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"The Rivals"

Question: What is meant by Sentimentalism? Examine Sheridan's attitude towards the Sentimental Comedy as revealed in 'The Rivals'.

Answer: The Sentimental drama simply revealed in the excess of pathos and tearful situation in which wronged innocence was held up to draw forth the sympathetic tears of the audience. 'The Rivals' is an artificial comedy of manners but it is not totally devoid of sentimentalism. Lydia Languish is ready to die with disappointment. In subplot also the Julia and Faulkland episode verges on sentimentality. She loves Faulkland who is an incorrigible sentimentalist. He is full of doubts about the sincerity of his beloved and so Julia has to leave him with tears when she is unable to bear the excesses of her lover.

Though Sheridan tried to att-

ack sentimentality in his plays yet he could not completely get rid of the prevailing force of sentimentality. In this regard Nettleton observed "Sheridan's achievement in comedy, however great its success, did not destroy the vitality of the sentimental play; the contagion of seductive vogues was stronger than the example of an individual and transitory triumph."

The end.

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