

Comedy

Comedy is, to my mind, the only thing worth writing in this despairing age, provided the comedy is truly on the side of the lonely, the neglected, the unsuccessful, and plays its part in the war against the imposing of an arbitrary code of behaviour upon individual and unpredictable human beings. There may, for all I know, be great and funny plays to be written about successful lawyers, brilliant criminals, wise schoolmasters, or families where children can grow up without silence and without regret. There are many plays that show that the law is always majestic or that family life is simple and easy to endure. Speaking for myself I am not on the side of such plays and the writer of comedy must choose his side with particular care. He cannot afford to aim at the defenceless, nor can he, like the more serious writer, treat any character with contempt.

I use comedy because it is a better weapon than frontal attack. I want to give audiences the shock of recognition in which they see actors reflecting their own behaviour and laugh at it. I want to open their hearts. Normally they come along expecting to see something serious. But, as we know, life is not like that, and I don't force the two things apart. In any case it makes for surprise when you don't know what to expect next. There is the interaction between reality and illusion, circumstance pulling against fantasy. It gives you that feeling of your stomach turning over.

John Mortimer

QUESTIONS

1. What is comedy for the writer?
2. Which side is comedy on?
3. Why does he use comedy?
4. Which is the intention of the writer?
5. Do you agree with John Mortimer? Why?
6. Vocabulary:
 - Against:
 - Great:
 - Successful:
 - Life:
 - Comedy: