



Comic Effects in the Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde

Stefanie Grill

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Seminar paper from the year 2001 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 1,7 (A-), University of Stuttgart (FB Anglistics), course: Critical Analysis: Comedy, 8 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: "The Importance of Being Earnest" was written by the famous Irish author Oscar Wilde. Wilde was born in 1854 and died of cerebral meningitis in 1900. "The Importance of Being Earnest" was his final and most lasting play - "by all accounts, a masterpiece of modern comedy."1 This play is filled with wit and wisdom, which Wilde himself wrote of it, too. "Well I think, an amusing thing with lots of fun and wit might be made." 2 It represents Wilde's late -Victorian view of the aristocracy, marriage, wit and social life. The play tells the story of Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff. Both men lead a double life. One in the country and one in the city. Then, they both fall in love, and a series of crises threatens to spoil their romantic pursuits. The main plot line of the play is definitely marriage. "Of course Wilde pokes fun at the institution of marriage, which he saw as a practice surrounded by hypocrisy and absurdity."2 He focuses on the higher class and satirises the life of the English aristocracy. His characters are typical Victorian snobs who are arrogant, overly proper, formal and concerned with money. This essay will provide an outline of the comic effects in this play. How Wilde uses humour, satire, farce and irony. The analysis will show, what makes this comedy so funny and so special. The essay will show some combinations of dialogue, dramatic irony, social criticism, characterisation and exaggeration and it will prove that the dialogues with its puns and epigrams are the basis for the humour in Wilde's last play.



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Jessica Bowman:

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