

THE LITERARY DEVELOPMENT OF POETIC DRAMA IN THE WORKS OF ENGLISH POETS OF THE 20TH CENTURY (EXAMPLES FROM T.S.ELIOT AND W.B.YEATS WORKS)

Ikramova Aziza

Associate professor,

Bukhara State pedagogical Institute

Bahodirova Sabina Baxtiyor qizi

Master's student of Asian International University

Annotatsion: Poetic drama, or verse drama, experienced a significant revival in the 20th century, particularly through the works of T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats. Both poets sought to reinvigorate the tradition of poetic drama, drawing inspiration from classical, medieval, and Renaissance traditions while adapting it to modern themes and concerns.

Introduction

Poetic drama, a form of theatre in which dialogue is written in verse, has a long tradition in English literature, dating back to the works of Shakespeare and the Elizabethan playwrights. However, with the rise of realism and naturalism in the 19th century, poetic drama declined in popularity. In the 20th century, poets such as W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot sought to revive and redefine the form, adapting it to modern sensibilities while maintaining its lyrical and philosophical depth. Their contributions significantly shaped the development of poetic drama, blending classical influences with contemporary themes.

The poetic drama is a great achievement of the modern age. It is a mixture of high seriousness and colloquial element. It is the combination of the tradition and the experiment and of the ancient and the new. It is symbolic and difficult. Its verse form is blank verse or free verse. In short, its vehicle is verse, its mechanism is imagery, its substance is myth and its binding force is musical pattern.

Victorian poets attended poetic drama but they could not impart to it real dramatic excellence because the conditions of the stage were not favourable for the stage. It could not be produced either in the 18th century which was an age of great prose writers, or in the 19th century, which was an age of great poets. Only there were signs of the rebirth of poetic drama by 1920 but the atmosphere in which realistic and naturalistic drama prospered was not congenial to the growth and development of poetic drama.

English poetic drama in the present century arose as a reaction to the naturalistic prose drama of Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy. By the second decade of the century, this prose drama had reached a dead end. On the whole, this prose drama, in a decadent stage after the best work of Shaw, had failed to grasp the depth, tension and complexity of contemporary life.

Irish dramatists, like W.B. Yeats, J.M. Synge, Sean O'Casey, also played a significant part in the moment for the revival of verse play. Other great names in the revival movement are John Masefield, Christopher Isherwood, W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, and Christopher Fry.

At the Abbey theatre W. B. Yeats endeavoured to revive poetic drama, but his genius was lacking the essential qualities of a dramatist. It was T. S. Eliot who firmly established the tradition of poetic drama in the 20th century. The remarkable element of poetic drama is that these dramas were influenced by the religious beliefs or social attitudes of their authors.

W.B. Yeats was against realistic problem play and he was promoted to reconstruct contemporary life through the symbols of ancient folklore and the mythology of Ireland. In order to make the audience concentrate on poetry Yeats went back to the simplicity of Greek theatre and Shakespearean theatre. His early plays *The Countess Cathleen* and *The Land of Heart's Desire* deal with the realisation of the spiritual theme. In his most successful play *On Baile's Strand* Yeats achieves an end for which all important drama in this in the century has sought the interpretation of different levels of reality in an integral and controlled structure. His other plays too are rich in poetical intensity. However, it is T.S. Eliot who, both through his theory and practice of poetic drama, has achieved considerable success in establishing tradition of poetic plays in the 20th century. He had a full understanding of the nature of poetic drama, the difference between verse drama and prose drama, the causes of the failure of 19th century verse dramatists, the problem, technical and otherwise, which face a writer of verse plays in the modern age.

His verse-plays are not concerned with socio-economic problems; they are concerned not with the outer, but with the inner emotional and psychic realities. Thus the core of his first play, *Murder in the Cathedral*, is the psychic struggle of the hero with the temptations offered to him, and that of *The Family Reunion* the psychological guilt-complex of Harry, the hero of the play; *The Cocktail Party* is a study in the awareness of personal inadequacies of married life in the modern context. In these plays, he has also demonstrated the relevance of religion to all human activity. They are all Christian plays, the purpose of the dramatist being, "to train people to be able to think in Christian categories."

Christopher Fry's *The Lady is Not for Burning* is an important experiment in verse technique. it is an excellent comedy. Christopher Fry is a poetic dramatist of originality and daring who has restored to English drama something of the verbal sprightliness and the relish of the exploratory and suggestive use of language that we get in the Elizabethans.

His another poetic play *Venus Observed* is written in simple poetic language and it is an interesting comedy.

Though poetic drama has been written time to time through the various ages of English Literature but it is only during the twentieth century that poetic drama established itself as an important dramatic form.

It's hard to overstate just how pivotal a figure in English literature William Butler Yeats was – and remains.

"Yeats matters today in the way that Shakespeare or Jonson or Dickinson matter," says the critic and poet James Longenbach. "He's inseparable from what we understand the medium of the English language is capable of producing on the page." Authors from Chinua Achebe to Joan Didion have found conceptually perfect titles – *Things Fall Apart* and *Slouching Toward Bethlehem* – in his memorable lines. TS Eliot called Yeats "one of those few whose history is the history of their own time, who are a part of the consciousness of an age which cannot be understood without them".

Born on 13 June 1865 in Ireland and raised in London in his painter father's bohemian circle, Yeats was a traditionalist who wrote sonnets for half a century. His knowledge of English form, Irish literature and Celtic mythology – inspired in part by summers at his mother's home in County Sligo in the west of Ireland – resulted in an inspired body of work. If he had stopped at the end of the 19th Century he would have an impressive collection of nostalgic, pastoral poetry – but thankfully he didn't, for his work in the 20th Century helped usher in modernism – and create a new language to understand modernity's terror and beauty. It is this contribution that continues to resonate with poets today.

Influences and Aims

Yeats was deeply influenced by Irish mythology, folklore, and the aesthetic principles of the Symbolist movement. He aimed to create a poetic theatre that combined lyrical beauty with mystical and nationalistic themes. His vision was largely shaped by his involvement with the Irish Literary Revival and the Abbey Theatre, which he co-founded in 1904.

Key Works

- **"The Countess Cathleen" (1892, revised 1911)** – One of Yeats's earliest plays, this work explores themes of sacrifice and morality, using verse to heighten its dramatic intensity.
- **"The Land of Heart's Desire" (1894)** – A short poetic play dealing with Irish folklore and supernatural elements.
- **"Cathleen ni Houlihan" (1902)** – A symbolic play that portrays Ireland as a mythical old woman urging young men to sacrifice themselves for national independence.
- **"At the Hawk's Well" (1916)** – A Noh-inspired poetic drama that reflects Yeats's interest in Japanese theatre, combining stylized movement, chant-like dialogue, and mythical storytelling.
- **"The Death of Cuchulain" (1939)** – A play based on Irish mythology, emphasizing heroism and fate through poetic language.

Like all great art, Yeats' work refreshes itself with each generation – and it is with poets troubled by war and civic dissent that Yeats continues to resonate most strongly. "He was political, concerned about his country and the cost of its freedoms, the ones who had paid the price of it becoming a country," says the poet Tess Gallagher, who first read Yeats during the Vietnam War.

The poet Honor Moore points to *The Second Coming* as a poem read with new comprehension in the chaotic year 1968. "He was writing in the wake of World War I (without knowing there would be a second one)," she notes via email. "I and many others who were in their early 20s then were chilled to the bone by the accuracy of these lines: 'the best lack all conviction/while the worst are full of passionate intensity'. An indescribable and terrifying beast, its 'gaze blank and pitiless as the sun'."

Yeats once said that the purpose of art is "to hold in a single thought reality and justice," says the poet Tom Sleight, whose new collection, *Station Zed*, draws upon his experiences as a journalist in Lebanon, Somalia, Iraq and Libya. "You read something like that, and apply it to the hard facts of a country like Iraq, and it inoculates you against all kinds of emotional fol-de-rol."

Characteristics of Yeats's Poetic Drama

- **Symbolism and Mythology:** Yeats's plays often use mythical figures and symbolic landscapes to explore themes of destiny, heroism, and transformation.
- **Influence of Japanese Noh Theatre:** He adopted stylized movements, masks, and musical elements to create a mystical and ritualistic atmosphere.
- **Chorus and Incantatory Language:** His use of choric elements and incantatory rhythms gives his plays a lyrical and meditative quality.
- **Nationalism and Irish Identity:** Many of his works address Irish history, culture, and independence.

Influences and Aims

T.S. Eliot sought to revive poetic drama within a modern context, drawing inspiration from Greek tragedy, medieval religious drama, and Elizabethan verse drama. Unlike Yeats, who was more focused on myth and symbolism, Eliot aimed to integrate poetic dialogue into contemporary settings while addressing philosophical and religious themes.

Key Works

- **"Murder in the Cathedral" (1935)** – A verse drama based on the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, blending historical narrative with religious and existential concerns. The choral passages are reminiscent of Greek tragedy.
- **"The Family Reunion" (1939)** – A modern adaptation of Aeschylus's "The Oresteia," using poetic dialogue to explore guilt, redemption, and psychological turmoil.
- **"The Cocktail Party" (1949)** – A poetic drama influenced by Euripides's "Alcestis," blending comedy, realism, and philosophical depth.
- **"The Confidential Clerk" (1953) and "The Elder Statesman" (1958)** – Later works that explore personal identity, social duty, and spiritual redemption in poetic form.

Characteristics of Eliot's Poetic Drama

- **Modern Themes with Classical Structures:** He combined contemporary settings with classical dramatic structures, such as Greek tragedy and medieval morality plays.
- **Use of Poetic Dialogue in Natural Speech:** Eliot experimented with verse that mimicked natural speech patterns while retaining poetic intensity.
- **Religious and Philosophical Depth:** His plays often explore themes of faith, redemption, and existential crisis.
- **Chorus and Ritualistic Elements:** Like Yeats, Eliot used choral interludes and ritualistic sequences to enhance the poetic and dramatic effect.

Conclusion

Both Yeats and Eliot played crucial roles in the development of 20th-century poetic drama. Yeats infused his works with Irish mythology, symbolism, and ritualistic elements, while Eliot modernized poetic drama by integrating it with contemporary issues and philosophical depth.

Their contributions helped to revive verse drama in an era dominated by prose theatre, leaving a lasting impact on modern drama and poetry.

References

1. Икромова, С. А. (2024). ЭМОЦИОНАЛЬНЫЕ ОПЫТЫ ЧЕЛОВЕКА И ПРОЦЕСС НИМИ УПРАВЛЕНИЯ. Introduction of new innovative technologies in education of pedagogy and psychology, 1(3), 14-19.
2. Икромова, С. А. (2024). ПОВЕДЕНИЕ ЧЕЛОВЕКА И ВНУТРЕННЯЯ МОТИВАЦИЯ. Introduction of new innovative technologies in education of pedagogy and psychology, 1(3), 8-13.
3. Икромова, С. А. (2024). ОСНОВЫ ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКОГО ЗДОРОВЬЯ. New modern researchers: modern proposals and solutions, 1(2), 22-28.
4. Икромова, С. А. (2024). ГРУППЫ И СОЦИАЛЬНОЕ ВЛИЯНИЕ ЛЮДЕЙ В СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ СРЕДЕ R. Introduction of new innovative technologies in education of pedagogy and psychology, 1(3), 32-38.
5. Икромова, С. А. (2024). ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ РЕАБИЛИТАЦИЯ, ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ ПОДДЕРЖКА И ВОССТАНОВИТЕЛЬНЫЕ ПРОЦЕССЫ. New modern researchers: modern proposals and solutions, 1(2), 56-62.
6. Икромова, С. А. (2024). ПСИХОЛОГИЯ ЛИЧНОСТИ И ВНУТРЕННИЙ МИР ЧЕЛОВЕКА. Introduction of new innovative technologies in education of pedagogy and psychology, 1(3), 53-58.