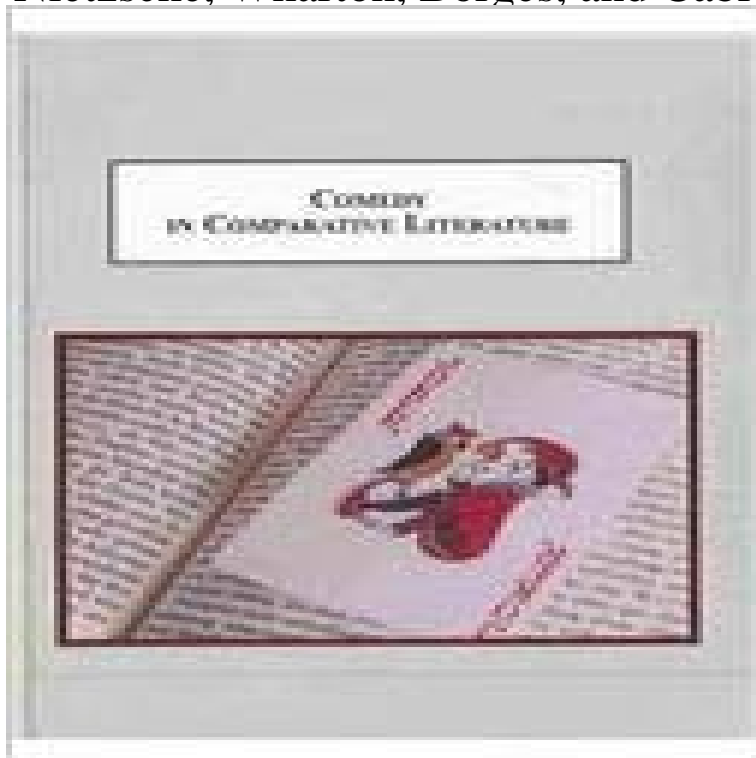


## Comedy in Comparative Literature: Essays on Dante, Hoffman, Nietzsche, Wharton, Borges, and Cabrera Infante



This collection of essays examines the very dynamics of comedy, jokes and laughter. It utilizes theories from early writings of antiquity to contemporary modern-day fiction. Traditionally, comedy has suffered from a rather poor standing within the history of literature, and it is only in this and the last century that the critical theory of comedy has started to receive the scholarly attention it merits. In ancient Greece, a comedy concluded a night at the tragic theatre; the comedy thus gained its legitimacy secondhand from the dramas it followed, and these comedies were followed by the Roman authors Plautus and Terence, who translated many of the lost Greek comedies of the fourth century BC. The only fragment that survives of the first work of literary theory in the western tradition, Aristotle's Poetics, is an impassioned defense of tragedy and the Homeric epic against Plato's philosophical misgivings about art in general: the long, concluding section on comedy is lost to posterity. The later comedic writers and comedies which have been deemed significant have been treated as such because of their anomalous, comedic character.

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