

E-CONTENT

by

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Poetic Drama

The poetic drama is a literary revolution, a revival of traditional style of drama writing which became so famous during the modern age that it is considered to be one of the greatest literary achievement of English literature of the age. It is unique in its own way as it amalgamates high seriousness with colloquial element. It is an artistic combination of tradition and the experiment and of the ancient and the new. It is symbolic and thus it sometimes seems incomprehensible.

The verse form that is usually practised to write a poetic drama is blank verse or free verse. As these dramas are written in verse form, we find a free use of imagery, their subject matters are usually mythical and their aestheticism lies in the musical pattern that dominates the plot and theme of the drama.

While studying Tragedy we have already discussed that during the 18th and the 19th century dramas were written in prose. Although Poetic drama revived in 1920s but as most of the dramatists of this period were interested in realistic drama it could not capture the centre stage. There came a change with the passage of time.

The followers of Ibsen were overshadowed by the writings of W.B. Yeats who at the Abbey Theatre staged poetic drama. (oxfordscholarship.com) It was T.S. Eliot who firmly established this genre of literature as a prominent tool of expression. He stated that the craving for poetic

drama is permanent in human nature. He believed that poetry was a complete medium for drama.

T.S. Eliot did commendable work for the revival of this genre. Although some of his precursors too tried hard to create a taste for poetic drama but it was Eliot who by making valuable experiments in poetic drama made it popular in the last century.

The major dramatists who influenced Eliot and prepared the stage for him are Stephen Phillips, John Masefield, Gordon Bottomley, James Elroy Flecker and John Drinkwater. They all experimented in poetic Drama. Their contribution vitalised the course of poetic drama.

The famous trio, W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory and J.M. Synge established the Abbey theatre in Dublin to encourage the poet - playwrights. The sole motive of Yeats was to revive poetic drama. He wrote twenty-six plays in verse. There is no doubt that Yeats plays are rich in poetical intensity but his poems appealed the readers more than his plays. Yeats' important plays are *On Baile's Strand*, (1904) *The Resurrection* (1927) and *Deirdre* (1907).

The stage was now open for T.S. Eliot who propagated the theory of the poetic drama. He re-established its tradition in 20th century. *The Murder in the Cathedral*, (1935) his first full-length poetic play was a great success which was followed by *The Family Reunion*, (1939) *The Cocktail Party*, (1949) *The Confidential Clerk* (1953) and *The Elder Statesman* (1958). These plays by Eliot are befitting examples of poetic mode of expression. He stopped himself from the use of traditional blank verse because he avoided to be a mere echo of Shakespeare.

He was very knowledgeable and a learned scholar too. He successfully explored the dramatic possibility of verse which resulted into an extension of the scope of poetic drama.

W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood wrote some famous poetic dramas. Auden's *The Dance of Death* (1933) and the joint ventures of Auden and Isherwood's *Ascent of F6* (1936) and *On the Frontiers* (1938) are important plays. Isherwood's plays deal with symbolic situation and

cartoon characters. Stephen Spender too experimented with this form of drama and wrote *Trial of a Judge* (1938). John Masefield, Drinkwater, MacNeice, Duncan, and Ridler are the other dramatists that have enriched the field of the poetic drama. Christopher Fry's *The Lady Is Not for Burning* (1948) and *Venus Observed* (1958) are important experiments in verse and technique. (Science and Business media LLC 1989)

Web Links

Literarycriticismjohn.blogspot.com

Mafiadoc.com

Oxfordscholarship.com

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