CHAPTER - V

Conclusion
The foregoing chapters have presented incisive analyses of the plays of Neil Simon who has achieved phenomenal success as a playwright, although he has not received as much critical acclaim as he merits. Domestic comedy is his forte and his plays project it taking in their sweep such relationships as filial, marital, and that of friends. Commenting on them Simon says:

Marriage, a home, a child here, a child there, Manhood at last. But the breach widens, the rift expands. The Unseen Eye observes, the Unseen hand writes—but it doesn't live comfortably alongside normal human functions.¹

His plays are marked by an extraordinary variety in style ranging from broad farce to teasing understatement as also by the blending of comedy with moments suggestive of what is poignant and tragic. Further, they offer remarkable variations on situation comedy involving complex characters as also comedies having snatches of verbal
comedy. Furthermore, the most notable characters figuring in them are urban-dwelling Americans who have to contend with the urban ills. But what makes for the popularity of Simon's plays is humour which is both subtle and farcical. Again, as pointed by Thomas Meehan,

One must n't overlook the fact that Simon writes funnier jokes than almost anyone else around.²

On the negative side, it may be mentioned that some of his plays have weak structures which is the reason why the plots are marked by twists and turns as in Fools as also by repetitiousness in respect of structure as in Come Blow Your Horn. Moreover, some of the plays, especially The Odd Couple, I Ought to Be in Pictures and The Gingerbread Lady, have contrived happy endings. However, a few of the plays like Chapter Two and The Sunshine Boys are distinguished by expertly wrought structures.

Simon's plays in part owe their popularity to the memorable characters, both major and minor, figuring in
them. For instance, among the major characters the domineering Mr. Baker in *Come Blow your Horn* and the alcoholic Evy Meara in *The Gingerbread Lady* are sharply drawn and among the minor characters, the unfortunate Lou Tanner in *The Gingerbread Lady* stands out. Further, they present some of the most engaging characters in contemporary American drama. Al Lewis in *The Sunshine Boys*, Barney Cashman in *Last of the Red Hot Lovers*, Oscar Madison and Felix Ungar in *The Odd Couple* who are a part of American Cultural Folklore like Huck Finn, and Babbit, are outstanding creations of Simon.

One of the significant features of Simon's plays is that neither the hero nor the heroine rebels against or clashes with society. Indeed, his characters suggest that despite one's attempt at self-actualisation one should opt to remain within the social network. For instance, Buddy Baker in *Come Blow Your Horn* aspires to become a writer but agrees to work in his father's shop. Likewise, the 'radicals' in *The Star-Spangled Girl* aim at reforming rather than destroying society. Significantly, Barney Cashman in *Last of Red-Hot Lovers* in
defying society's conventions, ends up as a comic character rather than as a hero.

As is to be expected, to remain in the society and lead one's own life one has got to compromise which is not easy for one who is immature or unaware of one's weaknesses. Oscar Madison, for instance, in The Odd Couple realizes, though with difficulty, that he should not be self-centred and ironically enough, he comes to recognise in the end the value of virtue of orderliness, even though he has driven away his friend, Felix, for upholding it.

Interestingly, Simon presents a fairy-tale story in his play, Fools, which is unlike any other comedy he has written. The opening scene shows Leon Tolchinsky, a young man, who is college-educated, proceeding to the village of Kulyenichkov, in response to an advertisement by Doctor and Mrs. Zubritsky who want a tutor for their daughter, Sophia. Leon comes to know that a curse, that of stupidity, was laid upon the villagers years ago by Yousevitch family, for having been
refused the hand of a Zubritsky girl. Though he finds the parents of Sophia to be as stupid as the villagers he agrees to serve as tutor as he has fallen in love with her. He does heed the warning that he will also be inflicted with stupidity if he stays on in the village for even twenty-four hours, and continues to be a tutor to Sophia. He learns that if a Zubritsky marries a Yousevitch, the curse will cease to operate and that Greger Yousevitch has been wooing Sophia. Undeterred by what he has learnt, he pretends to have become dumb caused by the curse which helps the villagers realize that the curse works only through the power of suggestion as also their having wronged the Yousevitch family, and which convinces them that they have been stupid.

Leon asks Gregor to adopt him so that he can marry Sophia and break the curse. After the marriage ceremony Gregor declares that he will not allow Leon to use Yousevitch name. Gregor tries to make the Zubritskys agree to his marrying Sophia. But Leon steps in to stop the ceremony by pretending that he has received
a postcard informing him that his uncle, before his death, changed the family name to Yousevitch. Thus for a third time, the wedding ceremony starts and is interrupted by an explosion but only after Leon and Sophia are married, which makes the people stand up.

The villagers who are no longer stupid dance in celebrating their good fortune.

The play has received unflattering notices like the one by Gill Brenden, who considered it to be "depressingly unoriginal":

We hear in it echoes of "Brigadoon" "Fiddler on the Roof" and half a dozen other plays and movies, some of them by Simon himself. The play has the air of a failed musical from which, by some gross mischance, the music and lyrics have been expunged.3

Despite its poor reception, it is undeniable that it has scenes like the one featuring Leon's conversation with Sophia's parents which are lively and engaging as also many jokes which are marked by
remarkable variety and word-play. Further, the love scenes featuring Miranda-like Sophia and infatuated lover, Leon, create the fairy-tale atmosphere which contributes to the appeal of the play, and reminiscent of those involving Romeo and Juliet without tragic overtones. Furthermore, Gregor is an engaging villain whose villainy does not prove destructive, since it seems intended only to impart suspense necessary to sustain interest in the play to the end.

Plaza Suite (1968) comprises three short plays - Visitor from Mamaroneck, Visitor from Hollywood and Visitor from Forest Hills - unified by the use of Suite 719 in New York's Plaza Hotel as the setting for all of them. The visitors to the suite face crises which do not result in any tragic outcome. There are other features which help unify the plays. The main male characters - Sam Nash, Jesse Kiplinger and Roy Hubley - are all in the forty to fifty age group and have achieved success as per middle-class perception although such success may not bring them
satisfaction that it is supposed to spell. Sam and Jesse feel that extra-marital involvement will keep them young and Roy Hubley too would follow suit if he has the requisite opportunity. The wives of two of them are middle-aged and have apparently come to terms with life. The 'Other Woman', Miss Jean McCormack, with whom Sam is involved is a young divorcée who has retained her maiden name. Again, it is The Visitor from Forest Hills that features children who appear to be disappointing to their parents presumably because of the generation gap.

Though the plots of the three plays are simple they command serious attention because underlying their bright dialogue and farcical situations serious issues like marital infidelity, hollowness of worldly success, aging in American society, break-down of communication and generation gap figure. In The Visitor from Marmaroneck, the wife Karen Nash, a pleasant, affable woman who has not paid much attention to her figure attempts to revive the romance in their life by engaging
the Suite 719 of the Plaza Hotel for their night away from their home which is being painted. The Suite 719 is where the Nashes spent the first night of their honeymoon and the occasion is their twenty-third wedding anniversary for the celebration of which Karen have bought flowers and a sexy negligee. Sam seems to be more concerned with remaining youthful than with the anniversary. When his secretary brings papers for his signature to the hotel, Sam decides to get back to his office to finalise the details of an important business deal which they have to attend to the next morning. As they are leaving, Karen asks her husband whether he has an affair with Jean, Sam denies it. Karen, however, tells him:

I'm saying that if at this stage of your life you wanted to have a small, quiet affair with a young, skinny woman, I would understand.

Sam : What do you mean, at this stage of my life?
Karen: Well, you're blankety years old. I would say the number but I know you don't accept it. And I realize that when a man becomes blankety-one or blankety-two, he is feeling insecure, that he's losing his virility. (Smiles broadly at Sam), and that a quiet fling may be the best thing for him. I know, I read the New York Post.

Sam: I'm glad to know I have Rose Franzblau's permission.

Karen: And mine if you really want it.

Sam: (yells). Well, I don't want it and  
I'm not having an affair! 4

Karen says to him that they have not been very happy and asks that having two sweet children, a twelve-room house in the country and a maid, who does not drink, what he wants. Sam replies:

I don't know if you can understand this ... but when I came home after the war ... I had my whole life in front of me. And all I dreamed about, all I wanted,
was to get married, and to have children... and to make a success of my life ... Well, I was very lucky ... I got it all ... Marriage, the children... more money than I ever dreamed of making...

Karen : Then what is it you want?

Sam : I just want to do it all over again ... I would like to start the whole damned thing right from the beginning.

......

Karen : If that's what you want, just tell me straight out. Just say, "Karen, there's no point in going on". I'd rather hear it from you personally, than getting a message on our service.

Sam confesses his having an affair with Jean and Karen tells him that while she understands his need with a younger woman she wants him to end it. Sam does not accept her suggestion and leaves for the office.
It may be noted that while Karen is not worried about getting older, Sam is not prepared to surrender to age. He is aware of Karen being a loving wife. He is undecided about divorcing her then and there. However, he feels that he should stay away from her at least for that night and so leaves. The play has an open ending, since neither Karen nor Sam knows whether he is going to come back.

"Visitor from Hollywood" focuses on the seduction of a young married woman, Muriel Tate, by her former highschool boyfriend, Jesse Kiplinger, who has become a reputed movie producer. Jesse arranges a meeting with her in Suite 719 which turns out to be a "cosmopolitan male's attempt to seduce the uncosmopolitan female" which makes the seduction poignant. Further, what complexifies the seduction is that it seeks something more than a mere sexual enterprise.

Muriel seems at first rather apprehensive about renewing her acquaintance with Jesse who has become
famous, but being an ardent movie fan she does not want to forego the opportunity. As is to be expected, coming to the suite, she says that she cannot stay more than a few minutes, cannot have a drink and that she would not even remove her gloves although she is aware of what to expect at their meeting. When Jesse pretends to bid her goodbye so that she can get back to Tenaply, New Jersey, in time to get dinner for her husband, Muriel seemingly impulsively kisses him and asks him whether it was good. Though Jesse is taken aback by her query, he has the presence of mind to say "It was a superb kiss". The ensuing conversation reveals that Muriel has been an avid reader of movie magazines and that she has been following every kind of gossip about Jesse's doings during the seventeen years since their last meeting as evidenced by her calling him "Mr. Do-Whatever-you-want-to-Kiplinger" and "Mr. Famous Hollywood Kisser" as he is referred to in the gossip columns. Jesse appears to take his success in his stride and has had
an unhappy married life, having married and divorced three times during fourteen years. Further, he says that he is on the look-out for a "real-honest-to-goodness, unhappy woman", although he is only a philanderer who lives by a succession of sexual affairs. It seems, therefore, that Muriel has met her match in Jesse, since both of them are interested in a meaningless sexual conquest. When Murine pretends to be interested in hearing about his wives whom he calls the "three witches" Jesse tells her:

"I gave them love, I gave them a home, I gave them a beautiful way of life - and the three bitches took me for every cent I got. But I don't even care about the money... What hurts is that they took the guts out of me. They were phony, unfaithful, all of them."

What is apparent is that neither of them is really interested in communicating with each other, and in sharing their disappointment, since he does not
show any sympathy when she speaks about her unhappy married life with her husband, Larry, who has taken over her father's business. Ironically enough, while Muriel wants to forget her mundane depressing 'days gone by', Jesse seemingly bored with his success seems to be keen on reliving his pre-Hollywood life as is implied by his remark that she is 'the only, solitary, real, honest-to-goodness, unphony woman' he has met since he left for Hollywood.

Muriel gets over her fears about her being a satisfactory sexual partner to Jesse and tells him "I've got plenty of time." and hugs him. Jesse related at having made another conquest remarks, "The world can change for one hour," which articulates the vain hope they both have:

Thus, both Muriel's daydream and Jesse's 'came true'. She is made love to by a Hollywood celebrity. He makes love to an Innocent Woman. Muriel does not want to see, beneath the celebrity, a pathetically insecure, egoistical human being interested only
in reasserting his masculinity by sleeping with a middle-aged groupie. Jesse ignores the fact (that) Muriel has become a frustrated, calculating, hard-drinking housewife. On this day both Jesse and Muriel fornicate a fantasy. Consequently, they do not change their drab lives one iota.  

The third play, *Visitor from Forest Hills* focuses on the problem of communication which is presented in a farcical fashion. A bride-to-be, Mimsey Hubley, locks herself up in the Suite's bathroom minutes before she is going to be married. Her mother, Norma, unable to persuade her to come out of the bathroom, phones to her husband, Roy, who is downstairs. He too fails to make her unlock the door. Attempting to break open the door and to get in through the bathroom window, he and Norma learn what has been troubling her. She does not still come out until her fiance comes to talk to her. Significantly, before her husband comes, Norma tells her "Mimsey, if you don't care about your life, think about mine. Your father'll kill me."
Mimsey's refusal to come out indicates that her mother instead of trying to remove the apprehensions that Mimsey has, expresses concern about herself. Roy too is as selfish as Norma as is evident from what he says as he comes up to the suite:

Why are you standing here? There are sixty-eight people down there drinking my liquor.\(^{14}\)

He tries to browbeat Mimsey instead of talking to her lovingly:

This is your father. I want you and your four-hundred-dollar wedding dress out of there in five seconds.\(^{15}\)

He is more concerned about what the wedding costs than her situation. Interestingly, Norma tears her stockings while peeping through the key hole and breaks her diamond ring while trying to break up the door. Roy breaks his arm when he thrusts his shoulder into the door and has his coat torn when he tries to climb through the window.
However, when her parents stop thinking about their predicament and start worrying about their daughter, the impasse begins to dissolve. Responding to Roy's outburst Norma asks him:

Is that all you care about? ...Aren't you concerned about your daughter's happiness?\(^16\)

A moment later, Norma avers:

I'll tell you who can get into that bathroom. Someone with love and understanding. Someone who cares about that poor kid who's going through some terrible decision now and needs help. Help that only you can give her and that I can give her.\(^17\)

Chastened by his wife, Roy for first time makes a serious attempt to communicate with his daughter which has a salutory effect, since Mimsey talks with her father in the bathroom after which Roy asks the bridegroom, Borden, on the phone to come up. Reporting to his wife, Roy tells her that Mimsey is apprehensive that her marriage may turn out like parents'
Borden goes to the bathroom door and says:

Mimsey?... This is Borden... Cool it!18

Borden's words seem to still Memsey's misgivings, since she comes out of the bathroom.

Mimsey's parents are stunned by her prompt compliance with Border's summons, as they have not realised that love can only elicit a favourable response, since they themselves have seldom communicated love for each other. This is evident by the exchanges between them soon after Mimsey has come out of the bathroom.

Ray : What kind of a person is that to let your daughter marry?

Norma : Roy, don't aggravate me. I'm warning you, don't spoil this day for me.19

Though the play seems to be a light-hearted one it does convey an important truth about human
relationships which can be sustained only by love. Evoking laughter, the play presents incisive analyses of human experience, as is pointed by Walter Kerr:

There are small truths... truths of a size that can be accommodated in almost cheerfully covered over by a quip.20

In form California Suite takes after Plaza Suite, comprising as it does four one-act plays. Explaining why he has chosen this particular form, Simon says:

...You can get straight to the big scenes, the crucial moments, the immediate laughs.21

The first of the playlets, "Visitor from New York" dramatizes the question of where the seventeen-year old daughter, Jenny, of Hannah and William Warren, living in New York and Los Angeles respectively and after being divorced nine years ago, will spend her Senior Year in school.
After the divorce Hannah has been having the custody of Jenny except for two summer months of each year. Jenny has flown to Los Angeles on her own initiative to be with her father with whom she wants to remain indefinitely. Hannah waits in the California Suite to discuss with her ex-husband the question of custody of Jenny. The final outcome of their meeting is that Jenny will stay in California. Speaking from a stronger legal position than Bill's Hannah places Bill on the defensive in their conversation. She taunts him exploiting the 'fact' that his friends in California call him "Billy" instead of Bill which suggests an attack on his manhood. She sarcastically tells him:

A forty-five-year-old Billy. Standing there in his cute little sneakers and sweater. Please, sit down, Billy, I'm beginning to feel like your math teacher.²²

She remarks that since living with him Jenny has suffered a decrease in her intellectual sharpness
which she attributes to the California School system and its cultural ambience. Though Hannah appears to be dominating the conversation she does not seem to be confident about having her way which is indicated by her making a verbal slip. In the early phase of her conversation she says:

If I'm going to turn my daughter over to you - which I am not - at least I'd like to know what you're like.  

Billy retorts:

Jenny is our daughter! Ours!

Hannah: Maybe. We'll see. They've been very slow with the blood test. (They glare at each other a moment. She suddenly smiles). So you live in a French farmhouse off Sunset Boulevard. Do you have a pool?

Billy: Christ!  

Hannah relentlessly goes on questioning about
his place and other amenities including the car he has. Reacting to Billy's remark whether she is really serious, Hannah says:

I am dead serious. If I'm to leave my precious baby with you, I want to know what kind of a car I'm leaving her in.²⁵

Telling him that she has a few more questions to be thrown at him which Billy considers to be spears, she asks him about his love affairs. Billy is exasperated and asks her whether she has finished her interrogation.

He tells her bluntly:

For one of the brightest women in America, you bore the hell out of me. Your mind clicks off bric-a-bracs so goddamn fast, it never has a chance to let an honest emotion or thought ever get through.²⁶

Even before their meeting Hannah orders drinks for Bill and herself over the phone which the room-service
ignores. Again, talking to her lover over the phone she vehemently asserts that she is not worried about her problems with Jenny. These happenings suggest that she is not as strong and dominating as she appears.

Ironically, Hannah loses ground as their conversation progresses. She confesses that the New York environment is not a pleasant one although a turmoil in New York does help activate the New Yorkers' creative impulse. Hannah asks him what he looks forward to since he is forty-five years old, has "been married twice, had a child, half a dozen houses, a promising journalistic career and some questionable but undeniably commercial success". Billy replies that he enjoys Saturdays, which suggests that he has to some extent attained peace with himself and with the world. Hannah pointedly asks "Is being in love better now?" Billy replies, "yes" and asked by Hannah why it is so, Billy says "Because it's now."

In answer to Billy's question what she is looking forward to, Hannah replies that she looks forward to a grand-daughter.
When Billy tries to browbeat her, Hannah reminds him that she can phone to her friend, "The Attorney General of the United States" to keep Jenny legally with her. Billy realising his mistake adopts subtler tactics and asks her how much time she spends with Jenny knowing fully well that most of her time is spent on her professional occupation. Billy realises that being aggressive he cannot win their verbal battle. Hannah who is a match to him finds that she can win eventually if she does not try to force the issue, since her strong legal position paradoxically makes her more vulnerable than Billy. She agrees to allow Jenny to stay with him but on her own condition. She tells him:

No, goddamn it! I have to give her up to get her back, then let's do it.⁹

As their conversation proceeds it becomes apparent that they are not only concerned with their daughter's future but also with theirs, since both of them have
experienced setbacks to their health. Hannah has suffered from hysterectomy and Billy from prostrate condition. Realising that they have misused their lives they feel that they have to do something with the remaining years of their lives. After their divorce Billy married a second time and divorced his second wife. He has been living since then with a divorced actress. Stating that her lover will not live long because of his physical ailment and lifestyle, she is prepared to let Jenny live with him for a short while lest she and Jenny should end up as she and her mother with whom she never got on well had been.

The play ends with Hannah telling Bill that parting with Jenny she feels "like an artist selling a painting he doesn't want to part with".32

Billy assures her "I'll frame it and keep it in a good light."33

The second playlet, Visitors from Philadelphia
focuses on the confrontation between a happily married man, Marvin, who has come to California to attend his nephew's Bar Mitzvah, and his wife, Mille, who arrives unexpectedly at the suite. The confrontation threatens to become explosive because Marvin on waking up finds a call girl in a stupor lying next to him. He vaguely remembers that the girl sent to him as a "surprise package" by his brother has drunk more than he did. Marvin tries in vain to wake up the girl to get her out of the suite before his wife arrives. When his wife appears he makes a desperate attempt to save himself from embarrassment by keeping Mille out of the bed-room.

Failing in his attempt Marvin seeks his wife's forgiveness for his act of infidelity while promising her that he would not repeat it. Mille does forgive him but tells him that she is going to Beverly Hills and spend every cent he has got.

Though the plot is very thin it is enlivened by lively exchanges between Marvin and Mille. Marvin
trying to cover up his moral lapses tells her:

Mille, you mean more to me than you
could possibly know...but sometimes
we transgress. Sometimes we do foolish
little things that unwittingly may
cause hurt and injury to the other. 35

Mille assures him that he has never consciously
hurt her. Marvin's efforts to keep her out of the
bed-room prove unavailing, since Mille tells him:

My back is killing me from the plane.
I've got to lie down for a few
minutes." 36

Marvin makes another frantic effort by suggesting
that they can make love on the living room sofa
as they did on their honey-moon or on a rug. Mille
rejects his suggestion and enters the bed-room.
Marvin pretends to be having a stomach ache and
she tells him that she too is sick as she had her
period on the plane. She asks him to lie down with
her and hold her. Having failed to keep her out
of bedroom Marvin tells her:

It was never my intention to hurt you, Mille, but it's very possible in the next few minutes you may be terribly, terribly hurt.\textsuperscript{37}

Mille tells him that as long as he is not trying to cover up something she would ignore it. At that point the girl pushes the covers down and reveals herself. But at that moment Mille was looking the other way. Mille turning her head around and seeing the body in the bed laughs loudly and remarks sarcastically:

I'm praying the maid came in here to clean, got dizzy from overwork and fainted in your bed... I pray to God the maids in this hotel wear pajamas.\textsuperscript{38}

Marvin tells her that it is not the maid or his doctor but a woman sent by his brother. Asked by Mille why she does not move, Marvin tells her that
they were both drunk. Explaining to her how it has happened Marvin says:

Harry's four years younger than me. When he was sixteen, I gave him a birthday present — his first woman. He's been wanting to repay me for years... He knows in the fifteen years we've been married I never even looked at another woman... I had dinner at his house, had a few drinks, was feeling pretty good. Harry said to me when I got back to my room he was going to have a present there for me. I never expected anything like this — I thought may be a basket of fruit... Certainly I could have said no, but I didn't. She was in the room, she was attractive, she was a little tight, and she was paid for. And besides, I didn't want to insult Harry. He did it out of love... It is not much of an excuse. It will never happen again because not only did I not
enjoy it, I don't even remember it
...That is the story. If you want
to leave me, I would understand...
And when I kill myself, I hope you understand.39

He assures her that he has learnt his lesson
and promises that it is over and done with. Mille
tells him that she is not going to divorce him and
promising him not to bring up the matter again
as long as they live, she suggests that they should
make a fresh start and rebuild their marriage on
trust and faith. Overwhelmed by her generosity
Marvin tells her that he loves her more that minute
than he has ever loved her in his life.

Mille tells him that she is a little upset
because the Airline has lost her luggage which
contained a new dress and new shoes and everything
else.

The play ends with their reconciliation brought
about by their renewal of trust in each other.
The third playlet, *Visitors from London*, has a plot featuring a British couple, Sidney Nichols and his wife, Diana, an actress nominated for an Oscar.

The play opens with Diana dressing up for the function and worrying about her appearance. Dissatisfied with her dress Diana explains:

> We shouldn't have come. I never know how to dress in this bloody country. It is so easy to dress in England. You just put on warm clothing. Why did we come, Sidney?  

Answering question Sidney tells her that they have come because it is all free. Diana tells him that they should have stayed out in London and waited for the phone call and that Michael Caine could accept the award for her in which case no one could have seen her hump. Answering a phone call from Joe Levine who has paid for the trip and for the
suite and who had given her the best part that she had in five years, Diana tells him:

You're a chubby little man and I adore you... If I win tonight, darling, it's not going to be an Oscar - it's going to be a Joe Levine... You're an angel. 41

Hours later, returning from the function to their room disappointed at not winning the Oscar, Sidney and Diana, both drunk, give vent to their feelings. Trying to console her Sidney says:

What really infuriated me is how quickly the winners got their cars... How could the winners' cars be lined up so quickly outside if they didn't know beforehand who the winners were? Because it's rigged. We come six thousand miles for this bloody affair, and they park our car in Vancouver. 42

Recalling the events of the evening Sidney tells her:
Diana, I am sincerely sorry you lost tonight. But look at it this way. It's just a little bald, naked statue.

As their conversation turns into bitter exchanges between them Sidney assures her that he has never stopped loving her and tells her:

It's nearly three O'clock in the morning and we're both crocked. I don't think this is a good time to discuss biological discrepancies.

Their conversation reveals that Sidney is a bisexual and that he has come to California so as to make new contacts with homo-sexuals. Diana feels that she would have had a better chance of winning an Oscar if she was sentimental which would not happen unless husband was dying. Feeling uneasy Diana observes:

We are terrible, Sidney, aren't we?
God will punish us.

Responding to her statement Sidney says:

I think He already has.
Implying that Diana is punished for her egotism, she tells Sidney that she has seen his body becoming relaxed when another actress was announced as the winner. She remarks:

What could have caused such joy, I wondered to myself. Happy that it was finally over... or just happy? 47

Hungering for an emotional response from Sidney she makes him say that he loves her and agrees to make love to her that night. Their confrontation makes them confess their failings and weaknesses as stated by Sidney:

We are each a refuse for our disappointments out there. 48

Diana is aware that she is selfish and devoid of spirituality although she is idolised by the world, and that despite his homo-sexuality, Sidney is a finer person that she is. Their marriage appears to be as bizzare as the academy awards function.
The fourth play-let, *visitors from Chicago*, centres on how two couples Hollenders and the Franklys become wearied of one another in the last phase of the long vacation they have taken together. When Beth Hollender sprains her ankle while playing Tennis the Hollenders unreasonably blame the Franklys for the accident. This preposterous, irrational accusation releases the pent up hostility in the couples. Later, a number of physical accidents attributable to their weariness and emotional upset leads to open fighting between the couples which ends in Mort Hollender forcing Stu Franklyn to declare that he would welcome another chance to go another vacation with the Hollenders.

The distinction of the play lies in the way the two couples fall out with each other despite their being kindly disposed towards each other. As remarked by Mort Hollender "four people taking vacation together can get very testy," because "you start to get on each other's nerves" which
sums up the 'truth' which the play conveys.

When Mort informs the Franklyns of his wife's accident he is asked by them what they can do. Mort angrily tells them:

I want you to go to the pro shop and buy two cans of Wilson yellow tennis balls, charge them to me, and shove them up your respective asses.  

Shocked by his outburst Berth says:

Are you crazy? Those are our best friends... The four of us never should have taken a vacation together... There was trouble from the first day. When he showed up at the airport and said he'd forgotten his credit cards, I knew we were in for it.

Soon afterwards Stu and Gert Franklyn came up to their room carrying a can of tennis balls and a bottle of skin lotion. When Stu shows the
balls to Mort, Mort turns away from him in anger but almost immediately tells him:

I'm sorry, Stu. I'm very upset. Beth's foot may be broken - my temper got the best of me. I ordered some ice, Okay? 52

Stunned by Mort's accusation Stu says:

What are you, crazy? What are you blaming us for? It wasn't our fault. 53

Mort tells him:

Lob lob lob wasn't your fault? The woman stood there defenseless with her laces open, and would you hit the ball to me? Oh, no. You hit it over a crippled woman's head." 54

and ignores Stu's statement.

Soon the dialogue developed into one of charges and counter-charges culminating in a scuffle between the two husbands watched by their wives helplessly.
The playlet demonstrates how personality tensions can develop from petty irritations or trivialities.

Simon's play, *The Good Doctor*, has an interesting 'history', as pointed out by the author himself.

He says:

I started to write a Russian farce, but I don't think it would hold for a whole evening. Then I read Chekhov's "The Sneeze," and I got excited. I decided it would have to be on stage. But what do you do with a 15-minute story?

The play is marked by a change of pace and a departure in respect of style from Simon's norm. Commenting on it he said,

When the play was being performed in New Haven, I remember a woman coming up to me during intermission and saying, with a dour look on her face, 'It's not Neil Simon'. I asked her if that meant the play was good or bad, and
she said, 'I don't think so. It's just not Neil Simon'. She had come to expect something else.56

The title of the play refers to Chekhov, a doctor and writer, and to Simon himself nicknamed as 'Doc'. The 'lead character' is the Writer who, as Simon remarked:

.... could be one of many people - either Chekhov or the writer Trigorin in 'The Seagull' or me.57

Significantly, the Writer figures in the opening and the closing of the play who prefers talking to writing and who being conscious of the transitoriness of life feels that he can only write while other people 'live'. Interestingly, even when he is talking to someone, he is engaged in his craft, thinking that "He'll make a wonderful character for a story."58

Being dedicated to the achieving of perfection, he reading his printed work, finds "that it's all wrong, a mistake, that it ought never to have been written."59
His whole endeavour is based on the expectation that he is considered to be superior to all other writers. He wonders what he would do if he does not devote himself to writing and says at the end of the play that since childhood, he has wanted to write. Obviously, the Writer's monologue is essentially autobiographical as indicated by his statement in the introduction to *The Comedy*, of Neil Simon.

The play, *The Good Doctor*, comprises sketches which are farcial in that they present situations which are marked by exaggeration. The sketch, "The Sneeze", focuses on a government clerk, Cherdyakov, who in a theater accidentally sneezing on the boss, General Brasilhov, apologises to him immediately and also on the following day. Blaming himself later for having been servile he hurls insults at the General and dies of exhaustion and shame. The 'fact' that the clerk and his wife buy highly priced tickets to sit in a prestigious section is what brings about his mortification caused by his attempting to break
the postulates of social hierarchy. The sketch, "The Governess", centres on the continuous bullying of a governess by the mistress of an estate who blaming her for not standing up for her rights gives her full wages. The point that the story makes is indicated by the smile on the governess face on receiving the money which makes the mistress wonder whether she has deliberately allowed herself to be bullied in order to make her pay the entire amount and which points to the shrewdness and cunning of the lower classes who are not as powerless or disadvantaged as they appear. The sketch, "Surgery" presents a farcical representation of human pain by featuring an inexperienced village dentist attempting to extract a tooth causing pain to a patient. Commenting on the sketch Jack Kroll says that the sketch has missed the significant social overtones in Chekhov's story, which is a satire on "the callous pomposity of a flunkey who wreaks havoc by trying to imitate his superiors."
The next sketch, "Too Late for Happiness," a musical sequence, centres on the suppression of their desire to forge a relationship by two elderly shy people meeting by chance in a park who are conscious of living only a short time longer. The sketch presents a situation which is moving and poignant. The last sketch, "The Seduction," deals with the attempts made by Peter, a Russian Don Juan or Casanova, to seduce the wife of an acquaintance. Peter preens himself on having won several wives' affections. Peter indulges in a monotonous talk explaining his method of seducing a woman. The 'drama' in the sketch centres on the wife's pretending to disapprove Peter when her husband reports to her of his latest conversation with Peter. Meeting Peter alone, the wife expects her willingness to submit to him, only to be sent away by Peter who is unwilling to ruin her whole life. The twist at the end of the sketch does not accord with the run of the story, although it suggests that Peter is too sentimental to take advantage of a woman who is bowled over by his seductive talk.
The remaining sketches are more substantial than the ones discussed. "The Drowned Man" centres on an unusual request made by Tramp to the Writer for money to drown himself. The Writer considers him mad but is assured by Tramp that it is a routine act of his to get money. The Writer calls a policeman and informs him of Tramp's mad request only to find him treating it as unmovingly as Tramp does. Confused, the writer finds himself bargaining with Tramp who suddenly agrees to do it for a smaller amount. Tramp only tells him that he does not know to swim and relies on a partner's assistance. He asks the Writer to shout for "Popnichefsky" to come to rescue him. The play ends on a tragic note as Tramp gets drowned because the Writer forgets his assistant's name.

The play, "The Audition" seems to be based on Simon's own experience of listening to the actors' audition and is concerned with a girl, hailing from the provinces, who has never appeared for an audition.
Contrary to the expectation the Girl is able to hold her own in her meeting with her interviewer, the author of the play in which she is seeking a role, which may be attributed to her natural acting ability. Questioned about her age, she evades giving an answer till she is able to elicit the information that the role for which she is being auditioned is that of a twenty-two-year old woman and thereupon she tells him that she is twenty-two. She gains the sympathy of her interviewer by telling him that she is running a temperature but cleverly ignores his advice to go home. Later, when she finds that she has little chance of gaining the role, she flatters him by telling him that she has read everything he has written which is true in that she recites various roles from Chekhov's *Three Sisters* when she finally gains the role. Though the plot is thin, the play proves highly entertaining.

The final sketch, "The Arrangement", centres on a father's plan to give his son who is on the
verge of attaining manhood a special birthday gift which is to defray the expense involved in the Boy's first sexual experience - an experience which the boy is too shy to have. Though the boy is determined, egged on by his father he asks a prostitute for the price. The father is reminded of his own shyness when his father provided him with his first sexual experience. Annoyed at the boy's naivete, he asks whether he and his friends have ever discussed sex. As the boy becomes more and more nervous, the father wavers and is startled by the Boy's question whether there are no other ways of becoming a man like growing a moustache.

Ignoring the question the father goes on to strike a bargain with the Girl who demands thirty rubles. The father's offer of fifteen rubles is rejected by the Girl, who tells him that she can read Peter Rabbit for that sum. Finally, an agreement has been reached and the Boy informed of it tells
him with a sigh that when he comes down from the stairs he will not be little Antosha any longer but Anton the Man. Hearing it the father has second thoughts and is reminded of his own aging. He feels that his son soon will find that his father is not as confident as he appears. The father tries to relieve the situation by telling his son that that years's birthday gift will be an umbrella as there will be plenty of time the next year to become a man. This volte face on the part of the father gives a comic twist to the play which is funny because of its being marked by a farcical situation.

Simon's plays project themes which imply 'truths' concerning human relationships like the need to compromise in order to meet the norms of society. Inability to compromise is what brings about the separation between Oscar Madison and Felix Ungar in *The Odd Couple*. Barney Cashman after three disastrous attempts at having an extra-marital
relationship realizes his folly and phones to his wife for a date. Further, in delineating characters and their relationships the causes for the tensions bedevilling them are subtly indicated step by step as the play careers to its end as exemplified by the relationship between Diana and Sidney Nichols in *California Suite*. Further, Simon stresses the need for following the golden mean instead of stubbornly refusing to resile from the extravagant or unreasonable stances in play after play from *Come Blow Your Horn* through *California Suite* and the others although the modern urban, society does tolerate behaviour which does not accord with what is spelt by the 'middle way'. Furthermore, his plays suggest an unwavering regard for the family as one which makes for stability in society even in the cases of marital infidelity and children's flouting the authority of the parents or rebelling against them.
Simon being keenly aware of the human limitation adroitly, and humourously projects it in the plays thereby helping his audiences to laugh at themselves as in the play, *Last of the Red Hot Lovers*, in which Barney Cashiman, frustrated on account of his being aware of his limitations.

Simon displays an extraordinary capacity for fashioning hilarious dialogues which bring out the latent fears and expectations of the characters concerned, which is rarely encountered in any other writer of comedy. Another outstanding feature of his plays is the centering of the plots on farcical situations, which make coincidences marking them credible. Again, his plays represent his astounding success in presenting important issues concerning human deportment through the comedy he has fashioned. Indeed, they confront the audiences with what constitutes the human reality. As T.E. Kalem observes in *The Time* magazine:
If Broadway ever erects a monument to a patron saint, Neil Simon will have to be it. 61

His plays are distinguished by their imparting to humour a cutting edge that helps reveal the latent tensions and oppositions affecting the characters apart from their being focused on the 'truths' and complexities characterising the contemporary life. Further, they are charged with caustic wit that not be hurting being directed towards human follies, failings and weaknesses which will be acknowledged by the audiences, though not openly admitted. Simon's appeal lies in his projection of a fictional world that is encountered in the bylanes of human life.

Simon's plays are marked by an astonishing variety in style which accounts for his remarkable success at the box office as an artist apart from his astounding ability to invest the characters and situations with significant insights
into the human nature and behaviour which is what makes him stand out among the writers of comedy. Further, by stressing human frailty and by articulating what are regarded as old-fashioned beliefs which accord with those of the audience Simon is able to sustain his popularity. Neil Simon, indeed, is a phenomenon who has succeeded in using comedy as a servomechanism for confronting his audiences with what constitutes the human reality.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


5 Ibid., pp.529-30.


7 *The Comedy of Neil Simon*, p.547.

8 Ibid., p.553.

9 Ibid., p.548.

10 Ibid., p.554.

11 Ibid., p.558.


14 Ibid., p.562.
15 Ibid., p.564.
16 Ibid., p.565.
17 Ibid., p.577.
18 Ibid., p.581.
19 Ibid., p.582.
23 Ibid., p.557.
24 Ibid., p.557.
25 Ibid., p.558.
26 Ibid., p.560.
27 Ibid., p.566.
28 Ibid., p.568.
29 Ibid., p.568.
30 Ibid., p.564.

31 Ibid., p.570.

32 Ibid., p.572.

33 Ibid., 572.


36 Ibid., 583.

37 Ibid., p.585.

38 Ibid., p.586.

39 Ibid., pp.588-89.

40 Ibid., p.593.

41 Ibid., p.597.

42 Ibid., pp.606-7.

43 Ibid., p.609.
44 Ibid., p.611.


46 Ibid., p.597.

47 Ibid., p.608.

48 Ibid., p.613.

49 Ibid., p.620.

50 Ibid., pp.618-19.

51 Ibid., p.619.

52 Ibid., p.620.

53 Ibid., p.620.

54 Ibid., p.620.


56 Linderman, "Playboy Interview," opp. cit. 76.


59 Ibid.
