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## APPROACHES TO STUDYING ENGLISH RESTORATION DRAMA

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*This study applied cognitive-pragmatic, literary criticism and theory of theatre approaches to summarize findings on the dramatic discourse of English Restoration. In this article, I set out the main points of Stuart Restoration ideology, summarize findings on the predominant concepts of that time, substantiate that the institution of theatre became a leading ideological instrument during the English Restoration, and single out its two main functions: entertainment and dissemination of absolutist ideology. In this paper, the subject matter and dramatis personae of Restoration drama have been characterized. The paper focuses on generalizing the research results of comparative studies of Restoration and Elizabethan drama which concern their scope, genres, and morality. The conclusions reached in the studies that reported on borrowings in repertoire from native, French and Spanish sources at the beginning of Restoration and the influence of English and continental writers have been synthesized. Further investigation of English Restoration drama revealed an unprecedented genre variety and combination which demonstrated signs of development in different directions during the 1660s. In this article, I state that the existing studies have reported on active behaviour of Restoration audiences during the performances, describe usual patterns of their behavior, and make conclusions as to the direct influence of such behavior on the processes of drama production and perception. The existing research has demonstrated weak points in some key areas, such as Restoration audiences' composition. Despite the fact that scholars point to various sources of information as to the theatre-goers' personalities in the seventeenth century, there is still no consensus of opinions on this issue. Although Restoration drama research demonstrably improved over the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, further research on Elizabethan and Restoration drama cognitive construals of the world, comparative analysis of original plays and adaptations, literary genres origin and development, interactional patterns of viewers and characters of Restoration drama is recommended.*

**Key words:** English Restoration theatre, dramatic discourse, play, ideology.

## ПІДХОДИ ДО ВИВЧЕННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ РЕСТАВРАЦІЇ

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*У статті наведено узагальнення результатів наукових досліджень, присвячених дискурсу часів англійської Реставрації, з позицій когнітивно-прагматичного, літературного й театрального підходів. У дослідженні окреслено основні положення ідеології Реставрації Стюартів, узагальнено знахідки наукових досліджень, присвячених вивченню основних концептів того часу, обґрунтовано, що інститут театру став провідним ідеологічним інструментом за часів англійської Реставрації, та виділено дві основні його функції: розваги й розповсюдження ідеології абсолютизму. У роботі описано тематику й схарактеризовано персонажів драматичних творів часів англійської Реставрації. Наукова розвідка фокусується на узагальненні результатів наукових досліджень, присвячених порівнянню масштабів охоплення тематики, жанрів і моралі драматичних творів часів англійської Реставрації та драматургії часів королеви Єлизавети Тюдор. У дослідженні також синтезуються знахідки наукових розвідок, присвячених запозиченням у репертуарі з англійських, французьких та іспанських джерел на початку епохи англійської Реставрації, а також впливу власне англійських та європейських авторів. Подальше вивчення драматургії часів англійської Реставрації демонструє безпрецедентне розмаїття та поєднання жанрів, що демонструють ознаки розвитку в різних напрямках у 1660 роки. У статті стверджується, що наукові дослідження повідомляють про активну поведінку глядачів на виставах часів англійської Реставрації та робиться висновок про те, що така поведінка безпосередньо вплинула на процеси створення та сприйняття драматичних творів. Наявні дослідження демонструють прогалини в основних сферах, таких як контингент глядацької аудиторії вистав часів англійської Реставрації. Не зважаючи на той факт, що вчені вказують на різні джерела інформації щодо складу театральної глядацької аудиторії в сімнадцятому столітті, досі не існує*

одності поглядів на це питання. Хоча дослідження драматургії часів англійської Реставрації значно покращилися у XX і XXI століттях, рекомендовано вивчення концептуальної картини світу в драматичних творах часів англійської Реставрації та королеви Єлизавети, порівняльний аналіз оригінальних п'єс та адаптацій, виникнення та розвитку літературних жанрів, моделі взаємодії глядачів і персонажів у п'єсах часів англійської Реставрації.

**Ключові слова:** театр часів англійської Реставрації, драматичний дискурс, п'єса, ідеологія.

## 1. Introduction

Restoration of monarchy in Britain took place in 1660. It marked the return of Charles II as king after an eighteen-year Puritan rule. The young king strived to reestablish his power through cultural forms such as the Fine Arts. Charles II “would seek to establish himself as an ‘absolute’ monarch if afforded the opportunity, and that his court would serve as the engine of that process” (Walkling, 2001: 226). Therefore, “the advent of Charles II to the throne meant the restoration of drama, as well as of monarchy” (Nettleton, 2017: 30).

The very term Restoration literature is often referred to as the literature of “those who belonged, or aspired to belong, to the restored court culture of Charles II’s reign – the “mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease”, as Alexander Pope later put it” (Mullan et al., 2020). However, writers of noble birth were not the only authors creating drama, rather, during Restoration they started to compete for publicity with professional men-of-letters (Dharwadker, 1997).

When theatre activity was renewed, D’Avenant and Killigrew, received a permission to run theatre business (Nettleton, 2017). Langhans (2000) notes, that the two managers were responsible for the design of theatre-houses, audiences admission and repertoire. They were allowed to mount pre-Restoration dramatic production of their choice and select new plays to stage.

The changes Restoration theatre underwent embraced: authorship, repertoire, plots, character identities, and audiences.

In this article, I see Restoration drama as representative of a discourse of a society in transition from one political and social order to another during which time cultural institutions reconstructed their discourses to correspond to the changing political, social and cultural conditions, and, having regained power over human mind, become not only disseminators, but also shapers of the new ideology. Therefore, in this paper, I *aim* to summarize the most significant, in my point of view, results of the research work on Restoration drama through studying the aspects of dramatic production which underwent crucial changes during English Restoration and outline perspectives for future linguistic studies. In this article, I follow cognitive-pragmatic (Schmid,

2012; Shevchenko, 2019), literary criticism (Hume 1972; Scouten 1980; Zimbardo, 1998) and theory of theatre (Esslin 1987; Langhans 2000; Styan 1986; Summers 1934) approaches.

I start with the description of Stuart Restoration ideology and spirits that dominated in Restoration playhouses, characterize the conceptual system of English Restoration and mention typical characters and plots of the plays. Following this further, I characterize Restoration theatre repertoire, expound on foreign influences on the English drama of the seventeenth century, cite the existing genres and trace their development in the 1660s. Furthermore, I mention Restoration audiences and their role in the playhouse in the way it influenced dramatic discourse construction and perception. Finally, I draw some tentative conclusions and offer my vision of perspective linguistic analysis that may contribute to better understanding of the dramatic discourse of the seventeenth century.

## 2. “Who was in the prompt-box?”: Ideological background for Restoration drama

Many researchers of the seventeenth century literature (Canfield, 2000; Dharwadker, 1997; González-Treviño, 2013; Grant, Kay, & Kerrigan, 2011; Rose 2011; Zimbardo 1998) were unanimous in acknowledging the fact that Charles II was a patron of arts and an influencer, whose royal ideology found its wide dissemination in the dramatic production of the time. The king’s interest in and impact on the arts was wittily and laconically summarized by Scouten (1980: 6).

English dramatists would never again enjoy as strong a royal patron as the Merry Monarch had been. It is true that his successor, James II, sponsored the drama, but he was out of office in three years, and William and Mary were not devotees of the theatre. Queen Anne would protect the players because of traditional Stuart support of the stage, but she took little interest in it. The Brunswick Georges preferred opera. For whom then would the dramatists write?

I side with Love (1980: 39) who supposes that royal aristocratic patrons might have exercised a direct influence on management, casting, and repertoire. Similar views were expressed by Canfield (2000) in the preface to his book on Restoration tragedy, where the scholar explains his



choice with a brief but comprehensive answer: “Because, taken together with Restoration comedy, it constitutes a record of the negotiation of ruling-class ideology through a major cultural institution or state apparatus, the theater”. On addition, Love (1980: i) writing about Restoration theatre audiences mentions not only domination by the court, but also attendant moral corruption.

Quite predictably, the king who spent much time in asperities during the Interregnum longed to recompense it with lavish entertainment and simultaneously establish his absolute power. Hence, Restoration theatre performed two main functions – entertainment and ideological influence (Arena, 2017; Summers, 1934).

Following this further it is important to mention that on the one hand, the king found strong support among his courtiers many of whom were professional playwrights and helped disseminate the new ideas in their literary works and, on the other hand, regarded them with favour (Arena 2017; Dharwadker, 1997). The court intended to enjoy to the full all the pleasures available to it. So, both the White Hall and the stage were filled with stories of numerous sexual affairs, cuckoldry, gulling and flirt (Styan, 1986). Restoration plays as a reflection of the fashions of the day featured stereotypical characters, both male (rakes, fops, deceived husbands, witty lovers) and female (cast mistresses, deceived wives, whores, witty heroines). Besides, the dramatis personae included blocking parents, who interfered with young lovers’ happiness, smart servants and gay couples (Canfield, 1997; Corman, 2000; Gill, 2000). Another important fact about Restoration drama is that its topics managed to remain stable for about forty years (Styan, 1986). Gill (2000: 196) cites an example of a typical Restoration drama plot:

In general, comedies of manners introduce an amiable rake-hero, disclose his past or present sexual intrigues, and then bring on a heroine who wins his heart with her beauty, wit, and verve, and his hand with her breeding, money, and honesty. Obstacles appear to this happy merger of course, usually in the form of obdurate parents or inconvenient pre-engagements. The clever machinations and remarkable contrivances devised by the rake-hero to remove these obstacles comprise the principal dramatic action, interrupted and complicated by one or two farcical subplots that either assist or complement the rake’s progress. The comedies end in the promise of a witty marriage between the rich young beauty and the heretofore reso-

lutely single rake-hero, a marriage of intellectual equals whose guarded admissions to one another seem to suggest genuine affection.

Thus, among the most frequently cited trends popularized in the dramatic discourse of English Restoration (but by no means limited by them) were hedonism, libertinism and reestablishment of royal authority (Canfield 1997; Cavaillè 2012; Corman 2000; Fisk 2005; Schneider 1971; Tindemans 2012; Vanhaesebrouck & Dehert 2012; Webster 2005; Zimbardo 1998).

The instruments applied in studying Restoration drama differ in scale and variety. I argue, that the dramatic discourse of the seventeenth century was largely influenced by Stuart Restoration ideology which, by and large, reflected the spirits and moods of the day, therefore, I consider it necessary to start with the existing research on the ethos of Restoration comedy and single out the predominant concepts in the cognitive construal of the world during English Restoration. In this respect, it is important to mention Schneider’s (1971: 17) method which aims “to find the ethical common denominators in the plays” in order “to count the frequency of occurrence of a fixed set of characteristics in 1127 characters”. In the book dedicated to the ethos of Restoration comedy, Schneider (1971) singles out such concepts as: GENEROSITY; LIBERALITY vs AVARICE; COURAGE vs COWARDICE; PLAIN-DEALING vs DOUBLE-DEALING; LOVE vs SELF-LOVE. While Zimbardo (1998: p.3) sees Restoration discourse as one formed by two simultaneous processes – “a deconstructive discourse designed to dismantle medieval/Renaissance codes <...> and a zero point constructive discourse” and singles out such “discursive centers” as TRADE, SCIENCE, and EMPIRE. I argue that the concepts singled out by Zimbardo (1998) found reflection in late Restoration drama when Britain expanded its colonies abroad. Although the majority of scholars single out several predominant concepts of the epoch, there are also studies dedicated to a single concept, such as, for example, LIBERTINISM (Webster, 2005).

### **3. Approaches to studying English Restoration drama**

#### **3.1. Elizabethan and Restoration drama: similarities and differences**

Some literary historians study Restoration drama in comparison with Elizabethan dramatic production (Corman 2000; Dobrée, 1924; Krutch 1924; Nettleton, 2017). In particular, Nettleton (2017) in the book “English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century” dedicates an entire chapter to contrasts between Res-

toration and Elizabethan dramatic paradigms. The scholar calls Elizabethan drama “spontaneous and original”, while Restoration drama, in his point of view, is “artificial and imitative”. Nettleton (2017) believes, that the major difference between the two kinds of drama lie in the conditions of their presentation. Also, the scholar notes that Restoration drama is: 1) “local”, showing the events that happen in London, while Elizabethan drama is “national”; 2) characterized by a tendency to separate genres of comedy and tragedy, while Elizabethans preferred blending the two genres; 3) immoral (ibid.). Similar ideas were offered by Krutch (1924) in the book “Comedy and Consciousness after the Restoration”. The scholar notes that “there is a good deal of faith in human nature in the Elizabethan drama, especially in its earlier period, but after the Restoration such faith is almost dead” (Krutch, 1924: 2), the scholar also mentions London as the scene of action and emphasizes immorality of Restoration plays – the points also supported by Corman (2000: 59), who writes that such plays “invariably, if not imperceptibly, reinforce the values of the town” of the seventeenth century.

Another research in this field: “Restoration Comedy 1660-720” (1924) by Dobrée provides readers with some unravelling. The scholar explains immorality and debauchery by the fact that at the time of rapid political and social changes no one could foretell what tomorrow would bring and therefore the English people demonstrated great curiosity and a desire to experiment. Therefore, in Dobrée’s (1924) opinion, bawdry was merely “an attempt to be frank and honest”. The study also stresses the difference between the dramatis personae in both epochs: Elizabethan plays replete with ordinary, rough and bed-mannered personalities, while Restoration plays can boast of representatives of upper-middle class as characters (Dobrée, 1924; Hume, 1972).

Explicit expression of sympathy in favour of a wrong-doer (provided he is witty, clever, and capable of deceiving his rivals) is also an inherent part and specific feature of Restoration drama that has been marked by Dobrée (1924), Krutch (1924), Nettleton (2017), and Webster (2005).

### **3.2. What did the playbill feature? The repertoire of Restoration playhouse**

When theatre activity was renewed the main problem that theatre managers faced was what repertoire had to be restored, and moreover, what kind of new plays had to be written to hit the tastes of the audiences.

First of all, it is essential to note that Elizabethan plays were mounted again. However, in the majority of cases, these were not revivals, but rather adaptations. So were a number of new plays (Dobson, 2000).

King Charles II spend much time in exile in France, therefore it seems only natural that playhouses of English Restoration felt the influence of the French dramatic tradition brought from France by the courtiers and the king himself. In particular, Arena (2017: 61) mentions that the French influence was brought from exile by the aristocracy in the form of manners, ideas and “an alternative culture in which the young Cavaliers were cynical and Epicurean”. In addition, Hayden and Worden (2019) note that Charles II purposely sent his courtiers to France to study French staging conditions. To cater for the noble tastes, managers and playwrights filled Restoration plays with the French language, plots and character types.

Although Dobrée (1924), Hume (1972), and Nettleton (2017) acknowledge French influence on Restoration drama their interpretations differ in some degree. Namely, Hume (1972: 381) notes that in seventeenth century comedies “we find an astonishing number of adaptations, especially from Molière”. The scholar specifies Molière’s influence: “plots and characters are lifted from Molière’s plays and made to serve very different ends” (Hume, 1972: 383). While Nettleton (2017: 35) before describing the French influence first and foremost warns his readers not to regard Restoration drama as “an essentially foreign product”. The scholar stresses the impact of the French dramatic theory on the development of English drama after Restoration and marks the influence of Jonson and Molière on comedy development, while, tragedy, in the scholar’s opinion, borrowed lavishly from Corneille and Racine. However, the scholar notes that at the same time tragi-comedies by Beaumont and Fletcher also appealed to the audiences. Nettleton (2017: 47) ranks the French influence on Restoration drama higher than the Spanish one and states that French plays, dramatic theory and romance affected English playwrights so much that Restoration drama was for a while considered to be “an essentially Gallicized product”, however, in the author’s opinion, their influence was grossly exaggerated. Therefore, Nettleton (2017: 48) makes a conclusion that the dramatic production of English Restoration is “the resultant of English and Continental forces”.

Dobrée (1924: 51) also acknowledges the French influence but unlike Hume (1972)



and Nettleton (2017) calls it “negligible”. The scholar focuses rather on the differences between French and English comedies of that time and notes that when Restoration playwrights borrowed French plots they “transformed them beyond recognition” and believes that taking a plot and borrowing subject matter could not constitute influence (Dobrée, 1924: 50). With unhidden national pride the author calls Restoration comedies “glories of our literature, gems of our theatrical inheritance” emphasizing their superior qualities (ibid.: 171).

The French were not the only nation that influenced the dramatic production of English Restoration. The Spanish influence also took place. In particular, Hume (1972: 369) singles out the appearance of Spanish romance in Restoration playhouses and cites Sir Samuel Tuke’s “The Adventures of Five Hours” as an example: it has “a complex intrigue plot, set in Spain and involving Spanish cavaliers; utter moral propriety – everyone’s honor is *very* important, and ladies are chaste beyond any possibility of reproach”. In addition, Nettleton (2017: 46) also marks the Spanish influence which manifests itself in the proclivity of Restoration drama for the comedy of intrigue. In his book “English drama of the Restoration and eighteenth century (1642-1780)” Nettleton (2017: 45–46) mentions Calderon and Antonio Coello among the influencers and singles out authors who conveyed the Spanish spirit in their dramatic production. Among them the scholar names Wycherley, Mrs. Behn, Crowne, Steele, Cibber, and Mrs. Centilivre. No matter how persuasive the scholar’s arguments in favour of Spanish borrowings may sound, the author calls them “a slender thread of Spanish weave in the texture of later English drama” and renders the indebtedness to Spanish sources “neither considerable, nor potent” (ibid.: 47).

All in all, the dramatic production of English Restoration is characterized by simultaneous functioning of a great number of genres and their combinations. Canfield (2000: xi–xii) singles out: “heroic romance, tragicomic romance, romantic tragedy, political tragedy, personal tragedy, and tragical satire, both corrective and absurdist.” Analyzing the ideological component of Restoration tragicomedy, Canfield (2000: xii) makes a conclusion that it represents “a reaffirmation of feudal aristocratic virtues”.

Hume (1972), however, not only enumerates the genres, but mainly focuses on their development throughout Restoration. Thus, the scholar discriminates between a low “city” comedy (that

has an English setting) and a serious intrigue comedy, both of which had developed in different directions by 1665:

Serious comedy appears both inflated into pure heroic, and also (despite its strong new Spanish admixture) lightened with humor, as in *The Carnival* and *Flora’s Vagaries*. (Tragedy as such really appears only in Porter’s *The Villain* [October 1662], a rousing and popular exercise in Jacobean blood and thunder.) The “London” or city comedy shows at least three distinct strands: romantic plots similar to those in the lighter Spanish mode, gulling plots, and plain low farce (Hume, 1972: 373).

Tracing the development of the genres, Hume (1972: 375–385) says, that at the end of the decade Dryden and Orrery continue working with the heroic mode; low comedy set in London is gaining more popularity; pseudo-Spanish intrigue comedy is still in fashion, but becomes less serious; there appear several dramatic works that combine “two plots on sharply different levels” – double-plot tragicomedies. In “Diversity and Development in Restoration Comedy 1660–1679” Hume (1972: 376) explains the phenomenon of a double-plot play. In the scholar’s opinion, it combines “a quasi-heroic story with the sort of witty lovers plot which becomes a major feature of the “wit” comedies of the 1670s”.

Thus, although in variant degrees, English Restoration drama was formed under the influences of both native and foreign forces.

### 3.3. From a conception of audiences to an assessment of dramatic production

Many researchers of Restoration drama and theatre historians mention bad behavior of Restoration audiences and draw a parallel between this phenomenon and the plots and characters the viewers eventually saw on the stage, in other words, move from a conception of the viewers to an assessment of the English Restoration drama. As Neagle (1989: 15) puts it: “Assumptions about an audience lead to conclusions about plays which result in generalizations about a culture”. Scholars (Love, 1980; Neagle, 1989; Roach, 2000; Styan, 1987; Summers, 1934; Webster, 2005) mention active behavior of Restoration viewers, their habits to explicitly express emotions, likes or dislikes for the performance, to shout, walk in the aisles, converse, sit on the stage, and even, make love and fight duels. No matter how disrespectful such behavior may seem to a contemporary theatre-goer, Roach (2000) argues that exactly such patterns of behavior created a sense of intimacy in the relations between Restoration viewers

and audiences. Besides, the scholar states, that play-texts contain records of such intimacy in the form of asides, soliloquies, and addressing the public directly in epilogues and prologues. The above mentioned ways of addressing the audiences directly provided the viewers with “the privilege of being present at scenes expressive of vulnerability” (ibid., 2000: 25). In this paper, I argue, that the intimacy of relations between Restoration audiences and characters on the stage resulted into an enhanced perception of drama in the seventeenth century.

However, numerous arguments as to the composition of the audience in Restoration playhouses have not been resolved yet. The main issue – what to consider a reliable source of such information – still remains unresolved. Love (1980: 29) notes that studies of Restoration plays *dramatis personae*, who are invariably represented by ladies and gentlemen, confirm that “the middle classes were never a predominant party in the audience” and argues that prologues and epilogues for Restoration plays may serve as reliable sources of such information. The scholar quotes Dryden’s “*Marriage A-la-Mode*”. Namely, in the epilogue to the play Dryden mentions three elements that composed the audiences: the town, the city, and the court (ibid.: 31). Love also refers to Pepys’s diary, which provided an insight into Restoration theatre world and states that the audiences who attended the revived performances were “either persons of public distinction or personal acquaintances of the recorder” (ibid.: p.30). All in all, Love (1980: 39) makes a conclusion that undoubtedly the upper classes became “an influential party among the audience”. Thus, the scholar mentions three sources of information as to the audiences’ composition: *dramatis personae*, contemporaries’ diaries and prologues and epilogues.

Neagle (1989), however, explicitly excludes lower classes from the audiences’ composition, at least at the beginning of English Restoration, stating that “the theatre-going public was reduced to Charles II, his court, some officials and idlers who surrounded him” and explains it with the fact of operation of only two playhouses in the capital. In addition, Neagle (1989: 6) remarks that at the beginning citizens avoided the revived performances. The scholar writes that “the audience was courtly, the plays reflect courtly concerns and practices. Because the audience was libertine and hedonistic, the plays reflect this prevailing philosophy”. Also, the scholar notes that the Court Wits made up a considerable part of the audiences. In addition, many of them were

playwrights who often created characters based on their own and their friends’ adventures (Dharwadker, 1997; Webster, 2005).

Dissolute behavior inside the playhouse reflected the social spirit of libertinism which was in vogue at the beginning of English Restoration and which inevitably found reflection in its dramatic production. Moreover, such an interactive and turbulent mode of behavior of Restoration audiences had a direct impact on dramatic discourse construction and perception.

#### 4. Conclusions

The three approaches (cognitive-pragmatic, literary criticism and theory of theatre) applied in studies of Restoration drama revealed its specific features. Being both an instrument and shaper of ideology, Restoration theatre produced a discourse that unprecedentedly blurred the difference between reality and fiction; its concepts being a reflection of imperialistic ambitions of royal absolutism. The changes the dramatic production of the seventeenth century underwent concerned ideology, repertoire, subject matter, genre variety, and viewership. In the period when social, political and cultural institutions and role models were unstable, the English drama borrowed lavishly from both its own and continental heritages. Studies of Restoration theatre repertoire in comparison with Elizabethan dramatic production revealed their major differences that lie in their scope, genres, morality, and characters. I argue, that Elizabethan drama was produced in the times when the political power was more or less stable and allowed its people to think and speak about more moral and elevated things, think deeper and see farther. While Restoration drama revealed its viewers’ concerns about local, domestic issues which required recapitulation in connection with the change of the ideological paradigm. Hence instability of role models, extensive experimentation with genres, shifting of values, approval of immorality as a probable outlet for feelings reserved for 18 years of Puritan Interregnum, active involvement of the audiences in production and perception of drama as a common effort to produce a national product of its own value.

I argue, however, that deeper understanding of the dramatic discourse of English Restoration requires studies of the following issues that, in my opinion, represent perspectives for future linguistic research: comparison of cognitive constructs of Elizabethan and Restoration drama (to find major differences and similarities in ideology, e.g. to either trace Restoration drama development from Elizabethan tradition or prove



its unique origin); comparison of original plays and adaptations (to find the amount and degree of borrowings; to single out the aspects that were altered as well as reasons for and results of such alterations); each individual dramatic genre origin and peculiar development during Restoration as well as ratio of genre combination in Restoration plays (both within the scope of the epoch and literary heritage of an individual author); degree of audience participation in generating ideas, plots and character identities for Restoration plays.

Hopefully, further studies of the dramatic discourse of English Restoration may prove my findings and help better understand the process of discourse construction in the period under discussion.

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