The present undertaking, *The Anti-sentimental Tradition in the Plays of Oliver Goldsmith and R.B. Sheridan*, is a modest attempt to examine the attack against sentimentalism by these two celebrated dramatists of the eighteenth century, as manifest in their comedies. The conventional view is that sentimental comedy triumphantly dominated the Georgian comic drama, and that it was the signal achievement of Goldsmith and Sheridan to drive the 'weeping muse' out and bring back the 'laughing muse' into the theatre. Current scholarship finds this view untenable, so also the widespread view that Goldsmith and Sheridan were the only dramatists who opposed sentimentalism. For the comic spirit was very much alive in the theatre and there were quite a few other dramatists who had been ridiculing sentiment and upholding laughter, thereby forming a sort of anti-sentimental tradition. However it is acknowledged that Goldsmith and Sheridan were the most distinguished and most influential of the dramatists who campaigned against sentimental comedy.

The focus of the present study is on the plays of Goldsmith and Sheridan, more precisely on the anti-sentimental strain in them. The objective is to examine how far they were successful in their professed resistance to sentiment in comedy. Therefore those works of Sheridan which fall outside the purview of sentimentalism and opposition to it, such as *St. Patrick's Day* or *The Scheming Lieutenant*, *The Duenna* (a comic opera), *A Trip to Scarborough*, and *Pizarro*, are not considered. The study has no pretence to any originality, much less does it claim to have made any new findings. Its attempt has been to look at the plays of Goldsmith and Sheridan afresh in the light of the insights provided by critical studies of eighteenth century comedies, conventional as well as the more recent ones.
There are eight chapters in all in the dissertation. Chapter one is introductory. It states the theme of inquiry, its scope and limits. It gives an outline account of drama in general in the century, the conditions under which plays were written, and the emergence and establishment of sentimental comedy as a very popular form of theatrical entertainment. As illustrative examples of sentimental comedy in its early and later phases, Richard Steele's The Conscious Lovers, Hugh Kelly's False Delicacy, and Richard Cumberland's The West Indian; all known for their great popularity, are briefly analysed.

Chapter Two is concerned with a brief account of the Georgian comic tradition. Having pointed out how dissatisfaction with 'sentiment' in comedy was gradually building up even in the heyday of sentimental comedy, it goes on to make a cursory examination of some representative works of such dramatists as Charles Macklin, David Garrick, Samuel Foote, Arthur Murphy, and George Colman the elder, who in different ways were opposing sentimentalism in comedy and sustaining the comic spirit in the second half of the century.

Chapters Three and Four are devoted to Goldsmith who opposed in theory as well as practice 'genteel comedy', and offered as an alternative to it 'laughing comedy', in his plays The Good-Natured Man and She Stoops to Conquer which are analysed in some detail for their antisentimental content.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven are concerned with Sheridan who continued the onslaught on sentimental comedy, in a slightly different spirit. His three plays, The Rivals, The School for Scandal and The Critic are examined from the chosen point of view.

Chapter Eight, with which the study concludes, presents a summary of the main line of argument developed in the previous chapters.
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