

History of English Language and Literature
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Lecture No 9b
The Restoration Drama

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Hello everyone. Let me welcome you to yet another session of NPTEL course, The History of English Language and Literature. In today's session we shall be engaging with Restoration Drama. Restoration Drama as we noted before, it is perhaps the most notable artistic production of that period and it is also the best known of the period.

So as we begin, let us take a quick look at the shifting literary trends in English theater from the Elizabethan times onwards. We also noticed through the discussion of socio-political background that framed a particular literary and artistic tendencies that most of these shifting tendencies and these shifting loyalties were also largely dependent on whoever was the country's ruler at particular point of time. And we also notice that whoever was in power also controlled all kinds of laws, morality, fashion

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+ Shifting trends in English Theatre

- Theatre in England – dependent on who the country's ruler was
- Whoever is in power controlled all rules, laws, morality, fashion and what was popular and acceptable
- **Elizabeth I** – loved theatre
- **James I** – continued to promote art and literature
- **Charles I** – vs. Parliament, Civil War, Beheaded
- **Oliver Cromwell** – a Puritan, end of all forms of entertainment
- **Charles II** – theatres rebuilt, acting companies reinstated – entertainment stronger than ever, French influence

and also dictated what was popular and acceptable for each period.

In that sense we see a transition from the Elizabethan times onwards. For instance, Queen Elizabeth the First, she loved theater and promoted all kinds of arts. We also find theater flourishing during this time. James the First, he continues to promote art and literature. Charles the First, he never was, he never was against the promotion of art and literature. We also find a sense of Jacobean drama continuing to exist during that time. But also there is a significant decline that ensues during this time because of the various tussles of the monarch with the Parliament, the Civil War that followed, the beheading of the King and we also find the Commonwealth getting created under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell and under his rule we also find that the theater activity had completely closed down with the closure of theaters in 1642 and the Puritan government also had put an end to all kinds of entertainment in England during that point of time.

With the restoration of Stuart monarchy with Charles the Second assuming the Throne of England, we also find theaters getting rebuilt, the acting companies are reinstated and entertainment becomes stronger than ever. And there is also a predominant French influence which begins to dictate the fashion of the period,

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the literary tendencies of the period. And we also notice that Charles the Second and with the restoration of the theater, there is a certain kind of prolific production of drama and all kinds of art forms especially after suppression of a little more than a decade.

So we do find that this England after Restoration,

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it begins on a fresh note and although

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not altogether accepted by all the historians and all the critics of the time but also find that new phase gets inaugurated in terms of drama. So this phase also comes into being after the dearth of theatrical

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productions from 1642 to 1660. So in that sense, drama after the event of the Restoration of Stuart dynasty, we also find an inevitable reaction against the Puritan manners and morals.

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+ England after Restoration

- No theatre in England between 1642-1660
- After the event of Restoration - **Inevitable reaction against Puritan** manners and morals
- Return of the **Cavaliers** (exiled in France) – ‘encouraged hedonistic liveliness, infidelity and profligacy became fashionable, moral ideals turned into jest, domestic virtue ridiculed’
- The **Court of Charles II** – ‘most shameless ever known’ – “the scene of much pleasure, liberty and scandal . . . And the centre of patronage for politics, fashion, literature, art, learning, invention, company-promoting and a hundred other activities of the King’s eager subjects seeking notoriety or reward” (Hudson)

So there is also certain significant things that happened during this time.

It is characterized by the return of the Cavaliers, the supporters of the Royalists primarily. They were exiled in France and they have returned and

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as Hudson notes it,

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with their return, there was a different kind of moral ambience which was getting generated in England. They encouraged hedonistic liveliness, infidelity and profligacy became fashionable, moral ideals turned into jest and domestic virtue was ridiculed. So this was the moral and social scene in London, in England particularly

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in London after the return of the Cavaliers from the exile.

And court of Charles the Second also

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promoted all of these vices and allow me to read a passage from Hudson. Hudson describes the court of Charles the Second as the most shameless ever known. He goes on to say it was the scene of much pleasure, liberty and scandal and the center of patronage for politics, fashion, literature, art, learning, invention, company-promoting and hundred other activities of the king's eager subjects seeking notoriety or reward. So this was the scene in Court of

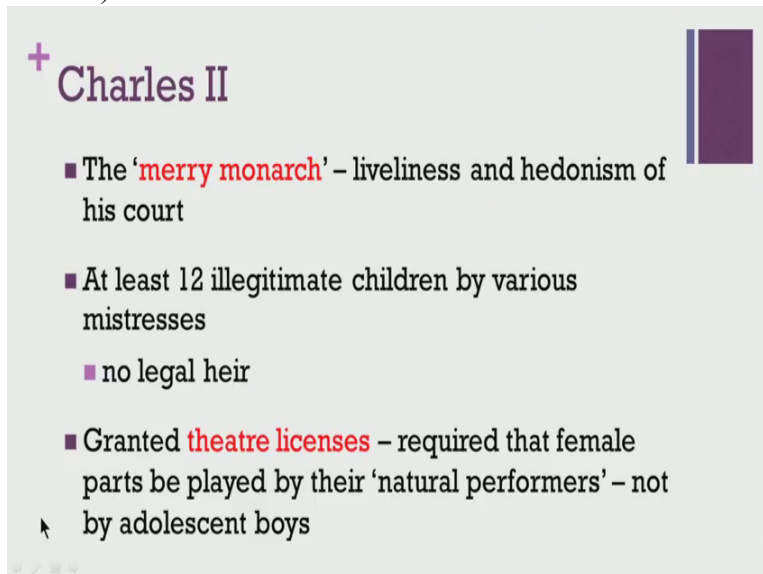
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Charles the Second.

This also provokes us to take a look at

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+ Charles II

- The **'merry monarch'** – liveliness and hedonism of his court
- At least 12 illegitimate children by various mistresses
 - no legal heir
- Granted **theatre licenses** – required that female parts be played by their 'natural performers' – not by adolescent boys

the kind of life Charles the Second was leading. He is generally known as the merry monarch of England. On a lighter note many historians also feel he was the one who brought back partying to England and he promoted liveliness and hedonism in his court. And his lifestyle also was quite promiscuous and we find that he had at least 12 illegitimate children through various mistresses and all of these alliances were not considered very acceptable either. And he had no legal heir incidentally.

And he was the one who granted the theater licenses in England and he also, the Dictum required that the female parts be played by their natural performers, women themselves and not by adolescent boys as it used to happen in the Elizabethan and Jacobean times.

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+ The Court Wits

- The Court Wits - poets and dramatists - gentlemen amateurs for their own amusement - 'they were their own first audience' - primarily for the eyes of their friends, not made public - Also, patrons of humbler writers
- **John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester** - 'a wit and a rake of the first rank' – the leader of the court wits
- **George Villiers**, Duke of Buckingham; **Charles Sackville**, Lord Buckhurst; **Sir Charles Sedley**; **John Sheffield**, Earl of Mulgrave; **Sir Carr Scrope**; **Sir George Etherege** and **William Wycherley**
- Continually appearing in the comedy of the period - either put themselves into their own plays, or others did it for them

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So a lot of change had already begun with the Restoration of Charles the Second. At this point, we cannot begin our discussion without taking a look at who comprised the court wits.

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The court wits were a set of people who were part and parcel of Charles the Second's court. They were primarily poets and dramatists. They were also gentleman amateurs and they had their own kinds of amusements and they also used to amuse Charles the Second incredibly. And very often, it is said about them that they were their own first audience. So they did not really write for the public or for the commoners unlike the earlier writers and artists but they performed only for their own kind in front of their friends, in front of the court and most of these performances were not made public either. And they were also patrons of humbler writers who existed in England during that time.

And the most important of the Court Wit was John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester. He was considered as the wit and the rake of the first order. And he was also considered as the leader of the Court Wits. In fact much of Restoration comedy, it was more to learn this character of Rochester who is said to have caught the fancy of many during those times. The other important court wits were George Villiers, Charles Sackville, Sir Charles Sedley, John Sheffield, Sir Carr Scrope, Sir George Etherege and William Wycherley, couple of them we shall come back to take a look at when we talk about Restoration Comedy. They otherwise dominated the cultural scene of London to such an extent that it was not possible to talk about entertainment without having reference to these Court Wits. And these Court Wits because of the lavish lifestyle and the extravagant lifestyle that they enjoyed and also because of the, because of the popularity and rather the notoriety that

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+ Restoration Drama

- "We **need not give much space** to this part of our subject. The theatre was now almost wholly the creature of the demoralised world of fashions and it everywhere reflected the taste of its patrons" – Hudson
- The Comedy of the Restoration – William Wycherley (*The Country Wife*), William Congreve, Sir John Vanbrugh, George Farquhar
- open and unabashed indecency - reveals the spirit of the society for whose amusement it was produced

they had

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in London, they continued to appear in many of their own plays or even many of the other plays were also modeled on the real life characters of these Court Wits.

So it was not seen as a bad thing by them. They also kind of enjoyed this kind of popularity or rather the notoriety that they had in London at that point of time and because of these varied reasons, some historians, for instance Hudson, he is of the opinion that one need not

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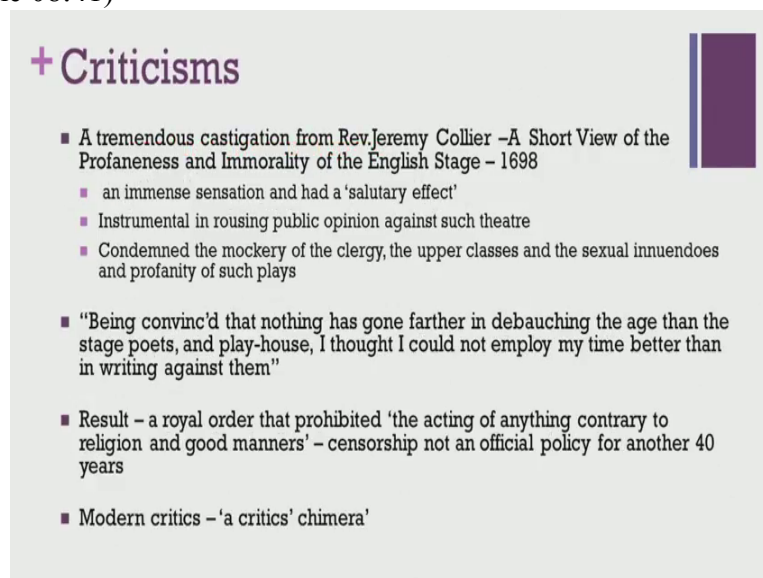
give much space to this part of our subject and his argument being theater was now almost wholly the creature of demoralized world of fashions and it everywhere reflected the taste of its patrons. For these reasons many historians during those times as well as the later times, they do not feel it quite appropriate to include these theatrical activities into the literary

history because it also include the history of amorous adventures and sexual adventures most of these court wits had.

Having said that, Hudson briefly talks about the Restoration, the comedy of the Restoration period and he makes a very brief mention, in just a couple of paragraphs about Wiliam Wycherley and his work, *The Country Wife*, William Congreve, Sir John Vanbrugh, George Farquhar. So other than that we do not find a prolific discussion of the Restoration drama in Hudson, or for that matter, in most of the leading early historical writings.

So the Restoration drama in general, it was characterized by open and unabashed indecency. It also revealed the spirit of the society for whose amusement it was produced. So maybe it was a result of the continued repression and suppression of the decade-old rule under the Puritan government led by Oliver

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+ Criticisms

- A tremendous castigation from Rev. Jeremy Collier – *A Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage* – 1698
 - an immense sensation and had a 'salutary effect'
 - Instrumental in rousing public opinion against such theatre
 - Condemned the mockery of the clergy, the upper classes and the sexual innuendoes and profanity of such plays
- "Being convinc'd that nothing has gone farther in debauching the age than the stage poets, and play-house, I thought I could not employ my time better than in writing against them"
- Result – a royal order that prohibited 'the acting of anything contrary to religion and good manners' – censorship not an official policy for another 40 years
- Modern critics – 'a critics' chimera'

Cromwell. It is not to say that this kind of

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drama was free from criticisms.

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Even during those times they drew a lot of flak, a lot of criticism from eminent people of those times, the most important one being the tremendous castigation that it received from Reverend Jeremy Collier.

He published a Short View of the profaneness and immorality of English stage in 1698 and this work, it was an immense sensation and it had a salutary effect in England then. It was also instrumental in rousing public opinion against such kind of theater which displayed and celebrated indecency and unabashed immorality. So this work by Reverend Collier, it also condemned the mockery of the clergy in these comedies. It also condemned the kind of (()) of

portrayal of the upper class lifestyle and also it objected the sexual innuendos and the profanity which was quite dominant and also enjoyed by the people of the times. And he makes this observation in his writing right at the outset, Being convinc'd that nothing has gone farther in Debauching the Age than the Stage Poets, and Play-House, I thought I could not employ my time better than in writing against them. So this plea was not unnoticed.

In fact the result was that Royal order prohibiting the acting of anything contrary to religion and good manners was issued shortly. But however censorship became an official policy only after about four decades. In spite of many criticisms against Restoration drama and Restoration comedy in particular, modern critics also considered that this entire field and this entire genre is a critics chimera. There a lot of recent works which have begun to look at the private lives of these court wits and also the

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writers of the Restoration comedy and to try and understand the kind of drama that they produced and the effect that it had on the Restoration society particularly the early period of Charles the Second's rule.

Moving on let us take the quick look at what constituted Restoration theater.

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+ Restoration Theatre

- Different **audience** - mostly upper class
- **Modern** theatre - picture frame stage, actresses, moveable scenery, artificial light
- Theatre moved **indoors** - to cater to the elite
 - **Private** theatre - not public like Elizabethan and Jacobean
 - Two major **licensed** theatres - The Theatre Royal and Duke's House
- **Adaptations** of Shakespeare and Marlowe - to suit **contemporary taste** and political needs
 - Influence of Ben Jonson - comedy of humours

It was a very different audience that went to watch these plays. It was mostly upper class. It was not the kind of plays that were enjoyed by the Elizabethan and the Jacobean audience. And the theater was also quite modern, in the sense there was presence of a lot of modern props such as the modern picture frame stage. Actresses were part of it, not just actors. There was the presence of movable scenery, artificial lightings. If you remember in the Elizabethan and the Jacobean times, one could not stage a play after sundown or one required canvas which was rather expensive. Theater also moves indoors from the outdoor public playhouses. This is primarily to cater to the elite and these were also private theaters, not public playhouses like the Elizabethan and the Jacobean times.

The two major licensed theaters in London during those times were the Theatre Royal and The Duke's House. And these were also, let me reiterate theaters indoors catered to the elite courtiers. It is not to say that Shakespeare and Marlowe had completely gone out of fashion. We also find lot of adaptations by Shakespeare and Marlowe during this time. Many of their plays were adapted to suit contemporary taste and political needs. It was, we also notice the influence of Ben Jonson considerably, especially in the Comedy of Humours which make a comeback during

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- + ■ Emphasis on **social acceptability** – Comedy of Manners
 - Eg: King Lear reworked by Nahum Tate – a happy ending, minus the scene of Gloucester's blinding
- Restoration Comedy - Reflects **the ideal social world of the Court Wits** of Charles II
 - A halfway house between the Elizabethan theatre and the theatre of 19th/early 20th century
 - Not a complete break from Elizabethan/Jacobean theatre - eg: strong influence of Ben Jonson (but more flippant and less moral in tone), typical restoration wit-combat between the sexes, the attack on marriage
- Admiration and imitation of **French** wit, French life - but heredity is essentially **English**
- a **pseudo-courtly ideal** in England (London) - contrast with the knightly code of Spenser or Sidney

this period as well. We find that with the interest displayed also on the Comedy of manners, there is emphasis on social acceptability as well.

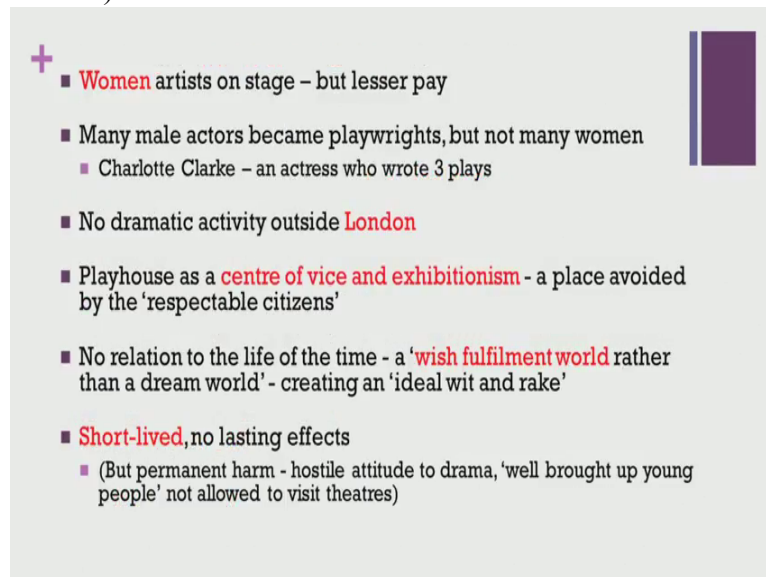
Plays are also staged and adapted in order to suit and to this sort of acceptability. For instance there is this particular adaptation made by Nahum Tate which was a reworking of King Lear by Shakespeare. We find that the play had a happy ending contrary to Shakespeare's original play. Also the violent gory scene which included the blinding of Gloucester was completely removed in order to save the agony of the present viewers. We also notice that the Restoration comedy reflected not the real social world but the ideal social world of the Court Wits of Charles the Second.

And this was also a sort of halfway house between Elizabethan theater and the theater of the early nineteen and early twentieth century. We do not find a complete break from the Elizabethan and the Jacobean Period. For example, as we noted a strong influence of Ben Jonson continues to prevail and also there is this typical Restoration wit combat between the sexes which was modeled on some of Ben Jonson's Comedy of Manners as well. So in spite of all of these things which were built into the theater of the Restoration period we find that it was mostly, mostly catering to the taste of upper class court wit audience and also we find a significantly an admiration, imitation of French wit.

If you remember French taste dominated the European scene as well. But in spite of this predominant influence of the French in the Restoration drama, we find that it is also

inherently English. This kind of drama also promoted the pseudo-courtly ideal in England particularly focused in London and this in start contrast with the knightly code that existed in the works of Spenser and Sidney and in that sense it also promoted the kind of lives and the lifestyle that were

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- **Women** artists on stage – but lesser pay
- Many male actors became playwrights, but not many women
 - Charlotte Clarke – an actress who wrote 3 plays
- No dramatic activity outside **London**
- Playhouse as a **centre of vice and exhibitionism** - a place avoided by the 'respectable citizens'
- No relation to the life of the time - a '**wish fulfilment world**' rather than a dream world' - creating an 'ideal wit and rake'
- **Short-lived**, no lasting effects
 - (But permanent harm - hostile attitude to drama, 'well brought up young people' not allowed to visit theatres)

enjoyed by the Court Wits of the time. As we noted with the dictum of Charles the Second, women were allowed to play a part on the stage but they, they got lesser wages than that of men.

And many of the male actors of the times, of those times, we also notice that they become playwrights as well. But we do not find this transition happening in many women. There is only a couple of names which are mentioned, especially that of Charlotte Clarke who was an actress and she is said to have written three plays. There is very little dramatic activity outside London and the playhouses which existed during that time, the private play houses, they were seen as the center of vice and exhibitionism. And it was also seen as a place which had to be avoided by respectable citizens of the time. And there was no relation to the real world of England during the time. It was very ideal kind of a world that we quote with joy to have and in that sense it was also world of wish fulfillment and it was also the world which focused on creating an ideal wit and an ideal rake, nothing of the knightly code or the knightly conduct of the Spenserian and the early Elizabethan times.

This perhaps, of all of these reasons put together, this kind of drama had a very short lived effect with no lasting impact on literature. We also find that this, more than the positive things it had done more harm, particularly because there was a hostile kind of attitude that developed in England at least for a while and it was also considered that well brought up young people were not supposed to visit these sort of playhouses or to engage with this kind of drama.

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+ Restoration Comedy

- Amoral wit and stylised hedonism - confined to **London** - to courtly and fashionable circles
 - Metropolitan literature
 - No equivalent provincial culture
 - Universal praise of London and detestation of the country
- The portrayal of **marriage** as a boring and restrictive system
 - Focus on carnality, follies and vices
 - Adultery, sexual attraction and sexual conquest
- Set scenes – eg: '**proviso scenes**' – a definite set of rules in order to facilitate a balanced relationship / setting the parameters of an equal marriage
- **Wit**, quick repartee, intrigue, gossip, parallel plots
- The **farce**, comedy of manners, satire, comedies of **provincial** humour

So coming to talk

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about particular kind of genres of drama that existed in England during that time, the most important one was Restoration comedy.

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So Restoration comedy was no different from the kind of things that the Court wits promoted. It promoted amoral and stylized hedonism. It was confined to London. In that sense it was a very metropolitan kind of drama and literature. It had no relation or any kind of relatability to the provincial cultures and it was also not popular outside London. And we also find in most of these plays there is an universal kind of praise showered on the city of London and also the people who are from outside the city of London, they are also ridiculed. And there is also detestation of the countryside.

And we find in these plays at least most of these plays are portrayal of marriage as an institution quite boring and restrictive. And it also highlights and even celebrates the carnality, follies and vices which exist outside the institution of marriage. And there is also a celebration of adultery sexual attraction and also sexual conquest which was considered quite a commendable quality for a rake.

In terms of the technicalities there was also presence of set scenes which were quite parodied in the most of the plays of those times. The supreme example was that of proviso scene. A proviso scene included definite set of rules in order to facilitate the balanced relationship or a dialog through which a kind of setting of parameters was done in terms of having an equal marriage. So this was primarily a discussion between the couple in order to

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bring about certain kind of balance in their relationships. We find these sort of proviso scenes being part of most of the dominant Restoration comedies of those times.

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The other significant features included the quick wit repartee, intrigue; there was lot of local gossip also built into these plays. And plays also had very intricate parallel plots and this also was because these playwrights liked to challenge the courtly audience, the upper class elite audience. There was also an element of farce. We find traces of comedy of manners. There were social satire built in and we also notice that humor in the comedies were mostly of provincial nature. So it was more local and it failed to make sense outside the immediate

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+ The Big Five of Restoration Comedy

- George Etherege
- William Wycherley
- William Congreve
- George Farquhar – professional playwright
- Sir John Vanburgh

Court wits

circles.

Who were the most important people of the Restoration comedy? The Big Five of Restoration comedy were George Etherege and William Wycherley who were also court wits, William Congreve, George Farquhar and John Vanburgh. And George Farquhar was incidentally the only professional playwright. The others mostly wrote for their fashionable and friendly circles.

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+ George Etherege (1634-91)

- Themes of love and intrigue, vanity, amorous adventures
- **She Would If She Could**, 1688 – Lady Cockwood – an amorous lady who pursues the hero
 - Pepys' Diary: at least 1000 people were turned away for lack of adequate seats on the opening night
- **The Man of Mode** – 1676
 - Sir Fopling Futtler – the prototype of the 'dandy' who was to become popular on European stage later

Let us take a very brief look at each of these plays.

George Etherege, he engaged with the themes of love and intrigue and also of vanity and he also tried to build into his plot structure a lot of details related to amorous adventures of the protagonists. And one of this famous plays is titled, *She Would if She Could*, and this was staged in 1688 and it was a huge success. There was this particular lady protagonist, Lady Cockwood who was characterized as an amorous lady who pursues the hero. In Pepys' diary it was noted that at least 1000 people were turned away for lack of adequate seats on the opening night of this play *She Would if She Could*. So this was the kind of popularity that Restoration comedy enjoyed during that time.

And the another significant play of Etherege was *Man of Mode* in 1676, an earlier one. In this there is this particular character of Sir Fopling Flutter. This character is considered as the prototype of the dandy who was to become very popular in the European stage at the later point of time. In terms of the names of the characters used to, we find there are these interesting coinages most of the dramatists continued to use during the time. It was also considered as an instant hit in terms of these peculiar names that were given to the characters in the play.

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+ William Congreve

- *The Old Bachelor* (1693), *The Double Dealer* (1694), *Love for Love* (1695)
- Brilliant dialogues, reliance on set characters and themes, exemplary craft
 - Witty conversations almost overshadowing the movement of the plot
- *The Way of the World* (1700)
 - the dialogue between the couple Millamant and Mirabell – a good example of the 'proviso scene' – the theme of bargaining between the sexes prior to marriage
- Concern with form and dramatic structure than with theme
- Overdone and uni-dimensional characters
- Low characters and villains – the best portraits

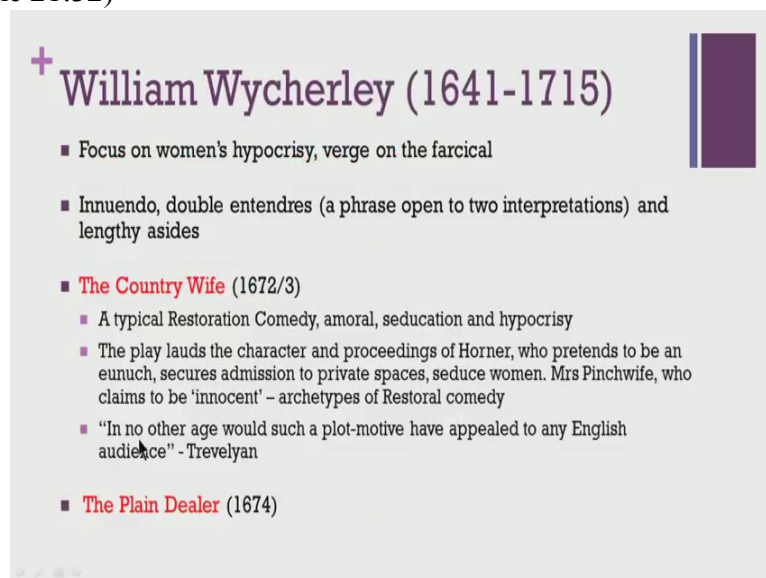
The second most important playwright of this period was William Congreve. His important plays were *The Old Bachelor*, *The Double Dealer* and *Love for Love*. And also the most successful one was *The Way of the World*. Most of his works, they were the, they included brilliant dialogs and he also relied on set characters and themes but in spite of these, predictability which was associated with most of his plays, he also displayed an exemplary

sense of dramatic craft. And there is also this critique against Congreve plays that the witty conversations in his works were so engaging that they almost overshadowed the movement of the plot as well.

The Way of the World was one of the successful plays of Congreve and also one of the most important plays of the period as well. Staged in 1700, it is about the love relationship between this couple Millamant and Mirabell. The dialog between this couple, it was considered as a very good example of the proviso scene which was dominant in the Restoration comedy. This was about the theme of bargaining between the sexes prior of marriage. This was hugely enjoyed at that point of time and continued to catch the fancy of people even at later point of time.

In most of his works, we find that Congreve was more concerned with form and dramatic structure than with theme and we also find his characters were overdone and unidimensional in nature. So they failed to appeal to a larger audience outside his circle or outside the Age in which this drama was popular. And apart from the many limitations that Congreve's plays had, we find that the portraits of villains and other lowly characters were more commendable than that of the protagonists in most of his

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+ William Wycherley (1641-1715)

- Focus on women's hypocrisy, verge on the farcical
- Innuendo, double entendres (a phrase open to two interpretations) and lengthy asides
- **The Country Wife (1672/3)**
 - A typical Restoration Comedy, amoral, seduction and hypocrisy
 - The play lauds the character and proceedings of Horner, who pretends to be an eunuch, secures admission to private spaces, seduce women. Mrs Pinchwife, who claims to be 'innocent' – archetypes of Restoral comedy
 - "In no other age would such a plot-motive have appealed to any English audience" - Trevelyan
- **The Plain Dealer (1674)**

works.

William Wycherley was perhaps the most noted in terms of dramatic genius and technique. Even Hudson makes a notable and worthy mention of Wycherley in his literary history. His poems mostly focused on women's hypocrisy and also it was this limitation that many of the portraits were on the verge of being a farce. His plays were considered unacceptable in terms of the kind of dialog and the kind of themes they included. It especially had a lot of innuendoes, lot of double-entendre. It was a phrase open to two interpretations, one for dominantly sexual in nature and there were also these lengthy asides which spoke on many things related to sexuality, about things which were taboo during those times and also about the relationship between men and women.

Country Wife was the most successful play of Wycherley. This was also considered, and it continues to be considered as the typical Restoration comedy which celebrated amoral activities. It spoke about seduction and hypocrisy as well. In this play *The Country Wife*, the particular character named Horner and his activities are lauded with a lot of humor and this play, this character who pretends to be a eunuch, he secures admission to private spaces where women are and he manages to seduce a lot of women. And this is considered as a commendable kind of quality and the play continued to celebrate this sort of quality, so to speak which was present in this protagonist. And there is also this portrayal of Mrs. Pinchwife who claims to be innocent but also falls as prey to the advances of this protagonist and also ends up cheating her husband.

And we find that most of these characters were archetypes in Restoration comedy and we find them in getting repeating in many of the plays later point as well. Talking of this play in particular, *The Country Wife*, Trevelyan makes this very interesting remark. In no other Age would such a plot motive would have appealed to any English audience. So at later point, many historians were even quite in awe over the fact that this sort of comedy and this sort of theme structure and plot structure one after the other, that it continued to enthrall an audience

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which was otherwise not in encouragement of such type of plot structure or such kind of dramatic themes. And at least this was opinion of most of the dominant historians and literary historians of a later point. The other significant work by Wycherley was *The Plain Dealer*.

And moving on let us take a

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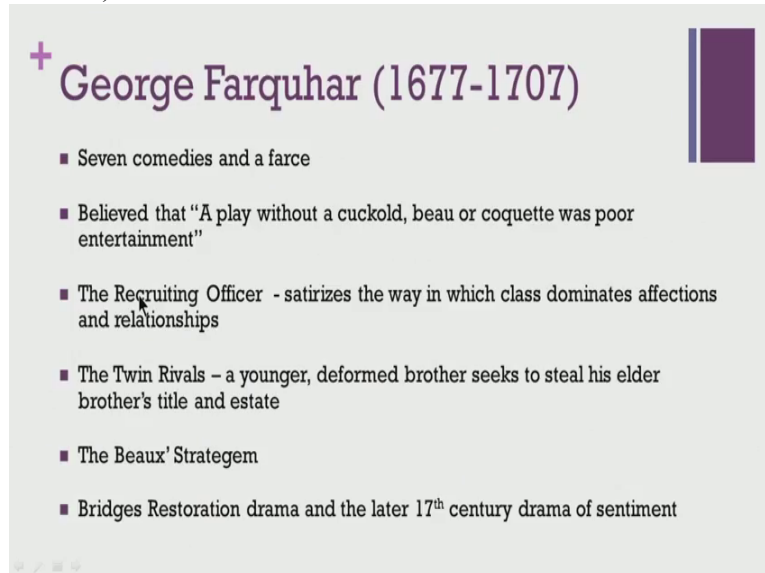
+ John Vanbrugh

- Reworked plays from the Spanish and French
- **The Relapse** (1696)
 - Lord Foppington – a charming portrait of a dandy
- **The Provok'd Wife** (1697)
- Rich characters, quick repartees, bawdy and crude wit, overwhelming cynicism, social evils and marital troubles
- Vanbrugh was singled out by Collier in his tract on the immorality of the stage

look at the dominant works of John Vanburgh. He was an important figure in the sense that he, most of the reworked plays from the Spanish plays and French plays, his significant plays were *The Relapse* and *The Provoked Wife*. His work had rich characters. It was also built with bawdy comedy, there was crude wit. There was also an overwhelming cynicism of all these kind of things which were happening around. And he also caricatured marital troubles in his play. In fact because of the bawdiness and the bold language which was part of

Vanburgh's plays we find that Jeremy Collier singly out Vanburgh in his treatise against the immorality of the stage and in that sense he also had a lot of public appeal during that time and also was quite an eyesore in the sight of many like Jeremy Collier.

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+ George Farquhar (1677-1707)

- Seven comedies and a farce
- Believed that "A play without a cuckold, beau or coquette was poor entertainment"
- The Recruiting Officer - satirizes the way in which class dominates affections and relationships
- The Twin Rivals - a younger, deformed brother seeks to steal his elder brother's title and estate
- The Beaux' Stratagem
- Bridges Restoration drama and the later 17th century drama of sentiment

George Farquhar, another significant writer of the times, he had written seven comedies and a farce. He also believed very staunchly that a play without a cuckold view or a coquette was poor entertainment. So we can almost imagine the kind of plot structure which he celebrated in most of his plays. His important works were The Recruiting Officer in which he satirizes the way in which class dominates over affections and even relationships and The Twin-Rivals in which a younger brother almost steals his older brother's title and estate and the other significant work was The Beaux' Stratagem. And we also find that his drama, it serves is a bridge between Restoration drama and the later seventeenth century drama of sentiment.

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Aphra Behn

- A successful playwright
- **The Dutch Lover, The Rover** – social comedies
- Criticised for her unfeminine themes and portraits
- Popular with theatre-goes
- The first woman to earn her living by writing for the theatre
- Sharp critiques of masculinity and power – pointed to the unequal education provided to women
- **The Widow Ranter** – the theme of colonization

And moving on, it is important to highlight the presence of Aphra Behn here as well. She was perhaps the only and more successful woman playwright of the times. Her important comedies were *The Dutch Lover* and *The Rover*. She was criticized for her unfeminine themes and portraits and obviously for her unfeminine kind of lifestyle and unconventional lifestyle that she led during those times. Aphra Behn was very popular with the theater enthusiasts of those times and she was incidentally the first woman to earn her life by writing for the theater, in that sense, the first professional successful playwright of those times.

And in her plays there was a lot of sharp critiques of masculinity and power. She also pointed, highlighted the unequal education opportunities which women received during that Age. In her play, *The Widow Ranter*, we find the theme of colonization coming back just like her fiction *Oroonoko* which we took a look at in the previous session.

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So she continued to be a strong critique of the colonization and also about the patriarchal system of the period and we also find a sense of seriousness is getting built into her comedies unlike the Restoration comedy written mostly by the male dramatists.

If we look

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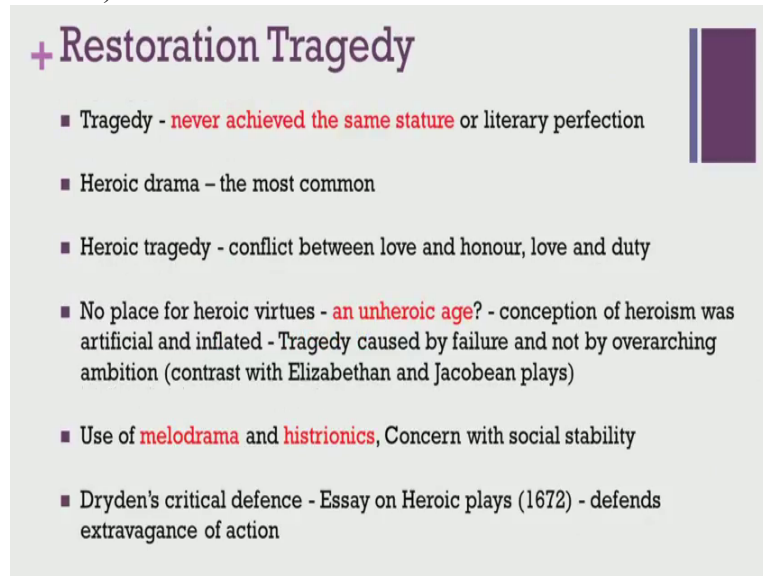
A presentation slide with a light gray background and a purple vertical bar on the right. The title 'Restoration Tragedy' is in a purple serif font, preceded by a purple plus sign. Below the title is a list of six bullet points, each starting with a small purple square. The text is in a black sans-serif font. A mouse cursor is visible over the text 'Nathaniel Lee, Thomas Otway'.

- Tragedy - equally artificial
- Not fashionable, the wealthy elites loved comedies
- Dryden - *All for Love* (based on Antony and Cleopatra)
- Congreve - *The Mourning Bride*
- Nathaniel Lee, Thomas Otway
- Works done for stage - little value as literature

at Restoration tragedy, it was equally artificial and also it was not very fashionable because the wealthy elites did not enjoy the tragedy much. They enjoyed the comedy of the times. And the important works were Dryden's All for Love based on Anthony and Cleopatra and Congreve's The Mourning Bride. We also find couple of writers such as Nathaniel Lee, Thomas Otway etc also staging tragedies over there but they were not hugely popular and

most of these works, they were primarily done for the stage and they had very little value as literature. We do not even find them getting adequate attention at a later

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+ Restoration Tragedy

- Tragedy - **never achieved the same stature** or literary perfection
- Heroic drama – the most common
- Heroic tragedy - conflict between love and honour, love and duty
- No place for heroic virtues - **an unheroic age?** - conception of heroism was artificial and inflated - Tragedy caused by failure and not by overarching ambition (contrast with Elizabethan and Jacobean plays)
- Use of **melodrama** and **histrionics**, Concern with social stability
- Dryden's critical defence - Essay on Heroic plays (1672) - defends extravagance of action

point.

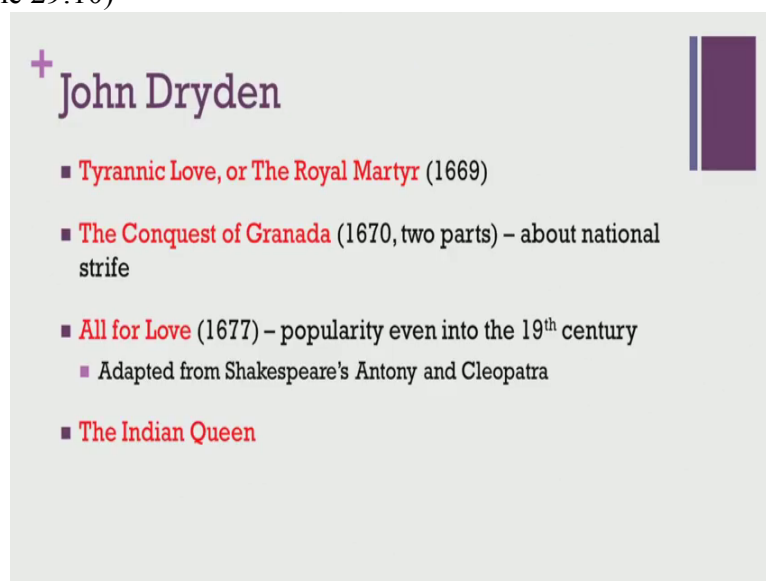
And looking at the elements of Restoration tragedy, it is important to note that it never achieved the same stature or literary perfection as that of Restoration comedy. It was not popular then. It never regained popularity at later point either. Heroic drama was the most common kind of representation during those times and heroic tragedy as it was depicted in the Restoration period, it was primarily the conflict between love and honor or between love and duty. And we also note that there was no place for heroic virtues given the kind of decadence of the times and also about the, the prolific kind of presence of celebration of vice in the Restoration comedy of those times. We find that there was no place for heroic virtues at all in the tragedy. Some critics even talk about this Age as an unheroic Age and the concept of heroism itself was very limited and artificial and it was also quite inflated and exaggerated kind of representation.

Tragedy unlike the Elizabethan and Jacobean representation, tragedy in Restoration drama was the result of failure and not the result of over-arching ambition. We also find excessive use of melodrama and histrionics taking a dominant place in the tragedy of the Restoration times. There was also a limited concern with social stability which do not get much attention

due to the flawed dramatic structure or due to the unimpressive kind of presentation of this drama.

We find Dryden coming up with this particular essay on heroic plays in order to defend the tragedies written during those times, he also defended the extravagance of action in these works. But apart from the, the kind of effective defense it could put up during those times, Dryden's work was more noted as notable work of literary criticism and major contribution towards the growth of literary criticism at later point of

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The slide features a purple plus sign icon to the left of the title 'John Dryden'. To the right of the title is a vertical purple bar. Below the title is a bulleted list of works:

- **Tyrannic Love, or The Royal Martyr** (1669)
- **The Conquest of Granada** (1670, two parts) – about national strife
- **All for Love** (1677) – popularity even into the 19th century
 - Adapted from Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra
- **The Indian Queen**

time.

Perhaps the most important dramatist of Restoration tragedy was Dryden himself. He composed quite a few plays of tragedy which were also considered important even at a later point of time. Tyrannic Love, or the Royal Martyr in 1669 and Conquest of Granada which had two parts. It was also about a national strife that England had encountered during those times. All for Love is perhaps the most successful of his writings and also perhaps the most successful tragedy of those times. This was adapted from Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. Its popularity continued even into the nineteenth century. The other important tragedy that he produced was the Indian Queen.

The other

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+ Major playwrights

- **Thomas Otway** – The Orphan (1680), Venice Preserved (1682)
- **Nicholas Rowe** – 7 tragedies – **The Ambitious Stepmother** (1700), **Tamerlane** (1701), **The Fair Penitent** (1703)
 - Models for Samuel Richardson's Lovelace in *Clarissa* and Henry Fielding's Miss Mathews in *Amelia*
 - She-tragedies – **Jane Shore** (1714) and **Lady Jane** (1715) – vivid descriptions of female distress
- **Nathaniel Lee** – collaborated with Dryden

significant playwrights of the period who focused more on tragedy were Thomas Otway. His works included *The Orphan* and *Venice Preserved*. Nicholas Rowe wrote seven tragedies altogether including *Ambitious Stepmother*, *Tamerlane* and *The Fair Penitent*. And some of his characters are also said to have inspired the later novelists particularly Samuel Richardson's character of Lovelace in his novel *Clarissa* and Henry Fielding's Miss Mathews in his novel *Amelia*, they are said to have inspired by some of the characters portrayed by Nicholas Rove. Rove also had particular set of writings later termed as she-tragedies. The two prominent of them were *Jane Shore* and *Lady Jane*. It included vivid descriptions of female distress. The popularity and significance of these plays were however heavily overshadowed by the presence of the Restoration comedy which was enjoyed by the people and also promoted hugely by the court of Charles Second. Nathaniel Lee was another significant writer who also had collaborated with Dryden.

With this we

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come to almost the end of the session. It is also the time to make a quick evaluation of Restoration drama and also

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A presentation slide with a light gray background. At the top left, there is a purple plus sign followed by the text '+ And then,'. On the right side, there is a vertical purple bar. The slide contains a bulleted list of events:

- Decline – early decades of the 18th century
- People turned to fictional prose
- Attacks on the 'immorality' of the stage increased
- The Theatre Licensing Act of 1737
 - The Lord Chamberlain, the official government censor
- To grant or refuse license to any play on religious, moral or political grounds

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figure out what happened after that. This sort of the celebration of the profligacy and vice of the time, it also is a kind of an acceptability that Restoration comedy had. It was only the beginning of the decline which went on until about the early eighteenth century. And we also find that during this period the people's attention turned to fictional prose rather than drama and also many feel that perhaps this sort of repetitiveness in theme and plot and also this predictability in terms of comedy, people were also quite fed up with these sort of repeated performances.

And the attack on the immorality of the stage, it also had a profound influence on the people and we also find them continually attacking the Restoration comedy which was prevalent. And another important point was that since it was mostly the metropolitan kind of literature and without any kind of provincial element built into it, we do not find the whole of England supporting these sort of plays which were prominent in Restoration drama. In fact plays were performed, let me reiterate, only in London and rest of England was completely left out from this form of drama. So in that sense it could not even be called as a national kind of literature or a national kind of drama during the Restoration period.

With the Theatre Licensing Act of 1737 we also find that this sort of dramatic activity also comes to an end. Lord Chamberlain who was appointed as the official government censor, he came up with this Act and also had the power to grant or refuse license to any play on religious, moral or political grounds.

So with this we also find Restoration drama in certain ways, particularly Restoration comedy coming to an end. But however it is of supreme importance to note the kind of dramatic activity which happened after the Restoration and particularly after the reopening of the theaters during the time of the Restoration. So with this we come to an end of this session. Thank you for listening

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and we look forward to seeing you in the next session.