at his door that day and his son will be claimed as the father of the child. At this stage Glycerium bears a son to Pamphilus, on which the resourceful slave builds the next intrigue. He arranges that the fact shall become known to the girl’s father, (Chremes) who now finally renounces the match. Meanwhile, an acquaintance arrives from Andros and reveals to both fathers (Chremes and Simo) that the young girl, who was thought to be the courtesan’s sister was, in fact, shipwrecked as a child at Andros with her uncle. With the story the man tells, the young girl’s real name is discovered to be Pasibula, not Glycerium, which makes one of the fathers (Chremes) sure that this is his long-lost daughter. Thus, the father and his daughter are reunited.

In the finale of New Comedy, long-lost daughters or sons are usually recognized by tokens such as toys or scars. In this play, the token is the girl’s real name. The arrival of the acquaintance (Crito) from Andros at a point where the complication reaches its peak can be explained by the frequent use of the chance element in New Comedy. These external solutions are frequent in New Comedy. The recognition of the young girl makes her an acceptable wife to the first young boy (Pamphilus), which also gives way to the union of the second pair of lovers (Charinus and Philumena).

These two Roman plays summarized above are adaptations of New Comedy, and bear certain similarities in subject matter, form and the characters. The play usually begins in the middle of the story, where a problem is presented. (Thorndike, 1909: 31) The usual problem in New Comedy is thwarted love. A pair or sometimes two pairs of lovers are desperately in love. Their marriage is made impossible. The obstacles are likely to be parental opposition due to the lower origin of one of the couples or lack of money to save the loved one from a slave
trader. As opposed to the figures of unresourceful romantic lovers, the plays hold impudent, quick-witted, intriguing slaves. Intrigues are usually planned and carried out by these cunning slaves in order to put lovers together or defraud the necessary sum of money to free the slave. Love intrigues are planned and carried out usually by these cunning slaves. The action of the play is drawn to a complication through ‘intrigues’, ‘overhearing’, ‘eavesdropping’ and ‘disguise’, which leads to mistaken identity. Overhearing may occur as a deliberate part of an intrigue. The characters sometimes make themselves heard to manipulate others. However, it may well occur as a result of pure coincidence; an example would be a slave’s overhearing of the master’s plan for Casina (in Plautus’ Casina). Disguise, similarly, takes place either as a part of an intrigue (the male slave being dressed as the bride in Casina) or happens by chance as a result of the misapprehension of other characters in the play. These elements take the plot of the play to a complication, where chance favours; slave lovers are ‘recognized’ to be freeborns and eligible spouses; and parents recognize their long-lost sons/daughters with the help of ‘tokens’ and are happily ‘reunited’ with them.

The characters employed in these entanglements conform to rather fixed types. Along with the ‘old man’ (stubborn, ill-tempered, miser or libertine) and ‘love sick young boy and girl’ (usually a slave or courtesan in the beginning but later restored to her freedom or higher origin) are ‘cunning or stupid slaves’, ‘good or bad-hearted courtesan’, ‘braggart soldier’, ‘parasite’, ‘mad doctor’ and ‘shrew’. Such types are recognizable in any state of society and give certain reality to the picture of lower or middle class ranks of society. (Thorndike, 1909: 31) Although the plots are artificial and improbable, the characters not individuals, they are well capable of infinite variation and give scope for humorous situations. (Arnott, 1961: 159). For this reason, the plays based on New Comedy still retain their place as models for the plays of today. (Dalven, 1969: 389)

The aim of this study is to trace the heritage of the New Comedy, represented by Plautus and Terence, in an effort to throw light on the emergence of ‘Comedy of Manners’, a forerunner of which is Shakespeare, and which reached its peak in the Restoration period with the Congreve’s skillful use of witty dialogue, and which served as a channel for G. B. Shaw in the 20th century in his revival of ‘Comedy of Ideas’ of Aristophanes, which he used as a weapon against Victorian manners and morality. In order to fulfill the aim of this study, Shakespeare’s Much Ado About Nothing will be analysed as the play which serves as an example of Shakespeare’s combination of New Comedy with English witty dialogue, which will mature in Restoration drama. Following Shakespeare, William Congreve’s The Way of the World will be studied for two reasons: the
two main characters (Millamant and Mirabell) are modelled on the former play’s two main characters (Beatrice and Benedick) and the play is considered to be the peak of ‘Comedy of Manners’. Lastly, G. B. Shaw’s play ‘Arms and the Man’ will be studied as it provides a good insight into the writer’s use of witty dialogue and characteristics of ‘Comedy of Manners’ in creating his own ‘Comedy of Discussion’, which he employs as a satirist and a moralist.

I. PAVING THE WAY TO ENGLISH COMEDY OF MANNERS:

SHAKESPEARE’S MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Similar to the ancient drama, medieval drama was born from religious sources. Biblical stories were made into plays and performed to the crowds for educative purposes. These were called ‘mystery cycles’. Following them were ‘morality plays’, whose plot was invented by the playwright, and, in which the characters were abstract ones like Humanum Genus, Malus Angelus (an evil angel). Mystery and morality plays remained a popular form of entertainment while a new dramatic form, the ‘interlude’ developed. It was a short dramatic play designed to be presented between the courses of a banquet. (Nicoll, 1978: 5-22)

With Renaissance, an increasing interest in the ancient Greek and Roman manuscripts developed. As more and more of these ancient sources were unearthed, English playwrights recognised the theatrical value of the ancient Greek and Roman plays and they started to become popular. (McDonnell, 1979: 112)

Renaissance brought to England a spiritual and intellectual orientation known as Humanism. English Humanists valued the study of Terence, Plautus and Seneca, the poets Virgil and Horace, and the orator, Cicero for their moral, political and philosophical truths. (Logan, 2000: 472-473)

A new interest was given to the study of ancient comedy by the discovery in 1472 of twelve hitherto lost plays of Plautus. (Thorndike, 1929: 29-31) The fifteenth century saw a growing interest in Terence, too, reaching almost the status of a cult. His plays were read aloud, discussed and set for study; by the early sixteenth century
Terence’s plays were widely performed in schools. The first recorded production is of Terence’s *Andria* by the students of the school of Vespucci in Florence in 1476. In 1560 Queen Elizabeth declared that every Christmas the scholar of Westminster should perform a Latin play so ‘that the young may spend Christmas with greater benefit and become better acquainted with proper action and pronunciation. (1929-32)

About the year 1553 two plays bearing affinities to Roman comedies were produced; one is *Gammer Gurton’s Needle*, written by a ‘Mr. S’, and presented at Christ’s College, Cambridge. In *Gammer Gurton’s Needle* the influence of ancient Comedy is patent; although the play is peopled by English village characters, its simple plot -the loss a precious needle and the resultant suspicions and jealousies- keeps the audience’s and the reader’s attention alert both by the vigour of the dialogue and the rapid lively series of actions. The other play, intended for school production (probably at Westminster) is Nicolas Udall’s *Ralph Roister Doister*. Ralph Roister himself is, simply a version of the bombastic, boasting soldier of the Roman plays. (Nicoll, 1978:39).

Shakespeare, too, was familiar with Plautus and Terence’s work, and in his play *Much Ado About Nothing* Shakespeare blends his knowledge of the ancient traditions of comedy of manners with his own artistic invention. That is why, in this study *Much Ado About Nothing* is included.

Shakespeare follows the multi-plot convention, which has its strongest source in the ancient comedies. (Fowler, 1987: 84-85) *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598) is built on three-plots, which Shakespeare relates with each other effectively. These plots have linking characters, and scenes where they merge. The three plots in *Much Ado About Nothing* can be named as;

1) the Beatrice-Benedick plot
2) the Hero-Claudio plot
3) the Dogberry-Verges plot

Three different plots of *Much Ado About Nothing* correspond to different levels of ranks. Naturally, the characters from different ranks receive different treatment. Hero-Claudio plot receives more tragic, serious treatment whereas the socially lower Dogberry-Verges plot receives a more comic treatment. Beatrice-Benedick
plot is a novelty and, as we will discuss further in this study, receives a totally new treatment. This distribution of tragic and comic material between distant plots makes *Much Ado About Nothing* be classified as a tragicomedy (Fowler, 1987, 84-85).

*Much Ado About Nothing* brings together characters from different classes of society. The characters from the higher class are The Prince of Arragon (Leonato, the father), Hero (his daughter), Antonio (Leonato’s brother, Hero’s uncle), Beatrice (Leonato and Antonio’s niece, Hero’s cousin), Governor of Messina (Don Pedro), Claudio (Don Pedro’s soldier and Hero’s lover), Benedick (Don Pedro’s soldier and Beatrice’s lover), Don John (Don Pedro’s bastard brother), Borachio and Conrade (Don John’s evil friends), Friar Francis and the characters from the lower class are Margaret (Hero’s maid), Dogberry and Verges (two constables).

There are two young men (Claudio, Benedick) and two young women (Hero, Beatrice) in the play. Like the ancient plays, there are obstacles between them and to overcome these obstacles several intrigues will be laid out which will thicken the plot. Towards the end, the confusion will be overcome easily with the help of tokens and the young couples will be happily married.

Similar to the ancient examples, there are two pairs of lovers in *Much Ado About Nothing*: Hero-Claudio and Beatrice-Benedick. However, only one of these pairs complies with the lovesick, desperate type characters of young lovers in the ancient plays; it is Hero-Claudio pair. Claudio falls in love with Hero at first sight. His youth is very much insisted upon, ‘he hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age, doing in the figure of a lamb the feats of a lion’. (I. I. 1) Similarly, Hero is a shy, submissive and obedient young girl. These two young lovers never speak to each other even when they are side by side until the last scene, where they are married.

Standing in complete contrast to typical lovers is Beatrice-Benedick couple. First of all, they speak most of the lines in the play unlike Hero-Claudio pair. Secondly, Beatrice-Benedick profess dislike to the opposite sex and towards each other continually. Instead of the conventional dialogue of caring lovers, Beatrice and Benedick are involved in a witty and lively battle of words. However, the merry war between the self-professed misogynists is a courtship in disguise. Palmer argues that this is Shakespeare’s invention; courtships in which love is expressed in a teasing conflict of wills and wits. (1945, 464-465) The reader/audience may notice the attraction between these two young people from
the very beginning of the play since the first thing Beatrice wants to know when the Messenger arrives is whether Benedick has returned from the war or not. The way they show or conceal this attraction is full of wit:

**BENEDICK:** What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living?

**BEATRICE:** Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it, as Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

**BENEDICK:** Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted: and I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart; for truly, I love none.

**BEATRICE:** A dear happiness to women: they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that: I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

**BENEDICK:** God keep your ladyship still in that mind! So some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face.

**BEATRICE:** Scratching could not make it worse, an 'twere such a face as yours were. (I. i. 4.)

Beatrice answers her uncle’s question about when she will get married as such:

**BEATRICE:** Not till God make men of some other metal than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to be overmastered with a piece of valiant dust? to make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? No, uncle, I’ll none: Adam’s sons are my brethren; and truly, I hold it a sin to match in my kindred. (II. i. 14)

The characters of parents in this play are not too different from the types of parents of classical plays: Hero’s father (Leonato), Hero’s uncle (Antonio) are both devoted, well-meaning parents. They do not
hesitate to get involved in intrigues to save Hero. Similarly, Don Pedro, who assumes the role of a father to the young lover, Claudio, gets involved in situations to help Claudio.

Don Pedro’s bastard brother, Don John masterminds the wicked intrigues in *Much Ado About Nothing*. He aims at damaging his brother Don Pedro’s respectability. We learn in Act I that the brothers were formerly bitter enemies, but have patched up the trouble between them. However, in Act I again Don John reveals his wicked nature by saying,

_I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace; and it better fits my blood to be disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love from any: in this though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain...._ (I. III. 20)

Hence, in the nature of comedy, as Lott argues, the reader/audience has been warned not to psychologise Don John’s motives and has been prepared to accept him by nature a schemer and worker of evil. (1987; x)

The lower class people in *Much Ado About Nothing* are Hero’s maid, Margaret, and the watches, Dogberry and Verges. These characters replace the figures of servants in the ancient plays. Both in ancient plays and Shakespeare’s play, figures of serving people add comical and farcical element to the plays. Margaret is a merry and light-hearted figure that speaks to Hero and Beatrice freely. She also flirts with gentlemen. The characters of Dogberry and Verges add plenty of fun to the play with their wrong use of words in their appeal to finer language.

**DOGBERRY:** You shall also make no noise in the streets; for the watch to babble and to talk is most tolerable and not to be endured.

**WATCH:** We will rather sleep than talk: we know what belongs to a watch.
Much Ado About Nothing follows the convention of classical plays with its abundance of intrigues. There are six intrigues in the play; two malign and four benign. Lott argues that the abundance of intrigues springs from the characters’ misperceptions, misunderstandings, deception of themselves and others. (1987:v)

At the opening of the play, a war has ended and The Prince of Arragon (Don Pedro), his officers (Claudio, Benedick), his brother (Don John), and Don John’s friends (Borachio, Conrade) are visiting the Governor of Messina (Leonato), and his brother (Antonio), his daughter (Hero) and his niece (Beatrice).

The first complication in the play rises from the overhearing of a conversation between Don Pedro and Claudio. Claudio confides his love for Hero to Don Pedro, who says,

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I know we shall have a revelling to-night:
I will assume thy part in some disguise,
And tell fair Hero I am Claudio;
And in her bosom I’ll clasp my heart,
And take her hearing prisoner with the force
And strong encounter of my amorous tale:
Then after to her father will I break;
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And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.
In practice let us put it presently. (I. I. 8)

This conversation is overheard by two different people: Antonio’s man, and Conrade (Don John’s man). Antonio’s man misunderstands the conversation and thinks that Don Pedro himself is in love with Hero. Leonato and Antonio inform Hero of the news and Leonato (her father) says, ‘Daughter remember what I told you: if the prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer.’ (II. I. 14)

The other overhearer of Don Pedro-Claudio conversation (Conrade), however, understands it correctly, but Don John decides to misinterpret it for his wicked end: he wants to harm his respected brother, Don Pedro’s reliability and reputation. So, Don John will tell Claudio at the masked ball that Don Pedro wants Hero for himself (of course, pretending to mistake Claudio for Benedick):

**DON JOHN:** Are you not Signior Benedick?
**CLAUDIO:** You know me well; I am he.

**DON JOHN:** Signior, you are very near my brother in his love. He is enamour’d on Hero. I pray you, dissuade him from her; she is no equal for his birth. You may do the part of an honest man in it.

**CLAUDIO:** How you know he loves her?

**DON JOHN:** I heard him swear his affection. (II. I. 6-13)

Claudio, who easily credits Don John’s lie at first, is later convinced otherwise by Don Pedro, who says: ‘Here, Claudio, I have wooed in thy name, and fair Hero is won. I have broke with her father, and his good will is obtained. Name the day of marriage, and God give thee joy!’ (II. I. 21)

Thus, Don John’s first wicked intrigue is terminated abruptly. Evans argues that this former swift moving tangle of confusion serves the aim of illustrating the characters’ general tendency for deceiving and being deceived. As the reader/audience, we are prepared to expect that any falsehood
even without proof can thrive in this world. (Evans, 1967: 201) This atmosphere of Messina gives way to more intrigues to be carried out.

Having failed in the first intrigue, Don John and his friend (Borachio) this time set out to devise another intrigue on Margaret’s (Hero’s maid) being mistaken as Hero. Borachio has instructed Hero’s maid, Margaret, to appear at Hero’s window in the guise of Hero. Claudio and Don Pedro are pre-informed by Don John to witness this false romantic meeting. Having witnessed and convinced of Hero’s disloyalty, Claudio decides to denounce Hero at the altar.

Meanwhile, in this fertile field for error in Messina, benign intrigues are engineered in order to bring the warring young lovers together. Both these intrigues are built on the element of overhearing.

Realising the intellectual attraction between Beatrice and Benedick, Don Pedro, Leonato, and Hero decide to make them overhear the affection one feels for the other in the ‘twin orchard scenes’.

In the first orchard scene, while Benedick is musing over love and what kind of a wife he would like to have (rich, wise, virtuous, fair, noble and mild—not one of Beatrice’s main qualities. (II. III. 24) Don Pedro, Claudio and Leonato arrive. Benedick hides himself intending to overhear them. Already aware of Benedick’s presence, the trio talk about Beatrice’s love for Benedick. What will be significant at the end of the play is the mention of Beatrice’s writing Benedick’s name on papers over and over again and then her ripping them to shreds. As soon as the trio leave, Benedick concludes: I will be horribly in love with her.... When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married.’ (II. III. 29)

Subsequently, Beatrice is made to overhear the conversation between Hero and Ursula, (Hero’s maid) speak of Beatrice’s pride and disdain which prevent Benedick from admitting his love to her. The trick initiates the expected effect in Beatrice, who says, ‘Contempt, farewell! And maiden pride, adieu!/ And, Benedick, love on; I will requite thee./ Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand.’ (III: II. 34)
Just before innocent Hero falls victim to conspiracy, Shakespeare introduces the figures of constables and watches. In order to maintain law and order in Messina Dogberry and Verges are instructing the watches:

**DOG Berry:** ..... You shall also make no noise in the streets; for for the watch to babble and to talk is most tolerable and not to be endured.

**WATCH:** We will rather sleep than talk: we know what belongs to a watch.

........................

**DOG Berry:** If you meet a thief, you may suspect him, by virtue of your office, to be not true man; and, for such kind of men, the less you meddle or make with them, why, the more is for your honesty.

**WATCH:** If we know him to be a thief, shall we not lay hands on him?

**DOG Berry:** Truly, by your office, you may; but I think they that touch pitch will be defiled: the most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief, is to let him show himself what he is, and steal out of your company. (III. II. 39)

The watches hence charged, it is only ‘chance’ that makes two watches ‘overhear’ drunken Borachio chatting with Conrade and gloating over his wicked success. Thus the crime is discovered soon after it is committed and before the denouncement of Hero at the altar. However, Dogberry cannot come to the point for his marvellous stupidity and prolixity, and tell Leonato what he has discovered; if Leonato had attended the problem Dogberry had presented to him, he would have learned the truth and prevent shame and hurt to Hero and himself. Instead, rushing to his daughter’s wedding, Leonato directs Dogberry to interrogate the prisoners further and then write a report:

**LEONATO:** What would you with me, honest neighbour?

**DOG Berry:** Marry, sir, I would have some confidence (conference) with you that discerns (concerns) you nearly.
LEONATO: Brief, I pray you; for you see it is a busy time with me.

DOGBERRY: Marry, this it is, sir.

VERGES: Yes, in truth it is, sir.

LEONATO: What is it, my good friends?

DOGBERRY: Goodman Verges, sir, speaks a little off the matter: an old man, and his wits are not so blunt as, God help. I would desire they were; but, in faith, honest as the skin between his brows.

VERGES: Yes, I thank God I am as honest as any man living that is an old and no honester than I.

DOGBERRY: Comparisons are odorous (odious): palabras (few words), neighbour Verges.

LEONATO: Neighbours, you are tedious.

DOGBERRY: It pleases your worship to say so, but we are the poor duke’s officers; but truly, for mine own part, if I were as tedious as a king, I could find in my heart to bestow it all of your worship.

LEONATO: All thy tediousness on me, ah?

DOGBERRY: Yea, an ’twere a thousand pound more than ’tis; for I hear as good exclamation (acclamation) on your worship as of any man in the city; and bough I be but a poor man, I am glad to hear it.

VERGES: And so am I.

LEONATO: I would fain know what you have to say.

VERGES: Many, sir, our watch to-night, excepting your worship’s presence, ha’ ta’en a couple of as arrant knaves as any in Messina.

DOGBERRY: A good old man, sir; he will be talking: as they say, When the age is in, the wit is out: God help us! it is a world to see. Well said, i’ faith, neighbour Verges: well, God’s a good man; an two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind. An honest soul, i’ faith, sir; by my troth he is, as ever broke bread; but God is to be worshipped; all men are not alike; alas, good neighbour!

LEONATO: Indeed, neighbour, he comes too short of you.

DOGBERRY: Gifts that God gives.

LEONATO: I must leave you.

DOGBERRY: One word, sir: our watch, sir, have indeed comprehended two aspicious (suspicious) persons, and we would have them this morning examined before your worship.

LEONATO: Take their examination yourself, and bring it me: I am now in great haste, as it may appear unto you.

DOGBERRY: It shall be suffigance. (sufficient)

LEONATO: Drink some wine ere you go: fare you well. (III. V. 45-46)

At the church Claudio denounces Hero without explanation and the gentle and fragile young girl, Hero, faints. When she comes round and swears her innocence, Francis Friar suggests that they could ‘change slander to remorse’ (IV. I. 53) by announcing Hero dead and waiting for the mist to clear. Friar says that if Hero is proven innocent, her honour will be restored, if not, she will be sent away to a convent. Thus, the fifth intrigue of the play is launched.
Beatrice is raged with the injustice done to her cousin, Hero, and wishes to have been a man to revenge on Claudio. Seeing Beatrice upset, lights the fire in Benedick and he confesses his love for her and Beatrice demands that Benedick kill Claudio. Reluctantly, Benedick agrees in order to prove his love. With Hero’s defamation, two lovers unite and take the same side in the affair.

Palmer emphasises the significance of the character of Dogberry as;

_The characters of Dogberry and his comrades are exactly determined by the part they are called upon to play in the comedy. The character of Dogberry is tailored – with his prolixity, his reverence for the protocol, the facility with which he meanders from the high road of detection into the bypaths of mystification, the slow mind that wastes itself upon irrelevant details but keeps obstinately moving in the right direction- to correspond with the necessities of the action. Dogberry has to be sharp enough to discover there is conspiracy against Hero before it is executed, so that the audience may know in advance that all will come tight in the end. Dogberry’s incompetence serves a very important end. He prevents the discovery of Hero’s innocence from taking place before the conspiracy heats up the hearts of two railing lovers: Beatrice and Benedick. They will come to realize their true feelings and will not be able to stop confessing their affection to each other. (Palmer: 482- 483)_

Dogberry and Verges hold the examination of Borachio and Conrade and come to Leonato’s house, where they meet Don Pedro and Claudio, who have heard of Hero’s death and come to give condolences. Borachio confesses his guilt in the presence of Don Pedro and Claudio.

Learning that Hero is chaste, Claudio wants Leonato to punish him for having falsely accused his daughter and causing her death. Leonato demands that Claudio should first hang an epitaph on Hero’s grave and marry another of his nieces, an exact copy of Hero. In fact, Leonato’s punishment is a
reward in disguise, and the sixth intrigue of the play. Claudio agrees and the next day, all meet in the church. Ladies enter masked. After Hero and Claudio are married Hero unveils and reveals the truth and the only dialogue between Hero and Claudio takes place:

**CLAUDIO:** Give me your hand: before this holy Friar,
   I am your husband, if you like of me.
**HERO:** And when I lived, I was your other wife:
   (Unmasking)
   And when you loved, you were my other husband.
**CLAUDIO:** Another Hero!
**HERO:** Nothing certainer:
   One Hero died defiled; but I do live,
   And surely as I live, I am a maid.  (V. IV. 74)

Benedick, meanwhile, gets Leonato’s permission to marry Beatrice. However, two obstinate lovers demur at the last moment and lapse into repartee:

**BENEDICK:** Do not you love me?
**BEATRICE:** Why, no; no more than reason.
**BENEDICK:** Why, then your uncle, and the prince, and Claudio
   Have been deceived; they swore you did.
**BEATRICE:** Do not you love me?
**BENEDICK:** Troth, no; no more than reason.
**BEATRICE:** Why, then my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula
   Are much deceived; for they did swear you did.
**BENEDICK:** They swore that you were almost sick for me.
**BEATRICE:** They swore that you were well-nigh dead for me.
**BENEDICK:** ’Tis-no such matter. Then you do not love me?
**BEATRICE:** No, truly, but in friendly recompence.
**LEONATO:** Come, cousin, -I am sure you love the gentleman.
**CLAUDIO:** And I’ll be sworn upon’t that he loves her;
   For here’s a paper, written in his hand,
   A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,
   Fashion’d to Beatrice.
**HERO:** And here’s another,
   Writ in my cousin’s hand, stolen from her pocket,
   Containing her affection unto Benedick.
**BENEDICK:** A miracle! Here’s our own hands against our hearts. Come, I will have thee; But, by this light, I take thee for pity.

**BEATRICE:** I would not deny you; but, by this good day, I yield upon great persuasion; and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption.

**BENEDICK:** Peace! I will stop your mouth. [Kissing her.]

*(V. IV. 74-75)*

Beatrice and Benedick’s denials of affection is overcome by the proof of sonnets they wrote for each other. Thus, the resolution is brought about by the help of some paper document. In the ancient plays, the resolutions are brought about by tokens like a toy, a necklace etc. This ancient tradition of tokens is resumed, not with the same devices but in the form of documents.

In the last few lines of the play, the Messenger informs the capture of Don John. Benedick promises ‘brave punishments’ (V. IV. 74) for him the next day, and the play ends with a dance.

*Much Ado About Nothing* is akin to ancient comedies of manners in that it is made up of many misinterpretations and intrigues based on ‘eavesdropping’, ‘disguise’ leading to ‘mistaken identity’ and ‘deceit’. ‘Chance’ plays its part with overhearing of the evil plot by the watches, which draws the play to its ‘happy end’. Beatrice and Benedick are brought together with the help of an intrigue based on ‘eavesdropping’. The final lapse is overcome by the written proof of their affection (replacing the ‘tokens’ in classical Roman comedies): sonnets which have been preserved so far by Hero and Claudio and brought out at the last moment when Beatrice and Benedick are about to give up marrying. It is noteworthy that the sonnets are used just like the tokens in Roman plays to uncover reality and solve the problem of the final moments.

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, types of parents are similar to the ones in the ancient plays in that they are good-willed and devoted. However, we do not expect to find a libertine father or a shrew wife of an ancient play in the noble world of Shakespearian comedy of manners.
Similar to the ancient plays, the job of providing the play with farcical and comic elements is attributed to the servants in *Much Ado About Nothing*. However, Shakespearian servants serve the same end as the ancient ones in a different way: In the ancient plays, the slaves are efficient and intelligent figures. That is why, they contrive the intrigues and cause complication which provides laughter. What is more, the figures of ancient slaves speak to their masters freely regardless of the punishment awaiting them. On the other hand, the figures of servants in *Much Ado About Nothing* are inefficient and stupid. They provide laughter with their stupidity and unsuccessful imitation of the language their masters speak. Despite the difference in the character of servants, their vitality for the plays is retained. In the specific case of *Much Ado About Nothing*, had Margaret asked Borachio the reason why she should appear at Hero’s window at night in Hero’s guise, or had Dogberry and Verges got over to Leonato the truth, none of the events in the play would have happened. As Borachio points out to Leonato, Don Pedro and Claudio at the end of the play, ‘....what your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light; ......(V. I. 65).

Along with his parallelism to Roman comedies, Shakespeare makes his own personal contribution to the comedy of manners; the affair between Beatrice and Benedick; his theme of an attraction between lovers manifested in professed hostility and its witty expression. It is Shakespeare’s own invention; courtship in disguise of wit-combat as opposed to conventional romantic courtship. (Palmer: 459) As Leonato puts it in the play ‘...... there is a merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her (Beatrice): they never meet but there’s a skirmish of wit between them’ (I. I. 2). Kirschbaum says,

*The technique of Much Ado in regard to Beatrice and Benedick is much like that of Walt Disney when he places live actors or actresses in his cartoon world of imaginary creatures and fantastic events. The contrast between formally real and essentially unreal, between complexity and simplicity, between reality and convention, pervades Much Ado About Nothing.* (1962: 128)

Shakespeare highlights the contrast in the final scene, where both pairs are about to marry. One would think that Hero and Claudio would reconcile only after long talks, explanations and apologies after so
much distress and misunderstanding. But our typical young lovers fall in love, and then make it up again in silence.

The latter, however, wear out the way to happiness and marriage through discussion and reach a ‘reconciliation’. Even when the love sonnets are revealed they do not give in:

**BENEDICK:** A miracle! Here’s our own hands against our hearts. Come, I will have thee; but, by this light, I take thee for pity.

**BEATRICE:** I would not deny you; but, by this good day, I yield upon great persuasion; and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption. (V. IV. 75)

This final agreement on marriage carries the undertones of the ‘bargaining scenes’ of the Restoration period which will be studied next in this study.

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Shakespeare follows the ancient traditions of comedy of manners with the use of multiple-plot, intrigues to complicate the plot and a happy end brought about easily by the interference of chance element and a token (a document). However, Shakespeare added the novelty of ‘witty dialogue’ of warring lovers to the ancient heritage and gave the tradition of comedy of manners a national quality. This artistic invention paved the way to playwrights of the next period.

**II. THE PEAK OF THE ENGLISH COMEDY OF MANNERS.**

**WILLIAM CONGREVE’S THE WAY OF THE WORLD**

The term ‘Restoration Comedy’ is loosely applied to the plays written between 1660 and 1710- a period of fifty years. (Muir, 1970: 16) The Puritans had closed the theatres in 1642 (Nicoll, 1978: 105) When Charles II –long in exile in France- came to England and restored the old monarchy in 1660, he granted patents to Thomas Killigrew and Sir William D’Avenant to start dramatic companies. (Nicoll, 1978: 105) However, the tradition of play-making, play-acting and play-going, which had formerly been diffused among all classes of society had been destroyed. A typical theatre audience of the Restoration period was composed of the courtiers, their ladies,
and the gallants, who were determined to enjoy the freedom gained after the Puritan repression of the interregnum. (Hirst, 1979: 7)

With the Age of Reason, the new scientific method of thinking raised serious questions about old religious assumptions, so rational thought based on empirical fact dominated the era. (McDonnell, 1979: 242) Accordingly, men and women were experimenting in social things; they were trying to rationalize human relationships. They found that, for them at least, affection and sexual desire were quite separate, and they tried to organize society on that basis. Love, in which the two feelings are imaginatively fused, scarcely existed for them. And since they accepted man as a licentious animal, it meant, of course, that if life was to be easy, the pursuit of a mistress must be an acknowledged amusement. (Dobree, 1924: 20)

Besides, the presence of women for the first time on the English stage resulted in the forming of comedies with great emphasis on marriage and sexual intrigue with their corollaries, adultery and divorce. (Hirst, 1979: 7-8)

Under the influence of the above mentioned factors, the English Restoration comedy was formed and plays which portray typical Restoration people in pursuit of their carnal and financial interests came into being.

Restoration comedy of manners is specifically concerned with the manners fashionable people of the Restoration time employ in a social context. The main concerns of the characters are carnal and financial pursuits of the upper class people and thus the interrelated topics of marriage, adultery and divorce. Friends and spouses betray each other either for sexual pleasures or for monetary concerns. What matters more than the deed is the manner it is done. The superficial social manner and the refined language elaborated with witty remarks seem at sharp contrast with the baseness and shallowness of the feelings and motives of the characters. (Hirst, 1979: 34-35)
However, this veil of elaborately witty language and veneer of manners did not help Restoration comedy of manners to escape criticism of immorality. (Feibleman, 1962: 59- 60) Taine criticises by saying,

*Nothing came to head; all was abortive. The age has left nothing but the memory of corruption; their comedy remains a reportory of viciousness; society has only a soiled elegance; literature a frigid wit. Their manners were gross and trivial; their ideas futile or incomplete.* (1890: 639)

The complaints about the moral tone of the Restoration comedies of manners found its strongest outcry with Jeremy Collier’s *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* in 1698. He criticizes the plays by saying,

*Here you have a man of breeding and figure that burlesques the Bible, swears, and talks smut to ladies, speaks ill of his friend behind his back, and betraies his interest. A fine gentleman that has neither honesty, nor honour, conscience, nor manners, good nature, nor civil hypocrisy. Fine, only in the insignificance of life, the abuse of religion and the scandals of conversation. These worshipful things are the poets favourites: they appear at the head of the fashion, and shine in character, and equppage. If there is any sense stirring, they must have it, tho’ the rest of the stage suffer never so much by the partiality. And what can be the meaning of this wretched distribution of honour? Is it not to give credit and countenance to vice, and to shame young people out of all pretences to conscience and regularity? They seem forced to turn lewd in their own defence: They can’t otherwise justifie themselves to the fashion, nor keep up the character of gentlemen: Thus people not well furnished with thought, and experience, are debauched both in practice and principle.* (1969: 20)

Congreve, Vanbrugh and Farquar, the distinguished playwrights of comedy of manners, stood in for the genre by putting forward the view that the comic writer’s job is not to correct and punish the follies and vices of people but only to present them. (Dobree, 1924: 13)

*The Way of the World* is a typical play of Restoration comedy of manners in that it reveals the carnal and financial pursuits of fashionable people of the Restoration time behind the veil of manners and veneer of witty dialogues. The complexity of the plot depends on the complexity of relationships of the characters which has a stretching back long prior to the play’s action. However, once mastered, the play begins to shed a glorious light upon contemporary issues of courtship, truthfulness, and testing the quality of one’s prospective mate and allies.
It is considered to be Congreve’s masterpiece of literary art and the brightest example of Restoration comedy of manners. That is why, *The Way of the World* is chosen to represent plays of the period for this study.

In *The Way of the World*, Congreve makes use of a large number of characters portraying a typical upper-class Restoration life. The universal type characters of the ancient plays are replaced by the types of the particular Restoration time. The characters are Lady Wishfort (Mrs. Fainall’s mother and Millamant’s aunt), Mrs. Fainall (Lady Wishfort’s daughter), Millamant (Mirabel’s lover), Mrs. Marwood (Mr. Fainall’s mistress and a friend to Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Wishfort), Mr. Fainall, Mirabell (Millamant’s admirer), Witwoud and Petulant (two Restoration gallants), Sir Wilful Witwoud (Witwoud’s half brother and a figure from the country), Foible (maid to Lady Wishfort and Waitwell’s newly-wed wife), Waitwell (servant to Mirabel, Foible’s newly-wed husband and Sir Rowland in disguise), Mincing (maid to Lady Wishfort).

In the parental position, stands a libertine Lady Wishfort. She represents a typical rich Restoration widow ‘who would do anything to get a husband;...’ (Congreve, 1933: II. II. 203) Lady Wishfort is drawn as a comic figure with her enthusiasm for the other sex.

Petulant and Witwoud, two young men, are typical gallants, rakes of the Restoration society. They demonstrate the nature of their wit in an amusing exchange of words. Petulant and Witwoud make good fools for they epitomise the shallowness and silliness of fashionable society. They are men of fashion and like to create the impression that they are in demand.

"WITWOUD: ... why he (Petulant) would slip you out of this chocolate-house, just when you had been talking to him—as soon as your back was turned—whip he was gone!—then trip to his lodging, clap on a hood and scarf, and a mask, slap into a hackney-coach, and drive hither to the door again in a trice, where he would send in for himself; that I mean, call for himself, wait for himself; nay, and what’s more, not finding himself, sometimes leave I letter for himself. (I. II. 198)"

In *The Way of the World*, Congreve offers two pairs young of lovers: Mr. Fainall-Mrs. Marwood and Millamant-Mirabell. The former is a typical Restoration pair: Mr. Fainall is a married man and having an affair with Mrs. Marwood. Mrs. Marwood is a mistress to Mr. Fainall and a friend both to Mrs. Fainall and Lady Wishfort (Mrs.
Fainall’s mother). The duplicity of friends and spouses of Restoration people is exposed in these two characters. Their relationship is based more on partnership of interest than love as the development of the action will reveal.

The latter pair of young lovers are modelled on Shakespeare’s Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*. In other words, Millamant and Mirabell are involved in a kind of courtship which involves a battle of words, facade of pretence, cruelty but no demonstration of the true feeling. The intensity of the witty conflict is indicative of the depth of their emotional commitment to each other:

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**MRS. MILLAMANT:** Infinitely; I love to give pain.

**MIRABELL:** You would affect a cruelty which is not in your nature; your true vanity is in the power of pleasing.

**MRS. MILLAMANT:** Oh I ask you pardon for that— one’s cruelty is one’s power; and when one parts with one’s cruelty, one parts with one’s power; and when one has parted with that, I fancy one’s old and ugly.

**MIRABELL:** Ay, ay, suffer your cruelty to ruin the object of your power, to destroy your lover—and then how vain, how lost a thing you’ll be! Nay, ’tis true: you are no longer handsome when you’ve lost your-loser; your beauty dies upon the instant; for beauty is the lover’s gift; ’tis he bestows your charms— your glass is all a cheat. The ugly and the old, whom the looking-glass mortifies, yet after commendation can be flattered by it, and discover beauties in it; for that reflects our praises, rather than your face.

**MRS. MILLAMANT:** 0 the vanity of these men! — Fainall, d’ye hear him? If they did not commend us, we were not handsome! Now you must know they could not commend one, if one was not handsome! Beauty the lover’s gift! — Lord, what is lover, that it can give? Why, one makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases; and then, if one pleases, one makes more.

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**MRS. MILLAMANT:** One no more owes one’s beauty to a lover, than one’s wit to an echo. They can but reflect what we look and say: vain empty things if we are silent or unseen, and want a being.

**MIRABELL:** Yet to those two vain empty things you owe the two greatest pleasures of your life.

**MRS. MILLAMANT:** How so?

**MIRABELL:** To your lover you owe the pleasure of hearing yourselves praised; and to an echo the pleasure of hearing yourselves talk. (II. II. 203-204)

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Beside the pairs of young lovers, there is a married couple in *The Way of the World*: Mr. and Mrs. Fainall. These two characters represent the typical married couples of the Restoration time. Marriage is regarded to be a financial settlement and a convenient vehicle for protecting social reputations. Mr. Fainall has an affair with Mrs. Marwood. Besides, Mrs. Fainall’s match with Mr. Fainall was arranged by her ex-lover (Mirabell) on suspicion that she might be pregnant.
MRS. FAINALL: You have been the cause that I have loved without bounds, and would you set limits to that aversion of which you have been the occasion? why did you make me marry this man?

MIRABELL: Why do we daily commit disagreeable and dangerous actions? to save that idol, reputation. If the familiarities of our loves had produced that consequence of which you were apprehensive, where could you have fixed a father’s name with credit, but on a husband? I knew Fainall to be a man lavish of his morals, an interested and professing friend, a false and a designing lover; yet one whose wit and outward fair behaviour have gained a reputation with the town enough to make that woman stand excused who has suffered herself to be won by his addresses. A better man ought not to have been sacrificed to the occasion; a worse had not answered to the purpose. When you are weary of him you know your remedy. (II. II. 202)

Beside the unfaithfulness in marriage, friends, too are disloyal. In the Restoration world, as long as the pretence of civility is maintained, and one does not get caught red-handed, having affairs is considered to be fashionable. It is obvious that the characters are aware of their friends’ and spouses’ infidelity but they prefer to keep their manners so that they can carry on their own games:

FAINALL: ... ‘Twas for my ease to oversee and wilfully neglect the gross advances made him (Mirabell) by my wife; that by permitting her to be engaged, I might continue unsuspected in my pleasures; and take you oftener to my arms in full security...... (II. I. 201)

As opposed to the cunning slaves of the ancient plays, the Restoration slaves, Foible, Waitwell and Mincing, do not contrive intrigues but act as assistants in masters’ intrigues. However, as the play unfolds, we see that the servants are well-aware of the on-goings in their masters’ lives. They prefer to stay indifferent and silent as long as necessity forces them to act otherwise.

The servants, Foible (Lady Wishfort’s maid), and Waitwell (servant to Mirabell and Sir Rowland in disguise), get married in the morning of the day when the play starts. Mirabell plans their marriage as a part of his intrigue.
The job of producing laughter and adding farcical element to the play is attributed to the ‘country people’ in the Restoration plays. In *The Way of the World*, the character of Sir Wilful Witwoud, half brother to Witwoud, is a figure from the country, which sharply contrasts with the figures of the town. Sir Wilful Witwoud’s country boots, his smell, his inability to understand the witty dialogue of the town people is repeatedly mocked at. He says he intends to learn the town lingo first but ‘in the meanwhile I must answer in plain English’ (IV. I. 213) Witwoud avoids acknowledging his relation to Sir Wilful Witwoud, his half brother since being related to someone rustic is despised and looked down on in the town:

*SIR WILFULL:*  
*S’heart, sir, but there is, and much, offence!*  
-A *pox,* is this your inns o’Court breeding, not to know your friends and your relations, your elders and your betters?*  
*WITWOUD:*  
*Why, brother Wilfull of Salop, you may be as short as a Shrewsbury-cake, if you please. But I tell you ’tis not modish to know relations in town: you think you’re in the country, where great lubbery brothers slabber and kiss one another when they meet, like a call of serjeants— ’tis not the fashion here; ’tis not indeed, dear brother.* (III. III. 210)

*The Way of the World* follows the convention of ancient comedies of manners with its domestic subject matter. In *The Way of the World*, the main obstacle between young lovers (Millamant-Mirabel) is parental opposition just like it is in the ancient examples. According to the will if Millamant does not marry with her aunt’s (Lady Wishfort’s) consent, she will lose her share of the fortune. Lady Wishfort hates Mirabel since this handsome young man pretended to be in love with Lady Wishfort but, she found out from her friend, Mrs. Marwood that Mirabel is in fact in love with Millamant. He courted Lady Wisfort just to be near Millamant.

Mirabel launches an intrigue so as to get Lady Wishfort’s consent, and as a result the money. We see monetary concerns playing very significant role in all human relationships in the play.

Mirabell’s intrigue involves disguise; Mirabel’s servant Waitwell, who is already married to Lady Wishfort’s maid (Foible), will be the impostor of Sir Rowland, Mirabel’s uncle, and will propose to Lady Wishfort. According to Mirabell’s father’s will if Sir Rowland marries and has a son, Mirabell will lose his share of the fortune. With her appetite for men and her yearning for revenge from Mirabel, Lady Wishfort is sure to be trapped. According to the plan, once Lady Wishfort makes her marriage contract, Mirabel plans to reveal the real identity of the impostor and save her from shame by producing a certificate of Sir Rowland (Waitwell’s) former marriage on condition that Lady Wishfort consents to his marriage to Millamant and releases her fortune.
The play opens in a chocolate house, where the young men play cards, chat and, thus, the reader/audience gets insight into these characters. Mr. Fainall advises Mirabell about marriage saying, ‘Marry her, marry her! Be half acquainted with her charms, as you are with her defects, and my life on’t, you are your own man again.’ (I. II. 196)

In Act II, Mrs. Marwood and Mrs. Fainall talk about how much they hate men. Mrs. Marwood says she would carry her aversion further ‘by marrying; if I could but find one that loved me very well, and would be thoroughly sensible of ill usage, I think I should do myself the violence of undergoing the ceremony’ (II. I. 200) When Mirabell and Mr. Fainall meet these two ladies in the park, Mrs. Marwood pairs up with Mr. Fainall (her lover) and talk. Mr. Fainall cannot help mocking with Mrs. Marwood’s hypocrisy:

FAINALL: ... O the pious friendships of the female sex!
MRS: MARWOOD: More tender, more sincere, and more enduring, than all the vain and empty vows of men, whether professing love to us, or mutual faith to one another.
FAINALL: Ha! Ha! Ha! You are my wife’s friend too. (II. I. 201)

While Mirabell, Waitwell and Foible are talking about the intrigue in the park later on, Mrs. Marwood sees them and rushes to Lady Wishfort to inform her that Foible is talking to Mirabel (Lady Wishfort’s enemy). While Foible is coming in, Lady Wishfort asks Mrs. Marwood to hide in the cabinet so that she can question Foible on the matter and test Foible’s honesty. Foible, using her quick wit, contributes to Mirabel’s plan by saying,

FOIBLE: 0 madam! ‘tis a shame to say what he said— with his taunts and his fleers, tossing up his nose. Humph! (says he) what, you are a hatching some plot (says he), you are so early abroad, or catering (says he), ferreting for some disbanded officer, I warrant.—Half-pay is but thin subsistence (says he) ;—well, what pension does your lady propose? Let me see (says he), what, she must come down pretty deep now, she’s superannuated (says he) and—

LADY WISHFORT: Odds my life, I’ll have him, I’ll have him murdered! I’ll have him poisoned! Where does he eat? —I’ll marry a drawer to have him poisoned in his wine. I’ll send for Robin from Locket’s immediately.
FOIBLE: Poison him! poisoning’s too good for
Unfortunately, after Lady Wishfort leaves the room, Foible relates the details of Mirabel’s plan to Mrs. Fainall. Hiding in the cabinet, Mrs. Marwood overhears it. She also overhears Foible scorn her by saying, ‘She (Mrs. Marwood) has a month’s mind: but I know Mr. Mirabel can’t abide her.’ This overhearing causes forming of a counter-intrigue and, thus, thickening of the plot.

First, out of her jealousy and rage, Mrs. Marwood suggests that Millamant should marry Sir Wilfull Witwoud, Lady Wishfort’s nephew who is coming to town that day. Lady Wishfort finds the match between Millamant and Sir Wilfull Witwoud reasonable. However, the gain of this intrigue born out of jealousy of a woman is not enough to satisfy the demands of typical Restoration people. That is why, Mr. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood decide to launch a better intrigue that will bring them financial gain. Mrs. Marwood will expose to Lady Wishfort Mirabel’s intrigue in an anonymous letter and will spoil it. Mr. Fainall will threaten to divorce Mrs. Fainall charging her with adultery with Mirabel. He will withdraw divorce only if Lady Wishfort agrees to leave all her fortune in his hands. The malicious intriguers both know that Lady Wishfort will accept any condition to avoid such shame on her and her daughter’s reputation.

In order to put this counter-intrigue in practice, Mrs. Marwood’s small trick (the proposal of a match between Millamant and Sir Wilfull Witwoud) needs abolishing. For this purpose, Mr. Fainall asks Witwoud and Petulant to get Sir Wilfull drunk so that Sir Wilfull will prove an impossible match for Millamant. The scenes where Sir Wilfull Witwoud, Witwoud and Petulant are drunk add farcical element to the play; and strips ‘the epitomisers of words’ (IV. I. 215) off their appearances exposing their base feelings and pursuits:

**PETULANT:** Thou art (without a figure) just one half of an ass, and Baldwin yonder, thy half-brother, is the rest.—A Gemini of asses split would make just four of you.

**WITWOU D:** Thou dost bite, my dear mustard-seed; kiss me for that.

**PETULANT:** Stand off I—I’ll kiss no more males—I have kissed your twin yonder in a humour of reconciliation, till he [Hiccups] rises upon my stomach like a radish.

**MRS. MILLAMANT:** Eh! filthy creature! what was the quarrel?

**PETULANT:** There was no quarrel—there might have been a quarrel.

**WITWOU D:** If there had been words enow between ’em to have expressed provocation, they had gone...
together by the ears like a pair of castanets.

PETULANT: You were the quarrel.

MRS. MILLAMANT: Mel

PETULANT: If I have a humour to quarrel, I can make less matters conclude premises. —If you are not handsome, what then, if I have a humour to prove it? If I shall have my reward, say so; if not, fight for your face the next time yourself— I’ll go sleep.

WITTWOUD: Do, wrap thyself up like a wood-louse, and dream revenge—and hear me, if thou canst learn to write by to-morrow morning, pen me a challenge—I’ll carry it for thee.

PETULANT: Carry your mistress’s monkey a spider! — Go flea dogs, and read romances! —I’ll go to bed to my maid. (IV. II. 216)

In Act IV, both Sir Wilfull Witwoud and Mirabell make advances to Millamant in subsequent scenes. The juxtaposition of two suitors reveals the scorn for rural manners and values by the town people. Just like the characters of Dogberry and Verges in Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*, the character of Sir Wilfull Witwoud can not handle the elaborate language of the upper-class people, messes with it and provides laughter:

MRS. MILLAMANT: [Repeating]
“I prithee spare me, gentle boy,
Press me no more for that slight toy.”

SIR WILFULL: Anan? Cousin, your servant.

MRS. MILLAMANT: [Repeating]
“That foolish trifle of a heart.”

Sir Wilfull

SIR WILFULL: Yes—your servant. No offence, I hope, Cousin.

MRS. MILLAMANT: [Repeating]
“I swear it will not do its part,
Though thou dost thine, employest thy power and art.”

Natural, easy Suckling!

SIR WILFULL: Anan? Suckling! no such suckling neither, cousin, nor stripling: I thank Heaven, I’m no minor. (IV. I. 213)

Millamant concludes with a typical upper-class attitude saying, ‘I loathe the country, and everything that relates to it.’ (IV. I. 213) Millamant’s wit which seems affected in Sir Wilful Witwoud’s company finds its balance and challenge in Mirabel’s. Mirabel answers Millamant back with the next line of the poem she has been quoting from. The poem alludes to the mythical romance between Daphne and Phoebus, and by extension Millamant and Mirabel. Despite this romantic tinge, Millamant and Mirabel’s prenuptial conditions have strong legal and logical rather than emotional overtones since, as Hirst puts it, at that time ‘marriage is as much a legal and financial settlement as a personal and spiritual union.’ (1979: 42) Millamant and Mirabel do not want the bright face of happiness to be tarnished with disillusionment. They strive to avoid becoming a couple like Fainalls by
putting straight each other’s expectations and needs as frankly as possible. Just like their Shakespearian
ancestors Beatrice and Benedick, Millamant and Mirabel are involved in a battle of words, witty conflict.
Emotional and romantic side of the relationship is kept in the background. The dialogue between Millamant and
Mirabel follows the courting convention which Shakespeare’s Beatrice and Benedick started and the famous
bargaining scene takes place:

MRS. MILLAMANT: ...Ah! I’ll never marry, unless I am
first made sure of my will and pleasure.
MIRABELL: Would you have 'em both before
marriage? or will you be contented with the first now, And stay for
the other till after grace?
MRS. MILLAMANT: Ah don’t be impertinent. —My dear
liberty, shall I leave thee? my faithful solitude, my darling
contemplation, must I bid you then adieu? Ay-h adieu —my
morning thoughts, agreeable wakings, indolent slumbers, all ye
douceurs, ye sommeils du matin, adieu! —I can’t do’t, ’tis more
than impossible—positively, Mirabell, I’ll lie abed in a morning as
long as I please.
MIRABELL: Then I’ll get up in a morning as
early as I please.
MRS. MILLAMANT: Ah! idle creature, get up when you
will—d’ye hear, I won’t be called names after I’m married;
positively I wont be called names.
MIRABELL: Names!
MRS. MILLAMANT: Ay, as wife, spouse, my dear, joy,
love, sweetheart, and the rest of that nauseous’ cant, in
which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar—I shall
never hear that—good Mirabell, don’t let us be familiar or fond,
nor go to Hyde-park together the first Sunday in a new chariot, to
provoke eyes and whispers, and then never to be seen there
together again; as if we were proud of one another the first week,
and ashamed of one another ever after. Let us never visit together,
nor go to a play together; but let us be very strange and well-
bred: let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while;
and as well bred as if we were not married at all.
MIRABELL: Have you any more conditions to
offer? Hitherto your demands are pretty reasonable.
MRS. MILLAMANT: Trifles! —As liberty to pay and
receive visits to and from whom I please; to write and receive
letters, without interrogatories or wry faces on your part; to wear
what I please; and choose conversation with regard only to my
own taste; to have no obligation upon me to converse with wits
that I don’t like, because they are your acquaintance: or to be
intimate with fools, because they may be your relations. Come to
dinner when I please; dine in my dressing-room when I’m out of
humour, without giving a reason. To have my closet inviolate; to
be sole empress of my tea-table, which you must never presume to
approach without first asking leave. And lastly, wherever I am,
you shall always knock at the door before you come in. These
articles subscribed, if I continue to endure you a little longer, I
may by degrees dwindle into a wife.
MIRABELL: Your bill of fare is something
advanced in this latter account—Well, have I liberty to offer
conditions—that when you are dwindled into a wife, I may not he beyond measure enlarged into a husband?

**MRS. MILLAMANT:** You have free leave; propose your utmost, speak and spare not.

**MIRABELL:** I thank you. —Imprimis then, I covenant, that your acquaintance be general; that you admit no sworn confidant, or intimate of your own sex; no she friend to screen her affairs under your countenance, and tempt you to make trial of a mutual secrecy. No decoy duck to wheedle you a fop-scrambling to the play in a mask—then bring you home in a pretended fright, when you think you shall be found out—and rail at me for missing the play, and disappointing the frolic which you had to pick me up, and prove my constancy.

**MRS. MILLAMANT:** Detestable imprimis! I go to the play in a mask!

**MIRABELL:** Item, I article, that you continue to like your own face, as long as I shall: and while it passes Current with me, that you endeavour not to new-coin it. To which end, together with all wizards for the day, I prohibit all masks for the night, made of oiled-skins, and I know not what—hogs' bones, hares' gall, pig-water, and the marrow of a roasted cat. In short, I forbid all commerce with the gentlewoman in what d'ye call it court. Item, I shut my doors against all bawds with baskets, and pennyworths of muslin, china, fans, atlasses, etc.—Item, when you shall be breeding—

**MRS. MILLAMANT:** Ah! name it not.

**MIRABELL:** Which may be presumed with a blessing on our endeavours.

**MRS. MILLAMANT:** Odious endeavours!

**MIRABELL:** I denounce against all strait lacing, squeezing for a shape, till you mould my boy's head like a sugar-loaf, and instead of a man child, make me father to a crooked billet. Lastly, to the dominion of the tea-table I submit—but with proviso, that you exceed not in your province; but restrain yourself to native and simple tea-table drinks, as tea, chocolate, and coffee: as likewise to genuine and authorised tea-table talk—such as mending of fashions, spoiling reputations, railing at absent friends, and so forth—but that on no account you encroach upon the men's prerogative, and presume to drink healths, or toast fellows; for prevention of which I banish all foreign forces, all auxiliaries to the tea-table, as orange-brandy, all aniseed, cinnamon, citron, and Barbadoes waters, together with ratafia, and the most noble spirit of clary—but for cowslip wine, poppy water, and all dormitives, those I allow—These provisos admitted, in other things I may prove a tractable and complying husband.

**MRS. MILLAMANT:** 0 horrid provisos! filthy strong-waters! I toast fellows! odious men! I hate your odious provisos.

**MIRABELL:** Then we are agreed! ... (IV. I. 214-215)

While Lady Wishfort is waiting for her guest, Sir Rowland, she is thinking of how to attract him. When Sir Rowland (Waitwell in disguise) arrives, Mrs. Wishfort makes effort to hide her enthusiasm to marry him. Lady Wishfort’s superficial cordiality and pretended tediousness about marrying in such a short time is at sharp variance with her heart-felt enthusiasm. She is ready to wait ‘a day or two for decency of marriage’. (IV. II. 216)
WAITWELL: For decency of funeral, madam! The delay will break my heart—or, if that should fail, I shall be poisoned. My nephew will get an inking of my designs, and poison me—and I would willingly starve him before I die—I would gladly go out of the world with that satisfaction. —That would be some comfort to me, if I could but live so long as to be revenged on that unnatural viper.

LADY WISHFORT: Is he so unnatural, say you? Truly I would contribute much both to the saving of your life, and the accomplishment of your revenge. (IV. II. 217)

Thus, Lady Wishfort is persuaded easily by Sir Rowland. However, the letter (from Mrs. Marwood) arrives and spoils the plan. Sir Rowland promises to bring back a box containing papers that prove his wealth and estate.

Soon, Mr. Fainall enters and demands that Lady Wishfort should leave all her estate and fortune to Mr. Fainall and never marry otherwise he will divorce Mrs. Fainall and set Mrs. Fainall ‘adrift, like a leaky hulk to sink or swim’ (V. III. 223) Mr. Fainall’s offensive reference to his wife at this point contrasts sharply with his address to her in the park and reveals his hypocrisy:

FAINALL: My dear!
MRS. FAINEALL: My soul!. (II. I. 220)

Mirabel comes and offers help and asks for Millamant in compensation for his help, however, Mirabel says he is willing to help anyway. Even at this point, Lady Wishfort is full of ‘the vigour of fifty-five’ and says, ‘his appearance rakes the embers which have so long lain smothered in my breast’ (V. III. 222)

As the play approaches to its end, the characters fill the stage and revelations begin to take place. The affair between Mrs. Marwood and Mr. Fainall is exposed by Foible and Mincing, who witnessed the affair.

Waitwell enters with the black box containing the documents which reveals the fact that Mrs. Fainall trusted all her fortune and property to Mirabel before she married Mr. Fainall. Left with nothing to threaten and gain money, Mr. Fainall leaves with anger. Lady Wishfort announces her consent to Millamant and Mirabell’s marriage. Thus the play ends with the union of lovers. Despite all the complication, the resolution is brought about rather easily and quickly similar to the ancient plays and Shakespeare’s play. In the ancient plays, it is a token (a toy, a scar etc.) and in Shakespeare’s play Much Ado About Nothing, it is sonnets, and in Congreve’s The Way of the World it is the legal documents.
The characters of parents in *The Way of the World* departs from the typical good-willed parents of the ancient plays and Shakespeare’s play. Yet, Lady Wishfort bears similarity to the character of the libertine father character in Plautus’ *Casina*. The father in *Casina* launches intrigues to be able to spend a night with the young girl regardless of the age gap between them. Similarly, Lady Wishfort ‘a widow full of the vigour of fifty-five’ is in love with a young boy, Mirabell.

The characters of servants, Waitwell, Foible and Mincing are in every way the equals of the ancient slaves in intelligence. Yet, due to the overwhelming dominance of the upper class characters in Restoration comedy of manners, the servants operate only if need be in the absence of their masters. In *The Way of the World* Foible avoids being sacked by Lady Wishfort upon the discovery of her involvement in the intrigue by using her wit and saying, ‘....I confess all. Mr. Mirabell seduced me; I am not the first that he has wheedled with his dissembling tongue; your ladyship’s own wisdom has been deluded by him; then how should I, a poor ignorant, defend myself? ...... (V. I. 219)

Besides, the Restoration servants prove to be very well aware of their masters’ secrets and the ways of the Restoration world:

*MRS. MARWOOD:* Have you so much ingratitude and injustice to give credit against your friend, to the aspersions of two such mercenary trulls.

*MINCING:* Mercenary, mem? I scorn your words. 'Tis true we found you and Mr. Fainall in the blue garret; by the same token, you swore us to secrecy upon Messelina’s poems. Mercenary! No, if we would have been mercenary, we should have held our tongues; you would have bribed us sufficiently. (V. III. 223)

Congreve’s *The Way of the World*, just like Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*, presents two different kinds of pairs of lovers: conventional and unconventional. Hero and Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing* resume the tradition of lovesick and inactive young lover type in the ancient plays. Mrs. Marwood-Mr. Fainall in *The Way of the World* is a typical Restoration pair in that their relationship involves the sharing of mutual interest and deceit. In otherwords, despite the contrast at first sight, Mrs. Marwood-Mr. Fainall pair resembles Hero-Claudio pair in that they are both ‘conventional’.
On the other hand, similar to Beatrice and Benedick, who are unconventional in the romantic world of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Millamant and Mirabell in *The Way of the World* pose as an unconventional pair for their own time. The distinction in the conduct of relationship between Millamant and Mirabell and the conventional lovers of the Restoration time is exposed in their dialogues:

```plaintext
MRS. MILLAMANT... what would you give, that you could help loving me?
MIRABELL: I would give something that you did not know that I could not help it.
MRS. MILLAMANT: Come, don’t look so grave then. Well, what do you say to me?
MIRABELL: I say that a man may as soon make a friend by his wit, or a fortune by his honesty, as win a woman by his plain-dealing and sincerity.
MRS. MILLAMANT: Sententious Mirabell!....... (II. II. 204)
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Congreve follows the example of Shakespeare’s ‘railing lovers’ in *The Way of the World*. Millamant and Mirabell and Beatrice and Benedick are similar in their conduct of relationships, too. Both pairs are intellectually attracted to each other and are involved in a competition to beat each other using their wit.

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, Restoration comedy of manners is subject to many critics’ distaste for its exposure of typical upper class Restoration life and their concerns and the playwrights’ general refusal to allow the audience a clear point of moral view. (Hirst, 1979: 10) Still, Millamant and Mirabell may be considered as Congreve’s suggestion to the deformed manners and relationships of the Restoration time. As Mirabell puts it in the play, ‘... Where modesty’s ill-manners, ‘tis but fit / That impudence and malice pass for wit.’ (I. II. 199)
*The Way of the World* coincides with the ancient tradition of comedy of manners with its domestic subject matter, the complication of plot with intrigues based on the elements of overhearing/eavesdropping, disguise and its happy end provided easily with a token (document) and its type characters representing typical Restoration people in this case since comedy of manners focuses on the depiction of the manners of people living in a certain society.

Along with the similarities, Restoration comedy of manners is not without its contribution to the genre: with *The Way of the World* Congreve advances Shakespeare’s invention of ‘railing lovers’ with Millamant and Mirabell. What is more, *The Way of the World* presents the brightest and most outstanding use of ‘witty dialogue’ among all the upper class characters in the play. Thus, witty and exquisitely refined language becomes the most distinguishing characteristic of the English comedy of manners.

**FROM COMEDY OF MANNERS TOWARDS COMEDY OF DISCUSSION: G. B. SHAW’S ARMS AND THE MAN**

The Restoration comedy of manners was replaced by ‘sentimental comedy’, in which goodness triumphs over vice and the audience is moved not to laughter but to tears. (Lipking, 2000: 2061) However, the virtuous platitudes of the sentimental comedy did not respond to the needs of the contemporary society. The times of Industrial Revolution and the subsequent Victorian period, while strengthening middle-class people abandoned working class people to starvation in slums. The tension between financial growth and social instability in Victorian England required a new kind of drama which will reflect the social problems of the time and offer solutions. (McDonnell, 1979: 444)

The endeavour to make the theatre express in its own way the new social issues before its audience required a move from the sentimentalism towards realism. (Nicoll, 1978: 142)

George Bernard Shaw is the first realist playwright of English literature. Shaw champions the value of reality against the conventional Victorian values based on romanticism and idealism, which pervaded his time.
idealism, which is only a flattering name for romance in politics and morals, is as obnoxious to me as romance in ethics or religion... I can no longer be satisfied with fictitious morals and fictitious good conduct, shedding fictitious glory on overcrowding, disease, crime, drink, war, cruelty, infant mortality, and all the other commonplaces of civilization which drive men to the theatre to make foolish pretences that these things are progress, science, morals, religion, patriotism, imperial supremacy, national greatness and all the other names the newspapers call them. On the other hand, I see plenty of good in the world working itself out as fast as the idealist will allow it; and if they would only let it alone and learn to respect reality, which would include... respecting themselves, ... we should get along much better and faster. (1898: 13)

Shaw blends his knowledge of conventions drama with his novelties, one of which is lack of a list of characters before the play. Shaw wants his readers to be introduced to the characters as they appear in the play, not before. Another of his novelties is his detailed stage directions. With this instrument Shaw is able to describe and determine the nature of his characters and the environment more clearly. Shaw’s use of detailed stage directions also helps him to typify his characters with certain gestures as we will see in Arms and the Man, the play which will be covered in this study. Plus, Shaw does not divide the acts into scenes. Shaw’s basic unit of construction is a short scene, usually consisting an exchange of ideas or opinions between a few characters. Lastly, Shaw prefers to spell contractions without an apostrophe in his plays.

Shaw celebrated the dramatists who found a flaw in the conventional morality and made it his duty to correct it. (Carpent, 1969: 7) Shaw regarded theatre as a means of shaking the audience out of their blind acceptance of conventional views, preconception of what is right and wrong, complacencies and hypocrisies. In order to
achieve this aim, Shaw follows a different structure in the action, which he puts as ‘exposition, situation, and discussion.’ (1969: 9)

With this structure, Shaw tricks his audience/reader into forming a meanly false judgement, which is already existent in their minds with preconceptions. Soon Shaw proves the judgement wrong by creating situations and then Shaw pressures the audience to question their conventional view and to realize that their ideas may be invalid, ridiculous or repugnant. (1969: 13-21)

*Arms and the Man* (1894), an anti-romantic comedy as Shaw himself classified in the preface (1898: 6), is chosen for this study since it is a good example of how Shaw handles the presentation of serious issues of his time in the above mentioned structure and while doing this serious job how he adds comic elements to his plays with the use of conventions of the comedy of manners.

In *Arms and the Man*, Shaw presents a variety of characters; three different kinds of soldiers and masters (Major Petkoff, Sergius Saranoff, and Bluntschli), two female masters (Catherine Petkoff, Raina Petkoff), and two servants (Nicola and Louka).

Major Petkoff is a cheerful, unsophisticated man about fifty. Shaw’s stage directions say that he likes money, his family and his place in local society, but otherwise unambitious. He says more ambitious and profitable designs about war settlement would have kept him away from home for too long.

Sergius is the personification of romantic, idealistic and heroic man of the nineteenth century thought produced. With the stage directions Shaw puts emphasis on Sergius’ romantic appearance and his being displaced in a Bulgarian city, his disillusionment and being cut off from reality. Shaw describes him as

`a tall romantically handsome man,.....; his assertive chin, would not be out of place in a Parisian salon, shewing that the clever imaginative barbarian has an acute critical faculty which has been thrown into intense activity by the arrival of western civilization in the Balkans. The result is precisely what the advent of nineteenth century thought first produced...`
in England: to wit, Byronism. By his brooding on the perpetual failure, not only of others, but of himself, to live up to his ideals; by his consequent cynical scorn for humanity; by his jejune credulity as to the absolute validity of his concepts and the unworthiness of the world in disregarding them; by his wincings and mockeries under the sting of the petty disillusions which every hour spent among men brings to his sensitive observations, he has acquired the half tragic, half ironic air, the mysterious moodiness, the suggestion of a strange and terrible history that has left nothing but undying remorse...’ (II. 44-45)

The third soldier in *Arms and the Man* is the personification of a realistic, prosaic thought that Shaw champions. This character is introduced as ‘The Man’ in the play until the character names himself as ‘Bluntschli’. Shaw first introduces Bluntschli as a pitiable soldier in the stage directions as ‘a man about 35, in a deplorable plight, bespattered with mud and blood and snow, his belt and the strap of his revolver-case keeping together the ruins of the blue tunic of a Serbian artillery officer...... (I. 24) However, with the situations from real life in the play the figure of Bluntschli who/which invites our pity and derision ascends to the position of a figure that Major Petkoff and Sergius respect.

Of the two ladies, Catherine Petkoff may be considered to be on the same romantic, idealistic plane as Sergius Saranoff. Catherine scorns her daughter, Raina, for having hesitated to marry Sergius. Catherine is an energetic, domineering wife of over forty and is still at heart a peasant although she tries to look sophisticated. As the stage directions reveal she has had an electric bell installed to call servants but she still shouts to them. Her laundry is still hanging out on the fruit bushes.

Raina is engaged to Sergius but has doubts about marrying him because she is not sure if the world of heroism, idealism and romanticism is a real one:

RAINIA: Well, it came into my head just as he was holding me in his arms and looking into my eyes, that perhaps we only had our heroic ideas because we are so fond of reading Byron and Pushkin, and because we were so delighted with the opera that season at Bucharest. Real life is so seldom like that! indeed never, as far as I knew it then. (Remorsefully) Only think, mother: I doubted him: I wondered whether all his heroic qualities and his soldiership might not prove mere
imagination when he went into a real battle. I had an uneasy fear that he might cut
a poor figure there beside all those clever officers from the Tsar’s court. (I. 21)

Louka and Nicola, two servants in the play, are engaged but Nicola feels the need to warn Louka about her
defiant manners towards the masters. We understand from the following dialogue that both servants are very
well aware of the happenings in the house. Nicola chooses to keep silent since he is afraid of ‘higher people’ and
never intends to be one of them. Instead he plans to go on living with their backup. However, Louka has put her
mind to move upward in her social position and will not refrain from using any of the means she finds available:

LOUKA .... But I know some family secrets they wouldn’t care
to have told, young as I am. Let them quarrel with me if they dare!
NICOLA  [with compassionate superiority] Do you know what
they would do if they heard you talk like that?
LOUKA What could they do?
NICOLA Discharge you for untruthfulness. Who would believe
any stories you told after that? Who would give you another
situation? Who in this house would dare be seen speaking to you
ever again? How long would your father be left on his little farm?
[She impatiently throws away the end of her cigaret, and stamps
on it]. Child: you don’t know the power such high people have over
the like of you and me when we try to rise out of our poverty
against them. (He goes close to her and lowers his voice). Look at
me, ten years in their service. Do you think I know no secrets? I
know things about the mistress that she wouldn’t have the master
know for a thousand levas. I know things about him that she
wouldn’t let him hear the last of for six months if I blabbed them to
her. I know things about Raina that would break off her match
with Sergius if —
LOUKA [turning on him quickly] How do you know? I never
told you!
NICOLA [opening his eyes cunningly] So that’s your little
secret, is it? Thought it might be something like that. Well, you
take my advice and be respectful; and make the mistress feel that
no matter what you know or don’t know, she can depend on you to
hold your tongue and serve the family faithfully. That’s what they
like; and that’s how you’ll make most out of them.
LOUKA [with searching scorn] You have the soul of a
servant, Nicola.
NICOLA [complacently] Yes: that’s the secret of success in
service.

...........
LOUKA ... You’ll never put the soul of a servant into me. (II.
41)

Arms and the Man is set in a small Bulgarian town during a war between Bulgaria and Serbia in November 1885.
It opens in Raina’s bedroom. The stage directions offer insights into Raina and her society. The bedroom is a
mixture of expensive traditional Bulgarian, Eastern European and Turkish furnishings, which are natural to the
region on the one hand, and cheap fashionable Viennese furnishings, which on the other hand, imply that the
inhabitants are badly imitating fashionable Western and European culture. From the paperback novels in her
room, we understand that Raina is influenced by romantic English and Russian writers. Among the objects in the room are a box of chocolate creams and a portrait of a handsome officer, which will be prominently used in the play.

The play opens in an atmosphere of heavily theatrical romance that would appeal to most Victorian spectators: A beautiful young lady wearing fur is standing on a balcony under the moonlit sky and gazing at the snowy mountains. Raina’s mother, Catherine, enters and informs the victorious cavalry charge of Sergius. Raina has been wavering about marrying Sergius since she has been dubious about the reality of romantic and heroic ideals. Now that Sergius, the impersonation of romantic and heroic ideals, has succeeded in real world proves to Raina that these ideals are true to life. So she says, ‘Oh, I shall never be unworthy of you any more, my soul’s hero: never, never, never.... My hero! My hero! (I. 23) So far, we are introduced to Sergius as a military hero.

Just after Raina goes to bed, a voice threatening Raina to keep quiet is heard and a Serbian officer comes into the room. From the very moment he starts speaking, he displays a kind of soldier other than Raina knows. Raina finds it difficult to understand that a soldier is afraid to die.

**THE MAN**  Well, I dont intend to get killed if I can help it. [Still more formidably] Do you understand that? [He locks the door quickly but quietly].

**RAINÀ**  [disdainfully] I suppose not. [She draws herself up superbly, and looks him straight in the face, adding, with cutting emphasis] Some soldiers, I know, are afraid to die.

**THE MAN**  (with grim goodhumor) All of them, dear lady, all of them, believe me. It is our duty to live as long as we can. (I. 24-25)

The man behaves quite differently from the other gentlemen Raina has seen:

**THE MAN**  ...Stop! [She stops]. Where are you going?

**RAINÀ**  [with dignified patience] Only to get my cloak.

**THE MAN**  [passing swiftly to the ottoman and snatching the cloak] A good idea! I’ll keep the cloak; and you’ll take care that nobody comes in and sees you without it. This is a better weapon than the revolver: eh? [He throws the pistol down on the ottoman].

**RAINÀ**  [revolted] It is not the weapon of a gentleman!

**THE MAN**  It’s good enough for a man with only you to stand between him and death. [As they look at one another for a moment, Raina hardly able to believe that even a Serbian officer can be so cynically and selfishly unchivalrous, they are startled by
a sharp fusillade in the street. The chill of imminent death hushes the man’s voice as he adds] Do you hear? If you are going to bring those blackguards in on me you shall receive them as you are.

………..

LOUKA [outside, knocking at the bedroom door] My lady! My lady! get up quick and open the door. If you don't they will break it down.
The fugitive throws up his head with the gesture of a man who sees that it is all over with him, and drops the manner he has been assuming to intimidate Raina.

THE MAN [sincerely and kindly] No use, dear: I'm done for.
[Flinging the cloak to her] Quick! wrap yourself up: they're coming. (I. 25-26)

When soldiers come to the door for the fugitive, Raina suddenly decides to protect this different man. As the moments pass, Shaw enriches the portray of this unusual soldier with details: his gun is not loaded, he carries chocolates in his pockets instead of ammunition. Feeling sorry for this exhausted soldier, Raina gives him a box of chocolate creams, which he goes through with great appetite. The sight of him when ‘he can only scrape the box with his fingers and suck them’ (I. 29) makes Raina feel that he is a ‘schoolboy’ (I. 29) She calls him ‘chocolate cream soldier’ (I. 33)

Up to this point in the play, two soldiers are introduced. As far as the conventional view allows, Sergius is a hero and The Man is a coward. Shaw gives us this conventional view first.

However, after a few lines, our view will be reverted. This ‘poor chocolate cream soldier’ (I. 33) has witnessed Sergius’ cavalry charge and tells Raina what has happened:

THE MAN …..Sheer ignorance of the art of war nothing else. [Indignantly] I never saw anything so unprofessional.
RAINNA [ironically] Oh! was it unprofessional to beat you?
THE MAN Well, come! is it professional to throw a regiment of cavalry on a battery of machine guns, with the dead certainty that if the guns go off not a horse or man will ever get within fifty yards of the fire? I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw it.

THE MAN He did it like an operatic tenor. A regular handsome fellow, with flashing eyes and lovely moustache, shouting his war-cry and charging like Don Quixote at the windmills. We did laugh.
THE MAN Yes; but when the sergeant ran up as white as a sheet, and told us they'd sent us the wrong ammunition, and that we couldn't fire a round for the next ten minutes, we laughed at the
other side of our mouths. I never felt so sick in my life; though I've been in one or two very tight places. And I hadn't even a revolver cartridge: only chocolate. We'd no bayonets: nothing. Of course, they just cut us to bits. And there was Don Quixote flourishing like a drum major, thinking he'd done the cleverest thing ever known, whereas he ought to be courtmartialed for it. Of all the fools ever let loose on a field of battle, that man must be the very maddest. He and his regiment simply committed suicide; only the pistol missed fire: that's all. (I. 31-32)

When Raina shows The Man Sergius’ portrait and tells him that Sergius is her fiancé, The Man reveals his kind and sensible nature by apologising and making up for his mistake, yet Raina is still offended for she has already had her doubts about the nature of Sergius:

THE MAN  [with sincere remorse] Of course. Certainly. I'm really very sorry. [He hands her the picture. She deliberately kisses it and looks him straight in the face before returning to the chest of drawers to replace it. He follows her; apologizing]. Perhaps I’m quite wrong, you know: no doubt I am. Most likely he had got wind of the cartridge business somehow, and knew it was a safe job.
RAINIA That is to say, he was a pretender and a coward! You did not dare say that before.
THE MAN  [with a comic gesture of despair] It’s no use, dear lady: I can’t make you see it from the professional point of view. (I. 32)

The Man is made even more unusual and contemptible as a soldier when he admits his fear of climbing down the waterpipe into the street to escape. He is even more pitiable in the eyes of the conventional thinkers when he falls asleep on Raina’s bed. The Man’s honest admission of fear and hunger is juxtaposed with Sergius’ pretentious heroic act in the battle and a question is raised in the mind of the reader/audience. Is Sergius really a hero? Thus Act I ends.

In Act II, Shaw tests the nature of Sergius’ heroism and military talent further with more situations from real life. Shaw introduces Sergius himself and reverses the situation and changes our idea of Sergius: Major Petkoff returns from the war and expresses his low opinion of Sergius’ military talent: ‘It’s no use, my dear: he hasn’t the slightest chance of promotion until we’re quite sure that the peace will be a lasting one.’ (II. 44)

Shortly after, Sergius himself enters. His allegiance to high ideals and his inability to live up to them lead him to be cynical and bitter. He explains his disappointment about his promotion as:
SERGIUS I won the battle the wrong way when our worthy Russian generals were losing it the right way. In short, I upset their plans, and wounded their self-esteem. Two Cossack colonels had their regiments roused oh the most correct principles of scientific warfare. Two majorgenerals got killed strictly according to military etiquette. The two colonels are now major-generals; and I am still a simple major. (II. 45)

While Shaw is degrading Sergius step by step, he is upgrading The Man in Act II: Major Petkoff and Sergius, despite being their enemy, talk about a Swiss officer with admiration. The Swiss soldier tricked Major Petkoff into exchanging fifty Serbian soldiers for two hundred aged horses. Sergius says the same Swiss soldier was saved from the Serbs by two Bulgarian women. He has heard that a young lady and her mother helped the Swiss to escape by disguising him in a coat belonging to the husband who was away in the Bulgarian army. Hearing that the news has already spread, Catherine and Raina’s blood run cold. Catherine and Raina’s disturbance is to be worsened when this Swiss soldier comes to the house to return the coat. Catherine tries to send him away as quickly as possible but just as the Swiss soldier is leaving Major Petkoff comes out of his library. To Catherine’s (the reader/audience’s) surprise, Major greets the soldier by his name, Bluntschli, and invites him to the library.

‘The Man’, ‘the Swiss soldier’, and finally ‘Bluntschli’ has now gathered with other characters in the Petkoff house. Shaw makes use of the chance element to bring his characters together. The coincidence of the escaped soldier taking refuge from the Bulgarian in the bedroom of the fiancee of the cavalry officer and in the house of the Major of the Bulgarian army brings all of these different people together and causes of conflict of personalities, thus ideas, which is what Shaw exactly aims at.

Major asks Bluntschli to help him and Sergius solve a military problem (getting three regiments back to Philippopolis). From this point on, the character of Bluntschli is introduced from another aspect. He ascends to a position of a prosaic, businesslike and competent military officer from the parody of a soldier of Act I.

At the same time, Sergius’ talent in management of post-war arrangements is tested. He proves to be a failure in business and management, too. He acts as an assistant to Bluntschli. The stage directions help Shaw to present Sergius comic and pitiable: he is ‘gnawing the feather of a pen’ (III. 61), and while signing the papers Bluntschli gives him ‘his protruded tongue is following the movements of his pen’ (III. 62)
Shaw goes on to test Sergius’ talent and virtue as a romantic lover. Sergius and Raina’s first meeting after he comes back from war is splendid:

**RAINAN*** [placing her hands on his shoulders as she looks up at him with admiration and worship] My hero! My king!

**SERGIUS** My queen! [He kisses her on the forehead].

**RAINAN*** How I have envied you, Sergius! You have been out in the world, on the field of battle, able to prove yourself there worthy of any woman in the world; whilst I have had to sit at home inactive—dreaming—useless—doing nothing that could give me the right to call myself worthy of any man.

**SERGIUS** Dearest: all my deeds have been yours. You inspired me. I have gone through the war like a knight in a tournament with his lady looking down at him!

**RAINAN*** And you have never been absent from my thoughts for a moment. [Very solemnly] Sergius: I think we two have found the higher Love. When I think of you, I feel that I could never do a base deed, or think an ignoble thought.

**SERGIUS** My lady and my saint! [He clasps her reverently].

**RAINAN*** [returning his embrace] My lord and my —

**SERGIUS** Sh — sh! Let me be the worshipper, dear. You little know how unworthy even the best man is of a girl’s pure passion! (II. 49)

As soon as Raina leaves to get her hat, Louka comes in and our romantic hero starts flirting with Louka, which proves to the reader/audience that Sergius is fake as a romantic lover as well as a soldier and a manager.

The maid, Louka, is not at all blinded by the romantic idealism like the Russian officer who inspected Raina’s room for a fugitive in Act I. She has seen the revolver on the ottoman and ‘eavesdropped’ to Raina and Bluntschli’s conversation at the door. Equipped with enough evidence about Raina’s relation with a man other than Sergius, Louka contrives the only ‘intrigue’ in the play so as to shatter Sergius’ world of illusions and wake him up to reality:

**LOUKA** ‘... if that gentleman ever comes here again, Miss Raina will marry him, whether he likes it or not. I know the difference between the sort of manner you and she put on before one another and the real manner. (II. 52)

The reality is too heavy and unbearable for Sergius. He loses control and bruises Louka’s arm. Louka goes on provoking Sergius until he swears that if he ever touches Louka again, he will marry her. Now, the only thing Louka has to do is to make Sergius touch her.
The two servants’ attitudes to their masters contrast sharply: while Louka is defiant, Nicola is completely obedient. It is Nicola, who has to carry the burden of the comic situations and the complications that the return of the Swiss soldier and the coat causes. When Raina comes back with her hat, she sees Bluntschli in the library with her father and reacts: ‘Oh! chocolate cream soldier’ (II. 58) She blames Nicola explanation his reaction:

RAIN... I made a beautiful ornament this morning for the ice pudding; and that stupid Nicola has just put down a pile of plates on it and spoilt it.

PETKOFF [suspiciously to Raina] And since when, pray, have you taken to cooking?

CATHERINE Oh, whilst you were away. It is her latest fancy.

PETKOFF [testily] And has Nicola taken to drinking? He used to be careful enough. First he shews Captain Bluntschli; out here when he knew quite well I was in the library; and then be goes downstairs and breaks Raina’s chocolate soldier. He must — [Nicola appears at the top of the steps with the bag. He descends; places it respectfully before Bluntschli; and waits for further orders. General amazement. Nicola, unconscious of the effect he is producing, looks perfectly satisfied with himself. When Petkoff recovers his power of speech, he breaks out at him with] Are you mad, Nicola?

NICOLA [taken aback] Sir?

PETKOFF What have you brought that for?

NICOLA My lady’s orders, major. Louka told me that —

CATHERINE [interrupting him] My orders! Why should I order you to bring Captain Bluntschi’s luggage out here? What are you thinking of, Nicola?

NICOLA [after a moment’s bewilderment, picking up the bag as he addresses Bluntschli with the very perfection of servile discretion] I beg your pardon, captain, I am sure. [To Catherine] My fault, madam: I hope you'll overlook it. [He bows, and is going to the steps with the bag, when Petkoff addresses him angrily].

PETKOFF You'd better go and slam that bag, too, down on Miss Raina’s ice pudding! [This is too much for Nicola. The bag drops from his hand almost on his master’s toes, eliciting a roar off] Begone, you butter-fingered donkey.

NICOLA (snatching up the bag, and escaping into the house) Yes, major. (II. 59)

Act III takes place in the library of the Petkoff house. The place is singular but with the characters fill and empty the stage numerous times. Although the play is not divided into scenes in its written form, Shaw sends the characters out and brings them in with reasonable excuses and arranges the dialogues to suit his purpose. Act III is a typical example of this style of construction allowing Shaw to develop arguments and to reveal personal feelings or opinions of characters.
First, Raina and Bluntschli are left alone in the library. Raina explains to Bluntschli that she has lied only twice in her life and both times (once to Russian soldiers inspecting her room, and the second time to her father to explain ‘chocolate cream soldier’ reaction) were to save Bluntschli. Bluntschli does not believe her, which surprises Raina first and then takes her to the admission of the hypocrisy of her romantic and noble attitude:

**BLUNTSCHLI**  [dubiously] … You said you’d told only two lies in your whole life. Dear young lady: isn’t that rather a short allowance? I’m quite a straightforward man myself; but it wouldn’t last me a whole morning.

**RAINTA**  [staring haughtily at him] Do you know, sir, that you are insulting me?

**BLUNTSCHLI**  I can’t help it. When you strike that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say.

**RAINTA**  [superbly] Captain Bluntschli!

**BLUNTSCHLI**  [unmoved] Yes?

**RAINTA**  [standing over him, as if she could not believe her senses] Do you mean what you said just now? Do you know what you said just now?

**BLUNTSCHLI**  I do.

**RAINTA**  [gasping] I! I!!! [She points to herself incredulously, meaning ‘I, Raina Petkoff tell lies!’ He meets her gaze unflinchingly; She suddenly sits down beside him, and adds, with a complete change of manner from the heroic to a babyish familiarity] How did you find me out?

**BLUNTSCHLI**  [promptly] Instinct, dear young lady. Instinct, and experience of the world.

**RAINTA**  [wonderingly] Do you know you are the first man I ever met who did not take me seriously?

**BLUNTSCHLI**  You mean, don’t you, that I am the first man that has ever taken you quite seriously?

**RAINTA**  Yes: I suppose I do mean that. [Cosily, quite at her ease with him] How strange it is to be talked to in such a way! You know, I’ve always gone on like that.

**BLUNTSCHLI**  You mean the —?

**RAINTA**  I mean the noble attitude and the thrilling voice. [They laugh together]. I did it when I was a tiny child to my nurse. She believed in it. I do it before my parents. They believe in it. I do it before Sergius. He believes in it.

**BLUNTSCHLI**  Yes: he’s a little in that line himself, isn’t he? (III. 67)

Sergius comes in to challenge Bluntschli to a duel. His reason for the invitation for a duel gives way to revelations about the fact that he got the hint about Raina and Bluntschli’s relation from Louka. Sergius accuses
Raina of infidelity, on which Raina demands an apology. Here, Shaw makes the character of Sergius act typically; he folds his arms and says, ‘I never apologise’ (III. 77). When Raina reveals the fact she has seen him flirting with Louka, Sergius dissolves and says, ‘Raina: our romance is shattered. Life is a farce.’ (III. 78) Seeing Sergius thus deromanticised, Bluntschli concludes, ‘You see: he’s found himself out now.’ (III. 78)

Raina guesses that Louka is eavesdropping at the door, which proves right. She comes in explaining she is not ashamed of eavesdropping for her love is at stake. Major Petkoff comes to the room asking for his coat. Raina helps her father wear it and secretly takes a portrait picture of hers signed ‘Raina, to her chocolate cream soldier: a Souvenir’. She put it in the pocket for Bluntschli on the night she saved him but he never saw it. However, Raina’s father has found it and he searches for the portrait in his pocket. Of course, he can not find it, so he asks what is happening. Thus, the resolution is initiated:

*PETKOFF* ...Now you know there’s something more in this than meets the eye; and
*I’m going to find it out.* [Shouting] Nicola!

*NICOLA* [coming to him] Sir!

*PETKOFF* Did you spoil any pastry of Miss Raina’s this morning?

*NICOLA* You heard Miss Raina say that I did, sir.

*PETKOFF* I know that, you idiot. Was it true?

*NICOLA* I am sure Miss Raina is incapable of saying anything that is not true, sir.

*PETKOFF* Are you? Then I’m not. [Turning to the others ] Come: do you think I don’t see it all? [He goes to Sergius, and slaps him on the shoulder]. Sergius: you’re the chocolate cream soldier, aren’t you?

*SERGIUS* [starting up] I! A chocolate cream soldier! Certainly not.

*PETKOFF* Not! (He looks at them. They are all very serious and very conscious). Do you mean to tell me that Raina sends things like that to other men?

*SERGIUS* [enigmatically] The world is not such an innocent place as we used to think, Petkoff.

*BLUNTSCHLI* [rising] It’s all right, Major. I’m the chocolate cream soldier. [Petkoff and Sergius are equally astonished]. The young lady saved my life by giving me chocolate creams when I was starving: shall I ever forget their flavour! My late friend Stolz told you the story at Pirot. I was the fugitive. (III. 83)

Raina explains that Sergius wants to marry Louka, which Major finds surprising since Louka is engaged to Nicola. However, Nicola uses his sensible side and says,

*NICOLA* [with cool unction] We gave it out so, sir. But it was only to give Louka protection. She had a soul above her station; and I have been no more than her confidential servant. I intend, as you know, sir, to set up a shop later on in Sofia;
and I look forward to her custom and recommendation should she marry into the nobility. (III. 83)

Louka is ready to carry out the last bit of her trick and hit the jackpot. She demands an apology from Sergius for having been offended. When Sergius touches and kisses her hand, she reminds him of his promise, and becomes his affianced wife.

So far in the play, Shaw presented Sergius as a hero and then proved him to be a man of broken ideas and disillusion. As for Bluntschli, he started off as a cowardly poor soldier and converted into a man who masters business matters with great efficiency.

Now, Shaw reverses the situation once again and puts Bluntschli’s personality/character to test. He has failed to realise that Raina is a young woman who loves him. He tries to prove that she helped him out of pity. He goes on to reveal his ‘romantic nature’ which shocks everyone in the play and the audience/reader.

**BLUNTSCHLI** What nonsense! I assure you, my dear Major, my dear Madame, the gracious young lady simply paved my life, nothing else. She never cared two straws for me. Why, bless my heart and soul, look at the young lady and look at me. She, rich, young, beautiful, with her imagination full of fairy princes and noble natures and cavalry charges and goodness knows what! And I, a commonplace Swiss soldier who hardly knows what a decent life is after fifteen years of barracks and battles: a vagabond, a man who has spoiled all his chances in life through an incurably romantic disposition, a man —

**SERGIUS** [starting as a needle had pricked him and interrupting Bluntschli in incredulous amazement] Excuse me, Bluntschli: what did you say had spoiled your chances in life?

**BLUNTSCHLI** [promptly] An incurably romantic disposition. I ran away from home twice when I was a boy. I went into the army instead of into my father’s business. I climbed the balcony of this house when a man of sense would have dived into the nearest cellar. I came sneaking back here to have another look at the young lady when any other man of my age would have sent the coat back —

(III. 85-86)

Bluntschli’s inability to understand the fact that Raina helped him and put her picture in coat pocket these because she loved him drives her crazy and she reacts and calls him a ‘romantic idiot’. (III. 86) Still, it does not take Bluntschli to come back to his senses and propose to Raina. This time he is confronted with the parents’ question whether he can provide enough for a girl who is used to fine means of living. Money is not a problem for Bluntschli since his father has just died and Bluntschli has inherited a huge amount of wealth. Not feeling
wanted enough and probably disturbed by the financial stress on their union, Raina is reluctant. A very familiar bargaining scene between spouses-to-be takes place. Our able man knows how to win her hand and heart:

RAINA [pretending to sulk] The lady says that he can keep his tablecloths and his omnibuses. I am not here to be sold to the highest bidder. [She turns her back on him].
BLUNTSCHLI I wont take that answer. I appealed to you as a fugitive, a beggar, and a starving man. You accepted me. You gave me your hand to kiss, your bed to sleep in, and your roof to shelter me.

RAINA I did not give them to the Emperor of Switzerland.
BLUNTSCHLI Thats just what I say. [He catches her by the shoulders and turns her face-to-face with him]. Now tell us whom you did give them to.
RAINA [succumbing with a shy smile] To my chocolate cream soldier.
BLUNTSCHLI [with a boyish laugh of delight] Thatll do. Thank you. (III. I. 88)

Thus, the resolution is brought about with the help of a token (a document) and the play ends happily with two marriages akin to the tradition of comedy of manners.

In *Arms and the Man*, Shaw follows the tradition of comedy of manners with his domestic subject matter, multiple plot involving two pairs of lovers (Raina-Bluntschli and Louka-Sergius) with its complication rising from intrigues involving the elements of ‘chance’, ‘eavesdropping/overhearing’, and ‘happy end’ provided with the help of a document. In order to have Sergius, Louka contrives her intrigue and the play comes to a resolution with the sudden emergence of a document (Raina’s portrait). The play ends with two marriages.

However, Shaw diverts from the conventions of comedy of manners at certain points: His domestic subject matter is only on the surface. Beneath this conventional subject matter, Shaw discusses the validity of romantic and heroic ideals in the real world in *Arms and The Man*. He aims at presenting and discussing the contemporary issues and problems of his time, which is akin to the plays of Old Comedy, the features of which is included in the introduction of this study.
Shaw presents his serious subject matter in a different structure from the surface domestic matter. He exposes an idea conventionally accepted as true, then he puts it to test and discusses the correctness of our judgement of the idea and reverses our view. *Arms and The Man* Shaw presents conventional Victorian values as correct and then reverses and refutes them as the play progresses. The structure of Shaw’s plays is similar to that of Old Comedy in that it is conducive to present a case to be argued.

As for characters, similar to the previous examples of comedy of manners included in this study, Shaw uses type characters. However, Shaw’s types are not the types of a certain human trait (libertine father, shrew wife, cunning slave) or the types of a certain time as it is in the Restoration comedy of manners (rich widow, unfaithful spouses and friends). In order to present his subject matter, Shaw chose his characters from the types of a class, profession, sect or nationality. He displays his characters as having their actions or their thoughts determined by the complex influences of the environment in which he places them – ancestral, family, educative, social, climatic, regional, economic, and political influences. This leads to Shaw’s symbolisation of abstract ideas in his characters, in other words, allegory. This is another characteristic of Shaw’s plays which makes them closer to Old Comedy. In *Arms and the Man*, Sergius impersonates the romantic and heroic ideals, Bluntschli impersonates the practical and prosaic alternative. So do the servants, Louka and Nicola.

In the tradition of comedy of manners, the characters of servants seem to have gone through a great change in Shaw’s hands. In the ancient plays, the slaves/servants are the intrigue makers. In Shakespeare and Congreve, we see the servants as assistants in the intrigues that the masters contrive. With Shaw, servants regain their role as intrigue-makers. Yet, Shavian servants have a difference from their ancient ancestors: ancient slaves used their skills for the benefit of their masters whereas Louka in *Arms and the Man* contrives an intrigue for her own benefit. Besides, Louka differs from all of the previous servant figures in her denial of class distinction. She says to Sergius, ‘.....whatever clay I’m made of youre made of the same.’ (II. 53)

The other servant, Nicola, in *Arms and the Man* seems to stand in contrast to Louka with his obedience and submission. However, his submission is again for his own benefit: he wants Petkoffs as customers in his shop.

Beginning with Shakespeare, witty dialogue becomes a distinctive feature of the plays of English comedy of manners. In Congreve’s play, witty dialogue is employed overwhelmingly by the upper class people, who
dominate the stage. The fashionable people of the Restoration time hide their base feelings and immoral pursuits behind the veil of polished and witty language. In Shaw, wit functions as a tool to excavate and expose the characters’ ideas and opinions. The witty dialogue is used to initiate and resume the discussions between characters.

Shaw knew all the conventional tricks of drama. In his own plays, he used the traditions of comedy of manners for his unconventional purposes. He blended conventions of comedy of manners (New Comedy) with the conventions of Old Comedy and created a new form called comedy of discussion.

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**TÜRKÇE ÖZET**

Töre Komedisi belli bir toplumun ya da bir toplumun belli bir kesiminin davranış, gelenek ve dünyaya bakış özelliklerinin iyi kurulu bir dolantı içinde sunan bir komedi türüdür. Temelleri Antik Yunan Tiyatrosu’nun Yeni Komedia döneminde (M.Ö. 486) atılmış olan bu komedi türü yüz yüzyıllar boyunca pek çok yazar tarafından kullanılmıştır. Her edebi tür gibi, tiyatro da içinde bulunduğu ortam ve
zamandaki değişikliklere tabidir. Bu nedenleki töré komedisi de Antik Yunan ve Roma Tiyatrosu’ndaki başlangıçlarından günümüze birebir bir sonraki değişikliklere uğramıştır.


İkinci Roma dönemi yazarı olan Plautus ve Terence, töre komedisi geleneğinin başlangıcını oluşturan Antik Yunan Tiyatrosu yazarı Menander’in bazı oyunlarını uyarlamışlardır. Yeni Komedya’nın tüm özelliklerini yansıtıkları için, bu iki yazarın oyunları seçilmiştir.


Viktorya döneminde gelindikçe İngiliz tiyatrosunun ihtiyaçları, yaşanılan sıkıntıları sahneye geçerken bir şekilde taşınan ve seyirci bunlardan haberli edip, çözümler sunan ve reform vaad eden bir tiyatro türü idi. Bernard Shaw tiyatrosunu gününün sosyal, ekonomik, sanatsal ve dinsel problemlerine dikkat çekmekte ve bu konulardaki görüşlerini anlatarak toplumda iyileşme ve reformu sağlamak için bir araç olarak görmüştür.

Töre komedisi de tarihsel değişim süreci içinde toplumu ilgilendiren ciddi konuları seyirci ve okuyucuyu eğlendirerek anlatan bir çizgi yakalamıştır. Böylece hem güldüren hem de eğiten bir tür olarak toplumsal işlevini devam ettirmektedir.

TÖRKÇE TEZ ÖZETİ
Keskin, Neslişil, İngiliz Tiyatrosunda Töre Komedisi Geleniği, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Danışman: Prof. Dr. Ayşegül Yüksel, 108s.


Töre komedisi Rönesans’ta Shakespeare ile nükteli söyleşim özelliğini kazanmıştır.
Restorasyon döneminde tür näkteli söyleşim dil özelliğinin en güzel örneklerinin verildiği oyunlar yazılmıştır.

Shaw ise Antik Yunan tiyatrosundan gelen Eski Komedya özellikleri ile Yeni Komedya özelliklerini sentez yaparak tartışma madde komedisi adlı yeni bir tür oluşturmuştur. Töre komedisinin (Yeni Komedinin) kişisel kayguları yansıtan ve dolantılar ile güldüren geleneksel yapısını dikkat çekmek için kullanırken, Eski Komedinin sosyal, politik, dinsel vb. ciddi kamusal kaygılı konu alan özelliğini izleyicinin aktif olarak düşünmeye zorlandığı bir yapısı içinde sunmuştur.

Böylece M.Ö. 323’te başlayan töre komedisi türü varlığını ve işlevini hala devam ettirmektedir.

**SUMMARY OF THESIS IN ENGLISH**

Comedy of Manners is a comic genre which started with Ancient New Comedy and presented the behaviour and understanding of a certain group of people ruled by the conventions of a particular time. It has universal and domestic subject matter (love, marriage, money) and elements of complication (overhearing/eaves dropping, disguise, mistaken identity) are used. Character types are employed and chance plays important part in the resolution. In a typical play of comedy of manners, there are young lovers, whose union is hindered (due to different social status or parents’ preplanned matches for their children) and a cunning slave contrives intrigues to overcome the obstacle. However, the plot thickens with elements of complication, and chance comes to rescue: a stranger arrives and restores the girl to her real identity (with the proof of a token—a toy, scar, name), which enables the young ones to marry and reunites the long-lost parents and children.

Shakespeare contributed the use of witty dialogue to the genre.

With Restoration, the plays presented the brightest examples of witty and elaborate language.

Shaw blended comedy of manners (New Comedy) with Ancient Old Comedy and created a new kind of theatre called comedy of discussion. Shaw formed a theatre which blended the presentation of serious political, social, religious problems of his time in a structure which forces the audience to think (Old Comedy) along with the presentation of universal and domestic subject matter with the elements of complication for their comic purposes (New Comedy).

Thus, the comedy of manners, which was born in 323 B.C. still survives and functions.