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Identify the various elements techniques and literary devices in drama slideshare

Twentieth Century British Drama Click on Picture to See Original “Over time the desire to unsettle, to shock, even to alienate the audience became one hallmark of modern drama.” (Greenblatt 5) Background Twentieth Century British theatre is commonly believed to have started in Dublin, Ireland with the foundation of the Irish Literary Theater by William B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J.M. Synge. (Greenblatt 1843) Their purpose was to provide a specifically Celtic and Irish venue that produced works that “stage[d] the deeper emotions of Ireland.” (The Abbey’s) The playwrights of the Irish Literary Theater (which later became the Abbey Theater, as it is known today) were part of the literary revival and included: Sean O’Casey, J.M. Synge, W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn, to name a few. In England the well-made play genre was being rejected and replaced with actors and directors who were committed to bringing both reform and a serious audience to the theatre by appealing to the younger, socially conscious and politically alert crowd. In the plays by George Bernard Shaw, Harley Granville Barker, W. Somerset Maugham, and John Galsworthy, characters emulated this new crowd, satirized the well-made play characters, and created new stereotypes and new standards. (Chothia) The early twentieth century denoted the split between ‘frocks and frills’ drama and serious works, following in the footsteps of many other European countries. “In Britain the impact of these continental innovations was delayed by a conservative theatre establishment until the late 1950s and 1960s when they converged with the counter-cultural revolution to transform the nature of English language theatre.” The West End, England’s Broadway, tended to produce the (Greenblatt 1844) musical comedies and well-made plays, while smaller theatres and Irish venues took a new direction. The new direction was political, satirical, and rebellious. Common themes in the new early 20th century drama were political, reflecting the unease or rebellion of the workers against the state, philosophical, delving into the who and why of human life and existence, and revolutionary, exploring the themes of colonization and loss of territory. They explored common societal business practices (conditions of factories), new political ideologies (socialism), or the rise of a repressed sector of the population (women).(Chothia) Industrialization also had an impact on Twentieth century drama, resulting in plays lamenting the alienation of humans in an increasingly mechanical world. Not only did Industrialization result in alienation; so did the wars. Between the wars, two types of theatre reined. In the West End, the middle class attended popular, conservative theatre dominated by Noël Coward and G.B. Shaw. “Commercial theatre thrived and at Drury Lane large budget musicals by Ivor Novello and Noel Coward used huge sets, extravagant costumes and large casts to create spectacular productions.” (West End) After the wars, taboos were broken and new writers, directors, and actors emerged with different views. Many played with the idea of reality, some were radically political, others shunned naturalism and questioned the legitimacy of previously unassailable beliefs. (Chothia) Towards the end of the century, the term ‘theatre of exorcism’ came into use due to the amount of plays conjuring the past in order to confront and accept it. Playwrights towards the end of the century count among their numbers: Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Brian Friel, Caryl Churchill, and Tom Stoppard. The last act of the century was a turn back towards realism as well as the founding of Europe’s first children’s cultural center. For a year-by-year breakdown between 1895 and 1937, please click here. Trends Realism and Myth Sigmund Freud inspired an interest in myth and dreams as playwrights became familiar with his studies of psychoanalysis. Along with the help of Carl Jung, the two psychiatrists influenced playwrights to incorporate myths into their plays. This integration allowed for new opportunities for playwrights to increase the boundaries of realism within their writing. As playwrights started to use myths in their writing, a “poetic form of realism” was created. This form of realism deals with truths that are widespread amongst all humans, bolstered by Carl Jung’s idea of the collective unconscious. Poetic Realism Much of the poetic realism that was written during the beginning of the twentieth century focused on the portrayals of Irish peasant life. John Millington Synge, W.B. Yeats, and Lady Gregory were but a few writers to use poetic realism. Their portrayal of peasant life was often unappealing and many audiences reacted cruelly. Many plays that are poetically realistic often have unpleasant themes running through them, such as lust between a son and his step-mother or the murder of a baby to “prove” love. These plays used myths as a surrogate for real life in order to allow the audience to live the unpleasant plot without completely connecting to it. Women The female characters progressed from the downtrodden, useless woman to an empowered, emancipated woman. They were used to to pose subversive questions about the social order. Many female characters portray the author’s masculine attitudes about women and their place in society. As time passed, though, females began gain empowerment. G.B. Shaw became one of the first English playwrights to follow Ibsen’s influence and create roles of real women. Mrs. Warren, Major Barbara, and Pygmalion all have strong female leads. Women first started voting in 1918. Later in the century, females (and males) were both subjected to the alienation of society and routinely were not given names to suggest to the audience the character’s worth within the play. Political Theatre and War Political theatre uses the theatre to represent “how a social or political order uses its power to ‘represent’ others coercively.” It uses live performances and often shows the power of politics through “demeaning and limiting” prejudices. Political theatre often represents many different types of groups that are often stereotyped – “women, gay men, lesbians, ethnic and racial groups, [and] the poor.” Political theatre is used to express one’s political ideas. Agitprop, a popular form of political theatre, even had its roots in the 1930s women’s rights movement. Propaganda played a big role in political theater, whether it be in support of a war or in opposition of political schemes, theater played a big role in influencing the public. The wars also affected the early theatre of the twentieth century. The consternation before WWI produced the Dada movement, the predecessor to Surrealism and Expressionism. Types of Modern Drama Realism Realism, in theater, was meant to be a direct observation of human behavior. It began as a way to make theater more useful to society, a way to hold a mirror up to society. Because of this thrust towards the “real” playwrights started using more contemporary settings, backgrounds and characters. Where plays in the past had, for the most part, used mythological or stereotypical characters, now they involved the lower class, the poor, the rich; they involved all genders, classes and races. One of the main contributors to this style was Henrik Ibsen. Social Realism Social Realism began showing up in plays during the 1930s. This realism had a political conscience behind it because the world was in a depression. These plays painted a harsh picture of rural poverty. The drama began to aim at showing governments the penalties of unrestrained capitalism and the depressions that lax economies created. One of the main contributors to this style was G.B. Shaw. Avant Garde Theatre “Dramatic truth couldn’t be found in the tangibleness of realistic drama, but in symbols, images, legends, myths, fantasies, and dreams” (Klaus) Absurdist Drama Absurdist Drama was existentialist theatre which put a direct perception of a mode of being above all abstract considerations. It was also essentially a poetic, lyrical theatre for the expression of intuitions of being through movement, situations and concrete imagery. Language was generally downplayed. (Barnet) Symbolism, Dadaism and their offspring, Surrealism, Theatre of Cruelty, and Expressionism all fall into this category. Dadaism Dadaism, or Dada, was a reaction against WWI. Like many of the movements, Dada included writing, painting and poetry as well as theatre. Many Dadaists wrote manifestos detailing their beliefs, which normally outlined their disgust in colonialism and nationalism and tried to be the opposite of the the current aesthetics and values. The more Dada offended, the better. It was considered to be (by Dadaists), the ‘anti-art’. It rejected the values of society and turned everything on its head, preferring to disgust and offend. Symbolism/Aestheticism In England, Symbolism was also known as Aestheticism. A very stylized format of drama, wherein dreams and fantasies were common plot devices, Aestheticism was used by numerous playwrights from Yeats to Pinter. The staging was highly stylized, usually using minimal set pieces and vague blocking. While the playwrights who could be considered Aestheticists lived and worked at the beginning of the century, it influenced all of the following styles. Surrealism Like Aestheticism, Surrealism has its base in the mystical. It developed the physicality of theatre and downplayed words, hoping to influence its audiences through action. Other common characteristics of surreal plays are unexpected comparisons and surprise. The most famous British playwright in the 20s surrealist style is Samuel Beckett. Theatre of Cruelty is a subset of surrealism and was motivated by an idea of Antonin Artaud. It argues the idea that theatre is a “representational medium” and tried to bring current ideas and experiences to the audience through participation and “ritualistic theater experiments.” Artaud thought that theatre should present and represent equally. This type of theatre relies deeply on metaphors and rarely included a description of how it could be performed. Expressionism The term ‘Expressionism’ was first coined in Germany in 1911. (Michaelides) Expressionism also had its hey-day during the 20s although it had two distinct branches. The branches had characters speaking in short, direct sentences or in long, lyrical expanses. This type of theatre usually did not name the characters and spend much time lamenting the present and warning against the future. Spiritual awakenings and episodic structures were also fairly common. Epic Theatre Epic theater was created by Bertold Brecht who rejected realistic theatre. He found that such plays were too picture-perfect. Epic Theatre is based on Greek Epic poetry. There are dramatic illusions such as “stark, harsh lighting, blank stages, placards announcing changes of scenes, bands playing music onstage, and long, discomfiting pauses” (Jacobus). Brecht believed that drama should be made within its audiences and he thought that Epic Theatre drama would reinforce the realities that people were facing rather than challenge them. Epic Theatre helped to preserve the social issues that they portrayed. Physical Advances To hear Yale University’s Maynard Mack describe some differences between Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre and today’s theatre, click HERE . Cylindrical-shaped Globe Theatre Architecture In the late nineteenth century, early twentieth century, theatre architecture changed from hosting as many audience members as possible without regarding their needs to creating better acoustical, visual, and spatial arrangements for both actors and audience members. Whereas before, theatres were cylindrical shaped, in the twentieth century fan-shaped auditoriums were favored. Audiences liked them because of Fan-shaped Olivier Theatre the clear sight-lines and favorable acoustics and actors liked them because the natural style of acting that was becoming more popular was conducive to smaller venues. (Klaus) There was also a renewed interest in the earlier forms of staging such as the thrust and arena stages (theatre-in-the-round). The theatre that most audiences are used to are like the pictured Olivier Theate. Everyone has basically the same view of the stage and the stage itself is viewed through the Proscenium arch, which acts as a picture frame surrounding the stage and framing the play. The Proscenium arch may be anything from a gilded, brightly lit masterpiece surrounding the curtain at the beginning of a show to the simple black walls preventing you from seeing into the wings of the theatre. In a Proscenium theatre, the action takes place either behind the Proscenium or slightly in front of it, on what is known as the apron of a stage. (The piece closest to the audience and which the curtain generally does not hide.) In a thrust theatre, the action takes place almost completely in front of the ‘Proscenium arch’, if indeed there is one. The audience is seated on three sides of the stage and many of these types of theatres make great use of entrances and exits by the hallways through the audience. An arena stage has audience seating on all four sides and has four entrances/exits called vomitoria. (from the Latin ‘vomitorium’ meaning (generally): [an audience] spews forth from them). In today’s American culture, arena stages (and vomitoria) are most commonly found as sports arena. Found Space is another recycled theatrical convention. The term ‘Found Space’ refers to streets, personal homes, a grocery store, anywhere that is not specifically designated as a theatre. Set The set in a theatre is the background upon which the story is told. It can be anything from a very detailed box set (explained below) to absolutely nothing. The set can be physical platforms and walls or it can be projections on sheets. The box set, or three walls designed to look like the interior of a house, complete with doors, windows and furniture, figured prominently in most, if not all, of the plays performed in the modern realistic tradition at the beginning of the 20th Century. (Klaus) Lighting Before the invention of the electric light bulb in 1879, theatres used either gas or carbon arc lamps. Both gas and carbon arc lamps were 1990 Light Board Example prone to fires. Numerous theatres had switched to the carbon arc lamp during the 1840s, but since the concept of the arc lamp is to send voltage through the open air, there was still a high chance of fire. The Savoy in London was the first public building to operate completely on electricity. In 1882, a year after the Savoy opened, the Munich Exposition displayed an electrified theatre, marking the beginning of a general change-over to electricity-lit theatres. Existing theatres that already had gas lines repurposed them by threading wires through the old gas lines and inserting a row of light bulbs in front of the gas jets. Unfortunately, electricity had quite a few drawbacks. The set designers or scenographers (combination set designer/costume designer) The Colonial’s original dimmer, photo courtesy of K Bilotti did not adapt to the new medium, creating sets that were unsuited to electric light placement. A second drawback was that electricity itself was very dangerous and electricians were hard to find. It might not be as dangerous as gas, but there was still the chance of fire. The front boards, also known as control panels (see above), were live, with handles that could be in an ‘on’ or ‘off’ position. The ‘on’ position did not have protection of any sort, and if the operator was not careful, he or she could die. In the photo to the left, technology had advanced enough for fuses. The third drawback to electricity was that it required a lot of power. Theatres often had to own the generators powering their theatres. Gordon Craig, a British actor, director,producer, and scenic designer made invaluable contributions to lighting. Instead of putting most of his lights at the foot of the stage (known as footlights or floaters), he hung lighting instruments above the stage. He, along with Adolphe Appia of Switzerland, also realized the dramatic potential of lighting, playing with color and form. Appia also established the first goals of stage lighting in his books: La Mise en scène du drame Wagnérien or The Staging of the Wagnerian Drama and L’Oeuvre d’art vivant (1921) or The Living Work of Art. (Adolphe) (1895) An American named Jean Rosenthal created the post of ‘lighting designer’ within the theatre world. Before her career in the 1950s, either the master electrician or the set designer would light the play. After her integral designs with the Martha Graham Dance Company and on Broadway, the position of Lighting Designer was added to the production staff. Many designers today credit her with specific lighting techniques and lovingly refer to her as the Mother of Stage Lighting. (Wild) Advances on the Continent and their Impact on British Drama Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen’s plays were first translated and performed in England in London, 1888. His startling Real-ist drama jumpstarted modern British drama. “His… serious drama based on moral and social issues hung over what has been called ‘the minority theatre [the ‘Off-Broadway of England]’” (Smart). Ibsen and Frenchman André Antoine pioneered the era of naturalistic drama that later snuck into England through writers in the early 20th Century. In Germany after the Franco-Prussian War, Georg II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, became the first modern director. He enjoyed plays so much that he built a stage, hired actors, had scripts written, and (because he financed it) told everyone what they should do. His productions eventually became the Meiningen Ensemble and toured Europe and England extensively, profoundly altering the actor/director, manger/director or writer/director mindset of the past. In Russia, Constantin Stanislavski organized the ideas of the Duke of Saxe Meiningen and of André Antoine into the Stanislavski Method of acting. Stanislavski brought the Eastern belief in dedication to the trade (some Japanese actors spend 30 years developing their craft (Worthen)) to the Western world. The Stanislavski Method states that the actor’s primary goal is to be believed. It tells the actor that s/he must use his or her own memories to evoke emotions. The Western world accepted this view and used this method to teach it’s actors for many 20th Century realist actors, although towards the 1990s this method has fallen out of vogue.(American, Sawoski) Antonin Artaud was a contemporary of Samuel Beckett’s. He created what is known as the Theatre of Cruelty. British Playwrights in the Twentieth Century Back to The Twentieth Century References The Abbey’s Cultural Role and Value. Abbey Theatre. Web. 15 May 2010. “Adolphe Appia.” Encyclopædia Britannica. 2010. 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