

Chapter-II

Drama: its origin, growth and development

The word "drama" is derived from the Greek word "dran" means to do, to perform; a kin to Greek "drainein" means to be ready, to do¹ and technically it means deed, action on the stage. This meaning indicates that it has a particular relation with action. A cursory glance at its history clearly shows that since its inception, action has been an integral part of it.

Drama is neither the name of statements in dialogue nor just a collection of characters as well as events nor is it just neither entertainment nor philosophy. Somewhere it is meant for purification of hearts and somewhere for salvation. Its elements, on the one hand include character, plot, and dialogue and color while on the other hand stillness, sound, light. So, it is difficult if not impossible to define Drama in brief.

Definition of Drama

Drama is an imitation of life in which dialogues and acting are in full consonance with real life where acting and performance occupy the first place and dance and dialogues occupy the second place. Drama is a branch of fine arts. According to some scholars the drama is a literary miracle which is written for the stage; dialogues and speeches are in the form of poem; sentiments and feelings are expressed by body and tongue.

Hari Ram Shankar, a Sanskrit scholar defines drama as follows:

"Drama is the representation by actors put up for show at certain place before spectators in the form of imitations of conditions and situations in which persons are placed from time to time by certain means, leading to enjoyment of a particular pleasure".²

The Encyclopedia Americana bears the definition as follows:

¹ The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Vol.1, (Oxford 1993), P-743.

² Mishra, H.R.; The Theory of Rasa in Sanskrit Drama, (Vindhyachal Prakashan, 1964) P-99

“ The Greek term drama meaning action applies to a form of literature intended to be interpreted to an audience by actors who impersonated the characters, recite the speeches and dialogues and perform the action of the story.”

Martin Esslin in his *Anatomy of Drama* has defined as follows:

1. Drama can be seen as a manifestation of the play instinct as in children who are playing mother and father.
2. Drama is something one goes to see, which is organized as something to be seen.
3. It is an enacted fiction an art form based on mimetic action.
4. In arts, drama is the most elegant expression of thought nearest to the truth (reality).
5. It is the most concrete form in which art can recreate human situation, human relationship³.

In fact all the above definitions contain words as ‘to do’, ‘performed’, or ‘the thing performed’ or ‘to present’ which clearly show the importance of action in Drama. It should be considered as a whole unit not confined only to reading like other arts of literature, but is indispensably attached with the stage, and it is written for presentation not just reading. Therefore it is improper to consider it as a collection of dialogues. The script of drama therefore is like that of a building map which is prepared before starting construction. As the completion of map does not mean the accomplishment of construction, in the same way the script does not bring drama into effect, for its realization needs, stage, audience, sound, light, music and so on.

It is also necessary to understand the factors of drama. In fact there are two human instincts behind its existence, one of which is self-expression and the other one is imitation. The former implies that whatever a human thinks and feels, he wants to tell them to the others. He feels relieved after relating the troubles as well as sorrows he undergoes. So, a human can not confine to his self all the observations, experiences, emotions and feelings. If not done so, he is under the constant urge of desire as to communicate with others being emotionally compelled.

³ Martin Esslin, *The Anatomy of Drama*, (Hill&Wing, New York, 1976), P-58

The fulfillment of the same desire is self-expression which is also necessary for the human health and from which springs forth the source of literary art.

Aristotle's definitions sum up these and other numerous definitions of drama by different scholars. He defines drama simply as an imitation of an action. He links it to the mimetic impulse in human beings like children playing father and mother in a childhood play. This means that imitation is a component of life. Human beings have the desire to copy others, situations or events. However E.M. Forster insists that drama is not just an imitation of action, but a tool for the exposure of social conditions, not just an entertainment but an instrument of political and social change. From these definitions, we can conclude that drama is a way of ~~creating or recreating a situation, an expression of reality through impersonation or re-enactment.~~ An action becomes drama if it is an imitation of an earlier action real or imagined. For instance, the story of a hunter who goes to the forest kills a black buck and takes it home even if he is dancing as he goes home, is not a drama. It becomes drama if the same story is reenacted maybe as part of a festival. In the later case, some people (actors) will represent the hunter and the antelope to the audience for entertainment or education. A young man who aspires to be a hunter could learn, from the presentation, how to stalk an animal or how to aim the gun or bow while ~~being entertained.~~ This story could be represented through mime, dance or in dialogue.

In the Chambers Encyclopaedia it has defined as follows :

"The drama may be defined as a story presented through the speeches of diverse characters in such a way that these characters may be impersonated by actors, and the words spoken or chanted before an audience."

Through this definition consists of plot, speeches, acting etc., it also does not carry full sense of drama. In this too, drama has been regarded as being represented on the stage only. Hence it does not serve the literary purpose.

In The World University Encyclopaedia it has been defined as under :

"In the conception of modern literature, however, drama implies only literary tragedy or literary comedy and those plays which are based on the meaningful dialogue. Independently of whether written in verse or prose, the drama in its current concept must have a definite significance and a

workable idea, whether comic or tragic, the idea to be conveyed by a succession of situations involving characters portrayed by actors, the whole developing into a recognized plot.”

In the above definition the drama written into verse or prose, comprising a recognized plot, dialogue etc., has been regarded as a literary form with more emphasis on meaningful dialogue. This definition has confined drama only to literature. Hence, this, too, is incomplete.

On the contrary, the definition made in the *Encyclopaedia Americana* bears almost all the elements, except conflict, of modern drama whether literary or written for the stage :

“The Greek term drama (meaning action) applies to a form of literature intended to be interpreted to an audience by actors who impersonate the characters, recite the speeches and dialogues and perform the action of the story.”

According to the above definition, drama is a form of literature in which plot, characterization, acting etc. play an important role. In this definition the word ‘audience’ has been used for spectator and reader both. But this definition is also incomplete and only the addition of the word ‘*conflict*’ in it can make it complete and comprehensive. It may be redefined as follows :

“The Greek term (drama) meaning action, applies to a form of literature intended to be interpreted to an audience by actors who impersonate the characters, recite the speeches and dialogues and perform the action of the story based on *conflict*.”

Functions of Drama

Drama is said to have originated from rituals. It is an important branch of literature and is devoid of the closeness with the novel, the abstract message of fine arts, the incomplete message of music or the cryptic and abstruse language of poetry. It presents a story realistically through the actors to the audience. Drama is therefore used to entertain, inform and educate people. We can see that it is the most effective tool for mass mobilization by the government and private agencies. For instance, most campaigns against AIDS, DRUG ABUSE, CHILD ABUSE and so on, are presented in form of drama to educate, enlighten while at the same time entertain

the people. Of all the creative artists, ⁴the dramatist is in the best position to reflect his society and to cause social reforms. This is because his work has a unique characteristic of presenting events in a vivid, picturesque and realistic manner. This helps to stamp social conditions realistically in the minds of the audience. Its message is therefore immediate. The rich and the poor, the young and the old, the literate and the illiterate enjoy and take in the message of drama once it is presented in the appropriate language as the actors perform the story (message) on stage. In most traditional societies, drama forms part of the communal rites. In Africa, reenactment of some feats like hunting, warfare, and other events, is usually a part of bigger festivals. Some of these events are presented in form of drama to entertain the audience. In Greece also, drama formed part of a bigger festival. Greek drama is acclaimed to be the earliest recorded form of drama (5th century B.C). It is said to have originated from the Dionysian religious rites, and also remained a communal rite during the classical period. The dramatists of this age gave insight into the philosophy and religious beliefs of the ancient Greece. These early Greek plays treated life's basic problems with utmost honesty and attacked social ills using legendary and mythological themes. This helped to ensure sanity and balance in the society. In the Medieval period, drama was used to clarify the message of the gospel through the reenactment of the biblical stories during mass. It was later expanded to include the dramatization of the lives of the saints and other notable stories of the bible that did not form part of the Sunday's lessons. It was therefore used for the spiritual and moral growth of the people. Drama and theatre also played important roles in the social lives of the people in the ancient Roman Empire. In England, Germany and France, playwrights like Shakespeare, Brecht, Goethe, Moliere, and others, in varying degrees, used their works to enable their respective countries to carve out and affirm a unique identity for themselves. The American industrial sector was radically but positively affected through the intervention of one play, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. This play is regarded as being responsible for the spirit of industrial revolution in America. In Africa, Kenya to be precise, a playwright, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o was arrested and detained because of the political and social consciousness which his play, "*I Will Marry When I Want*", aroused in the audience after the production. The play was written and presented in his Kikuyu language; this enabled the audience, to assimilate its message immediately and to react

⁴ Ibid. P.43

accordingly. Ngugi was forced into exile. The drama of any society, therefore, reflects the problems, aspirations, philosophy and cultural background of the people. We can easily realize that dramatists can use their works to help form the future of the societies. They can do this not only by reflecting the ugly sides of the societies but also by promoting the positive aspects of the people's way of life that are worth following or cultivating. They also help to ensure the continuity of their tradition and culture by reflecting them in their plays. Each dramatist, therefore, tries from his perspective to use his art to enlighten his audience on the goodness, differences and shortcomings of his society. Apart from their thematic concerns, each dramatist, in his own style of relaying his message, tries to highlight his cultural background through the use of myths, legends, music, songs, dances, proverbs, riddles, and other local expressions. In this way, dramatists all over the world are regarded as the conscience of their societies, and custodians of their moral and cultural values.

Origin of Drama:

It is commonly believed that the art of drama is western form of literature and it has been originated from the Greeks. But in reality it is not like that as the Encyclopedia Americana has rejected this theory. It traces its origin in Egypt as far back as 3200 B.C. it reads:

“Until comparatively recent times it has been supposed that western drama originated among the Greeks in and around Athens some time during the 6th century, by some modern researches indicated that some knowledge of the drama may have come from Egypt where it is known of Egyptian drama was the famous Abydos or Osiris passion play. Osiris being the name of the god whose history is celebrated. But George Freedly and Join A. Reeves remark in their “history of the theatre”.

“The pyramid texts of which at least 55 exists the coronation festival plays, several of which survive in some forms; Hebseds(Coronation Jubilees) , physical evidences of which still exist in great number. Passion plays, at least three; and at least one medicinal play recognized by Egyptology (possibly also a passion play). The story goes back at least to 3200B.C. and the content of Pyramid texts seem to indicate that it may be extended as far back as 4000B.C.”

Scholars are divided on the origin of drama. Some trace the origin to Greece but others insist that drama in its definitive form or pattern evolved from Egypt which is regarded as one of

the cradles of civilization in the world. The latter group argues that it was borrowed by western merchants who developed and documented it, and who now trace the origin to Greece----. However, the account of tracing the origin of drama to Greece is more plausible. The evolution is clearer and well-documented.

Many scholars trace the origin of drama to wordless actions like ritual dances and mimes performed by dancers, masked players or priests during traditional festivals or ceremonies. In the traditional society or in the primordial times, sometimes, the seasons did not come as expected. When this happened, men felt that they had offended the gods, so they devised means of appeasing these gods. That act of appeasing the gods is what we refer to as ritual. This ritual, as expected, involved a ceremony in which the priest played an important role at a selected location, mostly shrines. The priest would normally wear a special dress for the occasion. The role, the dress (costume), and the utterance or incantations are regarded as dramatic elements. Drama could have therefore emerged from this. So, if it is presented for entertainment and there is an element of impersonation, imitation of an action, and re-enactment of an action, it is drama. Another account traces the origin to man's desire for entertainment. Here, during festivals or other ceremonies, they recreate the feats of some legendary or mythical heroes to entertain the people.

Apparently, Greek drama evolved from religious festivals (ritual) that were celebrated to ensure the fertility of the land and the well being of its people. These festivals were connected with the worship of the god Dionysius, a native god who like the vegetation dies and was reborn each year. The festival involved singing and dancing by a chorus of fifty men. The choral song, known as Dithyramb, was sung in honor of the god. The men⁵ danced around the altar of Dionysius in a circular dancing place called orchestra. Sometimes a story about the god was invented by the leader of the chorus. Sometimes he dresses like a character from mythology. At this stage, individual actors were not involved in the performances. The dramatist, **Thespis**, is believed to have been the first person to introduce the individual actor and the element of impersonation in the 6th century B.C. During a particular performance, he stood out from the chorus and instead of singing in the honor of the god, he sang as the god. He performed between

⁵ ibid

the dances of the chorus and he conversed at times with the leader of the chorus. Thus drama was literally born. Thespis, therefore appeared as the first actor, and when he broke away from the chorus, he added the dramatic potential of impersonation. It is impersonation, because, instead of describing the god, Dionysius, or his actions, he pretended to be the god. Thus the performance changed from poetry performance to drama. Aeschylus added the second actor and this gave drama a new thrust forward because the additional actor enabled the dramatist to show in action a dramatic conflict rather than talk about it. Sophocles' addition of the third actor further enlarged the scope of the dramatist and provided him with the means of complicating his plot and devising more complex structural arrangement of his action. It is important to note here that speech is not of essence in drama because it could be presented without words or without the accompaniment of music/dance. The important feature of drama is communication. It induces a personal communication and an immediate experience between the actor and the audience. This makes drama a concrete art and the message is immediate and direct. It is concrete because we can see the actors performing and presenting a life-like story which affects us positively or negatively and we re-act immediately. Accordingly, drama exists in both oral and literary traditions.

Inarguably, imitation is present in human from the very beginning of his creation. It is in his nature to imitate lisping of a child, the movements as well as the intonation of others. Aristotle says that because of this faculty human is superior to other living beings and by the same institution gets his first education. When talking about the dramatic action and movement, it should not be forgotten that imitation is the most important thing in drama, for which Aristotle used the word Action that is 'to do again' especially when Action is being discussed in context with drama, otherwise the word movement could be used to denote physical activity or motion.

Drama from Indian Viewpoint:

According to Sanskrit grammar, drama is defined as a poetry that could be seen and heard. There are two kinds of poetry in Sanskrit, 'Drashya' meaning 'able to be seen' and Shrad meaning 'able to be heard. The synonymous word for drama is 'Rupak' derived from 'Rup' which implies to the specification of characters as well as presentation of natural exposures. Natak is one of the ten types of Rupak, but it was considered to be the synonym of drama having a lot of popularity and fame.

Most experts of Sanskrit tell the root verb of 'Natya' as 'Nritya' meaning 'to dance', while according to grammar its root verb should be 'Nat' which quite differs in meaning from that of 'Nritya'. The former denotes 'to do again'.

Indian tradition preserved in the 'Natyashastra', the oldest of the texts of the theory of the drama, claims for the drama's divine origin and a close connection with the sacred Vedas themselves.⁶

According to the 'Natyashastra', drama was first produced by Brahmaji in response to the request made to him. To accomplish his task he took from the Rigveda the element of recitation, from Samveda, song, from the Yajurveda, sentiment.⁷

Then the divine architect, Vishwakarma, was ordered to construct a playhouse in which the sage Bharata was imparted instructions to develop this art. Shiva contributed to it the Tandava dance, expressing violent emotion, Parvati, his spouse, the tender and voluptuous Lasya, while Vishnu was responsible for the invention of the four dramatic styles, essential to the effect of any play. And then it was intended to be transferred to the world. To Bharata fell the duty of transferring to earth this Celestial Veda in the inferior and truncated form of the 'Natyashastra'. Thus Drama believed to have existed in the Vedic period.

Drama actually acquired a clear form during the age of 'Ramayana' and Mahabharata. The terms Nata, Nirtak etc. provide a clear indication of its existence. In the Harivansha, mention has been made of a drama produced by the players out of the Ramayanan legend.

The Mahabhashya by Patanjali also bears evidence of the existence of drama. This book is reasonably placed about 140 B.C.

The most notable poet and dramatist was Kalidas whose period is yet to be decided. It is commonly held that he flourished in the first century B.C. and was a contemporary of Vikramaditya. According to another view, he lived in the 5th century A.D. His best known work is Shakuntala, a heroic romance in seven acts, which has become familiar with the western world

⁶ Keith, A.B., The Sanskrit Drama, (Oxford, 1970), P-12

⁷ Ibid' P-12

in English translations.⁸ His other plays 'Malvikagnimitra' and 'Vikramorvashi' have also achieved a great fame in India and abroad.

Yet another classical dramatist was the Buddhist king Harshdeva (606- 648 A.D.) to whom are attributed *Ratnavali Naganand* and *Priyadarshika*.

The eight century witnessed a great change in Sanskrit drama with Bhabhuti, the most renowned dramatist, who flourished at the court of Yassvarma of Kannauj A.D. 609. To the 9th Century belongs Vashkhadatta whose most popular drama is 'Mudrarakha'. Before the second half of the 9th century flourished Bhattnarayan to whom is ascribed the 'Venisambhara'. To the same century belongs Murari who wrote his most popular play 'Anargharaghava'.

Difference between the Eastern and Western Drama:

Some people think that high aesthetic values and dramatic traditions influenced and developed the Indian drama. Interestingly, such thinkers do not include only the Orientals but even the Indian laureates.⁹

The father of western drama, Aristotle, maintained that it is in welfare of humanity for it acts as catharsis (purification). He believed that the emotions produced by tragedy do not actually prove troublesome to the audience instead they are reformed by getting riddance of fear and piety

Considering this viewpoint, Aristotle laid much stress on the passionate plots filled up with suspense, wonder as well as sorrows that could make the audience wail and shed tears thereby catalyzing their saturated waste of emotions. Such type of plot could be produced only through extreme unpleasant ending as a result of severe conflict, violence, blood-shedding, tyranny and so on.

On the other hand, according to *Natya Shastrya* (the science of Dramaturgy) such plots that end on hatred, prejudice, violence etc are contemptible and abhorrent. **Bharat Muni** too calls the basic purpose of 'Natya' (Drama) as pleasant and it could be achieved by enthusing

⁸ Encyclopaedia Americana, Vol.9, (London) 1965, P-307.

⁹ Martin Esslin, Anatomy of Drama, (Hill&Wing 1992) P-23

pleasantness through dissolving *Ras* (mood) in the soul that could act as a shield and save a person from committing any sort of sins. That is the reason the most beloved art (tragedy) of the west could not flourish in India. It was disapproved in the past and is rejected even today.

One more basic difference is that the western dramatist base the foundation of sorrows and calamities on such person as does not deserve them, that is, they befall on the innocent. While the Indian drama completely defy this theory and lays its foundation on '*Karma*' (deed), here only the bad people fall in troubles, and incidentally, if a person suffers them, it is considered to be the fruit of his past life. Here the troubles erase out the effects of mistakes and pave the way leading towards good deeds. This is why the heroes of ancient dramas never fell prey to tragedy.

The western drama includes not only plot in its basic elements but also gives it a priority and pays full attention to its form as well as agility. The existence of drama is impossible to exist without conflict as well as struggle.¹⁰

The Indian one do not stress on the plots. The conflicts, contentions, violence, and hostility etc are negligible. Sanskrit drama never creates climax through them. The events are adorned with '*Ras*' and '*Bhau*'. According to it, a drama should be ordered in such a way that a sentence begins and end on the same word. Indian poetries believe in carrying the emotions to an artistic level of pleasure.

The western ideology accepts the theory of Survival for the Fittest, that human beings make their destiny through their own struggle and efforts. So, if anything no matter whether it is Nature impedes their growth, they should challenge it. Accordingly, we see the glimpse of its existence in their dramas.

On the other hand, Indian belief is that human is helpless and his destiny is determined by Nature. So he should lead his life in a persevered and satisfied manner. From the above discussion it also becomes clear that there is no room for tragedy in India, where only comedy got flourished and developed. The comedy also exists in the west but in a different method,

¹⁰ *ibid*

which is replete with jocularly, commotion as well excessive chaos, while in India humour exists with dignity and simplicity devoid of any sort of pandemonium.

Elements of Drama:

According to Aristotle, there are mainly five elements (1) Imitation (2) Plot (3) Action (4) Dialogue (5) Character, each of which is discussed in details below:

(1) Imitation

In simple terms, imitation means the act of copying somebody or something. It is an act of copying the way somebody talks and behaves, especially to entertain.¹¹

In literature, imitation is used to describe a realistic portrayal of life, a reproduction of natural objects and actions. This type of imitation includes writing in the spirit of the masters using merely their general principles; borrowing special "beauties" in thought and expression from the works of the best poets; or adapting their materials to the writer's own age. In drama imitation is more pronounced in performance. This is understandable because a play is written primarily to be performed. What is being imitated in drama is basically life. Drama tries to present life as realistically as possible on stage. This is why we say that drama mirrors life. According to Aristotle, "The instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. We have evidence of this in the facts of experience. Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and of dead bodies. The cause of this again is, that to learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosophers but to men in general; whose capacity, however, of learning is more limited. Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah, that is he.' For if we happen not to have seen the original, the pleasure will be due not to the imitation as such, but to the execution, the coloring, or some such other cause. Imitation, then, is one instinct

¹¹ ibid

of our nature.¹² For it to be drama a story must be told through dialogue as the characters interact among themselves and that story must have a beginning, middle and an end. It is different from musical presentations. Musicians in these presentations do not imitate anybody. They may wear costumes and act in weird manners but they are being themselves. Some of them take on other names like Lagbaja, African China, Weird M.C, and 2 FACE, P SQUARE, Baba Frayo, Daddy Shauki and many others. The people dramatizing these stories are imitating life in the dramatic sense. Over the ages, the attitude of dramatists on imitation differs from one dramatist to another and from one age to another. Some dramatists advocate the imitation of life exactly as it is lived, others insist on the imitation that is as close as possible to life. In the imitation that is as close as possible to life, the dramatist tries to create his characters to dress and act as close as possible to real life. That explains why we have different styles of imitation both in play-writing and acting skills. They include **Emile Zola's** 'Naturalism', **Bernard Shaw's** 'Realism', **Bertolt Brecht's** 'Epic Theatre', **Constantine Stanislavsky's** 'Realistic Acting', **Gordon Craig's** 'Theatre of cruelty', **Jerzy Grotowski's** 'Poor Theatre' and many others. Generally, the most popular form of imitation is the realistic one where the story is a representation of life and the characters are those we could identify in real life. This is why we say that drama mirrors life. This is why in *Hamlet*, he advises the Players to Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with special observance, *that We o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so overdone is for the purpose of playing, whose end, both at first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature...* (Act III Sc ii) Imitation in drama does not claim to present a literal copy of reality. This is because the truth of drama does not depend on reproducing the world exactly as it is. When we say that drama is true to life we mean that it is being false to our conventional notions of reality. This means that some plays present stories that we find difficult to believe or a particular actor acts in a manner that is unreliable. Sometimes we ask ourselves if it is possible for a man to be so wicked, insensitive and selfish that he would kill his own mother for ritual for the acquisition of material wealth. In most cases we still feel that maybe a person in a particular circumstance could be forced or persuaded to behave like that. If we look at the story of Oedipus for instance, we will believe that the story is highly improbable yet it creates a world that we recognize as being in some sense like our own. This depends on the perspective of the dramatist,

¹² Aristotle's Poetics, translation by S.H. Butcher, Orange Street press classic, (New York,1998) part-4, P.8.

the aspect of life he wants to focus his mirror. He may choose to focus on the beautiful, or on the ugly, the ideal/ harmonious or the chaotic. He may for instance focus on bad leadership. He therefore presents an insensitive despot as a leader who uses his position to emasculate all oppositions and oppress the masses.¹³

He may or may not succeed depending on the message of the play. In most cases, nemesis catches up with such characters. In mirroring the society, each dramatist decides on a particular perspective. When a play presents an idealized vision of the world as a place where everything is beautiful and orderly, we call it romance. On the other hand, when a play focuses on the ugly and chaotic as it presents a debased view of life we refer to it as satire. Satire and romance present extreme and sometimes, unrealistic conditions of life. Imitation in tragedy and comedy is very close to life as we live it as they emphasize the dominant patterns of experience that characters go through in life. In most comedies, the major characters begin in a state of opposition against one another or what they stand for. As the play progresses they get to understand one another better so that by the end of the play they get into harmonious relationships and the play ends on a happy note. The opposite is found in tragedy where the play presents a harmonious life for the hero at the beginning. As the play progresses, his world disintegrates and ends in catastrophe.

The basic concept of drama is imitation. This is why we say that drama is an imitation of life. In dramatic imitation, we should not expect an exact reproduction of life because drama is limited by time and space. Besides it is very difficult even in real life for any imitation of human action to be exactly like the original.

(2) Plot

A lot of volumes have been written on drama and aspects of drama of which plot is one of them. *The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines plot as a “plan or line of events of a story especially of a novel or a story”. In dramatic plot, unlike in the novel where the author describes the characters and incidents they are involved in, the playwright presents the characters

¹³ Martin Esslin, *Anatomy of Drama*, (Hill&Wing 1992) P.23

in action. This means that plot in drama develops through what the characters do or say, what is done to them, and or what is said about them or to them.¹⁴

We have seen that there are many opinions on plot but it cannot be concluded without looking at the insistence of the foremost critic Aristotle according to whom, "Plot is the imitation of the action- for by plot I here mean the arrangement of the incidents".¹⁵ The Greek tragic plots were based on the destiny of man and the gods were involved in the action. The tragic poet (playwright) was expected to base the plot on true events, myths and legends and so his choice was limited because not many families were "doomed" and not many individuals were driven to murder or incest that aroused pity and fear. He maintains that incidents presented, must be according to the law of probability and necessity. Plot is the structure of the actions which is ordered and presented in order to achieve particular emotional and artistic effects in a play. It helps to give the play an organic unity and a coherence that makes the play easy to understand. A good play should therefore possess a unified plot. Plot in simple terms is the arrangement of a story in such a way that there will be a sequential, logical and chronological order. The plot should be arranged in such a way that the action starts from the beginning rises to a climax and falls to a resolution. It is arranged in this form – **exposition, discovery, point of attack, complication, crisis, climax, denouement or resolution**. Some people confuse plot with story. To them, plot means a story which the play tells. A story is a series of incidents whose development does not necessarily depend on each other which means that the incidents may or may not be related or connected. Plot on the other hand, is the way the story is arranged and it thrives on causality and logical unity. In it, one incident happens and as a result the next one happens and the situation must be related to each other. It has a beginning, middle and an end. A beginning gives rise to the middle, which in turn raises the dramatic question that is answered in the end, thus completing what was started in the beginning. Dramatic plot is also expected to produce a result or an effect on the audience. The playwright, therefore, tries to fashion his play in a particular way to produce a particular impression on his audience. This explains why a

¹⁴ Ibid. P-43

¹⁵ Aristotle's Poetics, translation by S.H Butcher, (Orange Street press classic, 1997), part-6 P.12.

theme like corruption, could be treated by different playwrights. Each playwright by the use of plot and other devices gives his own perspective, understanding of what corruption is, its effects on the society and why it should be eradicated. He could, also, in the course of the plot, suggest means or ways through which corruption can be reduced to a barest minimum or its complete eradication. The success of a play depends mainly on the plot. It helps the audience or reader to understand the theme and the motivations of the characters in the play. Playwrights design their plots in most cases, to achieve different purposes like to create tragic comic or ironic effects. As the plot progresses, it arouses the reader's curiosity and expectations concerning future events in the play, especially the fate of some characters. This is called **suspense**. A good playwright makes an effective use of suspense to sustain his audience. Plot is a highly specialized form of experience. Let us use our daily experiences to illustrate and see just how specialized it is by considering what happens to us daily: we probably converse with a number of people and perform a variety of action. But most of these events have very little to do with one another, and they usually serve no purpose other than to satisfy our pleasure, our work, or our bodily necessities. Thus the events that take place in our daily existence do not and cannot embody a significant pattern or process even in a boarding school. There is an extent to which a person's life can be patterned. But in drama, every event is part of a carefully designed pattern and process. And this is what we call plot. In a good plot, the interest of spectators has to be deeply engaged and continuously sustained. This means that the plot must be arranged in such a way that the interest must be aroused and engaged by events that make up a process capable of being represented on stage. This means that plot is not confined merely to what takes place on stage. Plot includes reported, as well as represented, action. In *Oedipus Rex*, for example, we witness what we might call a process of criminal investigation, in which the investigator discovers him to be the criminal and inflicts the appropriate punishment for his crime. In the play, we do not witness all of the events that make up that process and contribute to its development. The three types of action in drama are **reported**, **physical** and **mental**. In reported action, an action that is not part of the present action on stage is reported by a character or a group of characters.¹⁶

The action could be about an incident in the past like the death of Polybus or an incident that happened in the course of the action of the play. In the play, the wisdom of the

¹⁶ Martin Esslin, *Anatomy of Drama*, (Hill&Wing 1992) P.54

oracle is reported by Creon; the death of Polybus is reported by the First Messenger, the suicide of Jocasta and the self blinding of Oedipus are reported by the Second Messenger. Obviously, all of these events take place in the imaginative world of the play but are not presented directly to the audience. They are part of the plot but are not part of what we call the **scenario**---the action that takes place on stage. Thus if we wish to identify the plot of a play, we will have to distinguish it from the scenario because it is not the same thing as the plot. We can recognize this distinction in another way if we consider the order in which events may be presented to us in a play. In *Oedipus Rex*, for example, the death of Polybus takes place before the time of the action on stage, however it is reported to us only after the stage action is well under way. The physical action is based on the current incidents in the play, the concrete action on stage. It includes the movements, gestures, facial expressions and other forms of physical action made by the characters and seen by the audience. The mental action includes the action in which the audience is left to imagine what happened. In most cases, it comes at the end of the play as the audience is left to imagine what happened to a character or a group of characters. This is one of the main reasons why movie producers produce the part two of some of their films. In the plot, of course, these events are linked to one another by an unalterable chronology. But in the scenario, these same events have been presented to us in an entirely different order. Thus, in studying the plot of a play, we must examine not only the events of which it consists, but also the complex ways in which those events are presented by the scenario.

Structure of the Plot:

As stated earlier, a good plot should have a beginning, middle, and an end. Oscar Brockett explains further that the **beginning** contains the **exposition** or the setting forth of information about earlier events, the identity of the characters and the present situation. Another aspect of the beginning is the **point of attack** which is the moment at which the main story starts as a potential conflict is identified. This is more obvious in classical plays usually, is focused early on the potential conflict or a question and its resolution leads to the end of the play. Such plays start with the **inciting incident**. This incident is usually an occurrence that sets the main action in motion. A good example is in found in *Oedipus Rex*. In the play, there is a plague in Thebes, the people are suffering and lamenting. Oedipus seeks solution from the oracle of Delphi and this leads to the major dramatic question (in this case, the identity of Oedipus) around which

the play revolves. The **middle** is made up of series of complications. A **complication** is a new element which changes the direction of the action. It leads to the **discovery** of new information. The series of **complications** culminate in **crises** and **climax**. In the play, the **complication** starts with the arrival of Creon with the information that the killer they seek is in their midst. Consequently, the blind seer is invited and there are more complications as he accuses Oedipus of being the murderer. There is a crisis with the shepherd's revelation of the true parentage of Oedipus and this leads to the **climax**. The **end** is the last part of the play. Here issues are unraveled, untied and resolved. In the play, the killer of Laius is discovered towards the denouement. Oedipus realizes that he has fulfilled the Delphic oracle's prophecy; he actually killed his father and married his mother. It is important to note here that We may not find all these elements in one play. Each playwright adopts his own style. Remember that Aristotle based his theory and postulations on already –written Greek plays. Apparently, he read and studied the plays critically to arrive at his conclusions.

Types of Plot :

There are different types of plots and each is designed for a particular purpose. Some plots, for instance, are designed to achieve tragic effect and others the effects of comedy, satire, or romance. However all plays do not have what we might call good plots, that is, with the beginning, middle and end. So, we have different types of plots. In a play, as said earlier, we have the main plot and **subject (sub) plot**.¹⁷

The main plot deals with the major events and the sub plot deals with other incidents which can be complete and interesting stories on their own. However, a skillful playwright uses the sub plot to advance our appreciation and understanding of the main plot. According to Abrams, "the sub plot serves to broaden our perspective on the main plot and to enhance rather than diffuse the overall effects"¹⁸ (129) of the play. Aristotle divides plot into two – **complex** and **simple** plots. A simple plot is that in which the action is simple and continuous and in which a change of fortune takes place without reversal of the situation and without recognition. In a

¹⁷ Ibid. P-43

¹⁸ Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, (New York, Holt, 1971,) P-129

complex plot, on the other hand, the change is accompanied by a reversal of the situation or by recognition or by both. He also identified two types of plots (a) the **unified** plot and (b) the **episodic** plot. He refers to the unified plot as the well-made plot. In the unified plot, the incidents are presented in a logical order and there is a causal arrangement. What do we mean by causal arrangement? The play starts from the beginning followed by the middle and the incidents in the middle are consequences of what happened in the beginning and these are resolved in the end. It is a kind of cause and effect presentation. The incidents will be so related that when anything is removed, it will create illógicality. In episodic plot, there is no causal relationship between the incidents. The only unifying factor is that the incidents are related or happening to one man. In unified plot, the removal of any incident affects the organic structure of the play, but in episodic plot, we can remove an aspect of the plot without changing or destroying the plot. It means, therefore, that the part that was removed is not necessary. A good plot must therefore not end haphazardly but must have a beginning, middle and an end, and should be well co-coordinated to give a coherent whole. The action which makes up the plot should be distinguished from a series of unrelated incidents because a plot must contain a logical unity within the play. It begins at a point and the middle raises the question which is answered in the end and that completes the action started in the beginning. All the incidents in the play are expected to contribute to the plot.

Dramatic Action:

Action is the process of doing something or the performance itself. The series of events that constitute the plot in any literary work is referred to as action. It includes what the characters say, do, think and in some cases, fail to do. Action involves activity. This activity becomes more pronounced in drama where the action is presented in concrete form as the actors present the story to the audience for entertainment and education. Drama is the only genre of literature in which the story is presented in dialogue from the beginning to the end. However, dialogue alone does not constitute dramatic action. What makes it drama is the action that is involved. Dramatic action includes facial expression, gestures and movements. So, what makes dialogue dramatic is the presence of action. It is only through action that the playwright can portray the human situations he chooses to dramatize. It is the action that propels the plot and helps to advance the theme. In simple terms drama is a story told in action by actors who impersonate the characters in the story on a stage. Dramatic action is a "...series of incidents that are logically arranged by

the playwright to achieve specific response like joy, pity, fear, indignation, ridicule, laughter, thoughtful contemplation, from the audience".¹⁹ Is there any relationship between causality and dramatic action? Yes. According to Oscar Brocket, "the cause to effect arrangement of incidents sets up the situation; the desires and motivations of the characters out of which the later events develop"²⁰. This logical arrangement of incidents presupposes that the action must be presented in such a way that it should make sense to the audience. Any action performed by any character must be as a result of an earlier action. Action in drama involves gestures, facial expressions, inflexion of voice and movement. Some gestures and expressions actually present more actions than words. Dramatic action also includes what the character fails to do. In *Hamlet*, the popular quote 'to be or not to be' refers to the action. Hamlet is contemplating on the proper action to take against his uncle who he suspects killed his father. He does not want to act until he is sure of it. He therefore organizes a play and presents a similar experience in the play. Luckily, he gets the desired effect as Claudius' reaction points to his guilt. It would have been possible for Hamlet to kill Claudius' immediately, but that would have been the end of the play. So, Hamlet's inaction helps to increase the suspense and emotional intensity of the play. We can see that all the actions mentioned here are logical. For the action to be logical, the characters must be well-motivated.

Types of Dramatic Action:

In the drama could be presented in the following three forms: (a) Physical Action; (b) Reported Action; and (c) Mental Action.

(a) Physical Action:

The physical action in drama refers to the movements made by a character in the play. It is visible and may or may not involve dialogue. Physical action could in form of movements/gestures, mime or pantomime. **Movement/Gesture** includes the steps taken by the character while he is speaking or in the process of undertaking other tasks. Movement is used to

¹⁹ Brocket, Oscar G. *The Essential Theatre*. (New York: Holt, 1980), p-58

²⁰ Ibid. P-32

describe mainly the actual movements like walking, running, pacing, kneeling, lying down, standing or sitting. Movement is simply the process of moving, change of place, position, or passing from one place to another. It involves the activities or whereabouts of a character or a group of characters.²¹ These movements are usually accompanied by dialogue. This differentiates it from mime and pantomime which are actions without words. Closely related to movement is gesture. Generally, gesture refers to body movements like position, posture, and expressions. Gestures are used by characters to express their thoughts, feelings, or as a rhetorical device. It could be used as a symbol to indicate intentions or evoke a response. Characters also use gesture a signal, motion, or an indication for his feelings or an action to taken by another character.

Mime:

Another form of physical action is mime. Sometimes, certain actions are presented without words to show meaning for the purpose of entertainment by dramatists. This is mime. *The Oxford Dictionary* describes mime as a dumb show, mummery, pantomime, the use of gesture to indicate certain action or indication by sign language. It is regarded as a simple facial drama that is characterized by mimicry and the ludicrous representation of familiar types of characters. Mime is therefore the art or technique of expressing or conveying action, character, or emotion without words but using only gestures and movements. In other words, it is an expression of action or performance using such means. In a play, the actions in mime are usually enclosed in the stage direction and mostly in italics. Some of these mimes are flashbacks, that is those events from the past that are recalled to help explain certain things in the play but some of them are presented as part of the present action in the play.

Pantomime:

Pantomime is synonymous with mime. It is a term for silent acting; the form of dramatic activity in silent motion, gesture, facial expression, in which costume are relied upon to express emotional state or action. It was popular in ancient Rome where it was a dramatic entertainment in which performers expressed meaning through gestures accompanied by music. It also refers to

²¹ Aristotle's Poetics, translation by S.H Butcher, (Orange Street press classic, 1997), part-4

some traditional theatrical performances originally significant gesture without speech, in mime, but now consisting of a dramatized fairy tale or stories with music, dancing, topical jokes and conventional characters frequently played by actors of the opposite sex. It is chiefly performed in Britain around Christmas. The actual pantomime opens on Boxing Day. Pantomime is also used to dramatize absurd or outrageous behavior.²²

(b) Reported Action:

In dramatic action, sometimes, it is not possible to present every action on stage. This could be as a result of the prevalent convention or because the action cannot be realized on stage. In the Classical Period, for instance, violence was not presented on stage. The playwrights were expected to maintain single settings indoor actions and violence were reported on stage. In *King Oedipus*, the death of Jocasta is reported on stage.

(c) Mental Action:

Mental action is an action that takes place in the character's mind. In most cases, mental action is manifested in facial expressions. The mental action includes the action in which the audience is left to imagine what happened. In most cases, it comes at the end of the play as the audience is left to imagine what happened to a character or a group of characters. This is one of the main reasons why movie producers produce the part two of some of their films. In the plot, of course, these events are linked to one another by an unalterable chronology. But in the scenario, these same events have been presented to us in an entirely different order. Thus in studying the plot of a play, we must examine not only the events of which it consists, but also the complex ways in which those events are presented by the scenario.

(3) Dialogue :

Dialogue is a discussion between two or more people. In literary works, it refers to a composition in a conversational form. In the novel it is incorporated in the story, that is, as the story progresses, the novelist gives two or more characters the opportunity to discuss or comment on certain issues and the story continues in prose form. However, in drama, the entire

²² Aristotle's Poetics, translation by S.H Butcher, (Orange Street press classic,1997) part-4, P.65

story is presented in dialogue. This explains why some people find it difficult to read plays because we see the name of a character, then, what the character says, the name of another character and the response. Dialogue in drama is expected to embody these literary and stylistic values. It advances the action in a definite way because it is not used for mere ornamentation or decoration. It is consistent with the character of the speakers, their social positions and special interests. It varies in tone and expression according to nationalities. It gives the impression of naturalness without being actual, verbatim record of what may have been said, since fiction is concerned with "the semblance of reality," not reality itself.²³

It presents an interplay of ideas and personalities among the people conversing; it sets forth a conversational give and take and not simply a series of remarks of alternating speakers. Dialogue is a highly specialized form of conversation that is designed to suit various contexts and modes of drama. It is not exactly like everyday conversation where we adjust style to suit the occasion and the personalities we are discussing with. In doing this, unconsciously, we use particular facial expressions, bodily gestures, vocal inflections. Sometimes, we pause or rephrase our feelings and ideas, as we adjust to circumstances to suit our thoughts and the thoughts of those we are talking to. It is not possible to reproduce it like that in drama. The playwright imagines these feelings and ideas, put them together in a more condensed form. This is because of the limitations of dramatic performance. The dialogue is designed in a way that it must be heard and understood by the audience. As a result, the continuity of the dialogue should be marked out clearly at every point.

Drama is presented only in dialogue so that it should be designed in such a way that through it, the reader or audience must be able to infer the nature of each character, the public and private relationship among the several characters, the past as well as the present circumstances of the various characters.

(4) Characterization

Characterization is the playwright's imaginative creation of characters that can effectively dramatize his story. The action of the play is presented through such characters. He

²³ Abrams, M. H. (1971). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, (New York: Holt, 1971) P-54

does so by imbuing the characters with certain recognizable human traits and qualities. These qualities include physical attributes, moral, psychological and emotional dispositions, their attitude towards other characters and situations, and so on. At the point of conceptualization of the idea he wants to present in his play, he thinks of the best way to present it to make it interesting and at the same time informative. He builds this idea into a story form and thinks of the type of characters that can tell this story effectively. So he uses the characters to explicate his theme and propel the plot.²⁴

His ability to craft the play in such a way that each character blends well in the plot is called characterization. These characters are presented and they develop in the course of the action. In most cases, the characters grow from innocence to maturity or from ignorance to knowledge. They also change according to situations and events. When this is done, the characters are referred to as round characters. A good playwright must craft his play in such a way that his characters are consistent. We don't expect a character to behave like an educated Weng woman in the opening scene and in the following acts like an illiterate village girl. This could happen if there is a proper motivation for that. For example, if she is pretending to be what she is not in order to obtain some information, get something or to escape from danger? Motivation in characterization means that there must be a good reason for any action that is taken by every character in the play. The reason or grounds for action, temperament and moral dispositions constitute his motivations. They act out the story of the play from the beginning to the end. They act within the limits of possibility and plausibility. This means that they and their actions should be as close as possible to reality. The playwright therefore creates a story that is credible for them to act. However, in an allegorical play, each character acts within the limits of what it represents. Each playwright, depending on his style, chooses how to develop his characters. This brings us to a discussion on characters.

Character Analysis:

The ability to create characters and to ensure that they blend/suit the action of the play is what we refer to as characterization. What is created is called character. Characters refer to the people who act the play. Drama is the most active form of literary art and is presented in

²⁴ Ibid.

dialogue. It is not like the novel or poetry where the novelist tells a story. The story in a play is told as people talk to one another and interact in inter-personal relationships. These people are referred to as characters.²⁵

Characters in a play must not necessarily be human beings. Animals or things can be used as characters. This depends on the intention of the playwright and the style he wants to adopt.

Types of Characters:

There are different types of characters in drama. They include the protagonist, the dynamic character, the static character, the flat character, the round character, and stereotypes.

Protagonist/Hero:

He is the main character and at the centre of the story. He is called the protagonist or the hero. If he is pitted against an important character, like in Hamlet, the opponent is called an antagonist. In the play, Hamlet is the protagonist while King Claudius is the antagonist and the relationship between them is what we refer to as conflict. Usually the story revolves around him and in fact the story is about him. He is easily identifiable because he stands out over and above most other characters. Everything revolves around him as he influences the action that he is going through. He creates a world for himself which could be big or small, palatable or detestable. He lives to sustain or oppose what happens to him. His role is usually central to the development of the theme, and whatever happens to him or whatever he does has much significance to the outcome of the story. He is often referred to as the hero of the story or the protagonist and he is one of the major characters. His central position in the story places him in a very important position. The playwright therefore portrays him carefully. His many - sided and complex nature is presented in details. He helps to inject life in the story when he is properly presented. In *Oedipus Rex*, for instance, King Oedipus is the protagonist. He is not just one of the major characters but he is the major character. The story that is told in the play is about the birth,

²⁵ *ibid.* P.163

the rise and the fall of King Oedipus. Sophocles uses him to show his audience that man is helpless before the gods.²⁶

This means that a man cannot change his destiny no matter how hard he or the people around him. In the case of King Oedipus, his parents try to change his destiny by ordering, when he was born and they discovered that he has been doomed to kill his father and marry his mother, that he be thrown into the forest where he was expected to die but the servant spared his life and offered him to the shepherd. As he grows, he tries to change that fate but does not succeed. Instead he moves closer to it and eventually fulfils it.

Dynamic/ Round Character:

This is a character that changes according to the course of events in the story. He may or may not be the protagonist or the hero. In most cases, he grows from innocence to maturity or from ignorance to knowledge, so he is consistently alert to his environment with its attendant problem and reacts accordingly. He is found almost everywhere in the story. In his own unique way, he participates actively as much as possible in the course of the action. He seems to have no special alignment to any group but tries not to lose his credibility or acceptability.

Static/Flat/Stock Character:

Here the character is complex and does not change in any basic way in the course of the story. He is presented in outline and without much individualization. He is usually stable and is said to be static because he retains essentially the same outlook, attitudes, values and dispositions from the beginning of the story to the end of the story. He is the opposite of the round character but lacks complexity in terms of presentation. He is presented with a few and broad strokes. In most cases his activities are easily recognizable, so, his actions can be predicted. Such values and attitudes may be positive or negative depending on the playwright's intention. He can be a minor or major character as long as he is hardly transformed as the events of the story unfold. Stock

²⁶ ibid. P.164

characters are character types “that recur repeatedly...²⁷(Abram 163) in dramatic composition “and so are recognizable as part of the conventions of the form.”

Character types are created by playwrights to represent particular individuals in the society. They could be professionals, ethnic groups, tribes or nationalities. They therefore act and behave in accordance with the dictates of the person(s) they represent.

Planting:

In drama, one of the techniques that is used to present the action of the play is planting. It is the use of certain props to give more information about some characters, the environment or situations. If for instance We are watching a home video, and a particular scene opens in the room where a character is lying on a bed with a wheelchair beside the bed, We will conclude immediately that the person on the bed cannot walk. It might not be that person on the bed that is paralyzed but the presence of the wheel chair indicates that there is a paraplegic character in the play. Thus that wheelchair is planted and without any explanation We are able to get more information about the play. In planting, representatives of certain issues/places/things are used to create an impression or point to an idea that will be exposed as the events of the play unfolds.

Play-within-the Play:

As the name suggests, a play-within-the –play is a play that is created in another play. Usually it is a complete play with a beginning, middle and an end. It has its own theme which in many cases is related to the theme of the main play. It is created for a particular purpose. A very good example of the play-within the-play is *The Mousetrap* in *Hamlet*. Shakespeare uses the technique to confirm the claim made by the ghost.

Setting:

Setting is the location of a play. It is the time and place when and where the action of the play takes place. Setting is very important in a play because it helps us to appreciate the background of the play. Also in productions it helps the designers to design appropriate locale,

²⁷ Abrams, M. H. p-163

atmosphere, and costume for the play. We can identify the setting through the names of characters.

Types of Setting:

(a) Geographical/Physical/Occupational: This is the actual geographical location of the story and whatever surrounds the place where the story is located. It also includes the manner of daily living of the people. This helps in locating the story; for example, it helps We to know if the action of the play takes place in an urban centre or a village, or a bush, or a market place and so on. We can identify the physical setting easily in some plays because the playwright mentions some known landmarks like the names of towns or other important places in the town. In the play, *Hamlet*, the physical setting is easy to identify because of the fact that two of the major characters in the play are addressed as the “Prince of Denmark” and the “King of Denmark”. Physical setting also includes the manner of daily living of the people.

(b) Temporal/Historical Setting: This is the period in which a story takes place. This includes the date, the season, and the general atmosphere in the local like war, fuel scarcity, democratic or military rule. This, like the physical setting, could be reduced from the dialogue or from the stage direction. It could be stated in some commentaries, especially the ones on the background of the play.

(c) General Environmental Setting: The social, moral, emotional, mental and religious backgrounds of the story. This is highlighted through dialogue, stage direction and the characters interpersonal relationships.

Dramatic Conventions:

In drama, the playwright tries to present life as it is lived in the real world. However, it is not possible to present real life on stage so he presents an illusion of reality. He needs certain devices to make this illusion as realistic as possible and the audience accepts the devices. In Shakespearean plays, sometimes a character talks to himself and this is called soliloquy.²⁸

²⁸ *ibid.* P.163

In real life people do not talk to themselves like that but since the public especially in that age accepted it, it becomes a convention. Also in the Classical Age the convention was that the dialogue is presented in verse but in the modern convention in most plays the dialogue is presented in prose. Another good example of dramatic convention is in play production where the convention is that a room has three walls instead of the four walls and the action of a play in which the events take place in various places is presented on a single stage. In the words of Abrams, "conventions are necessary or convenient devices, widely accepted by the public, for solving problems imposed by a particular artistic medium in representing reality."²⁹ There are also conventions in terms of style. Abrams explains further: "conventions are identifiable elements of subject matter, form, or technique which recur repeatedly in works of literature. Conventions in this sense may be recurrent types of character, turns of plot, forms of versification, kinds of diction and style."³⁰ It is not compulsory for every work to conform to preexisting conventions but what matters is how effectively an individual writer makes use of them.

Prologue:

This is the introductory part of the play. It could be an opening scene, a speech or an address. In most cases, it introduces the action and makes a statement on what the audience should expect in the play. In many plays the prologue foreshadows the events in the play and sometimes gives a background to the play as can be seen in the example below taken from Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*.

[Prologue] Enter Chorus.

Not marching in the fields of Trasimene

Where Mars did mate the warlike Carthagens

Nor sporting in the dalliance of love

In courts of kings where state is overturned,...

²⁹ *ibid.* P-33

³⁰ *ibid.* P-42

The form of Dr Faustus' fortune, good or bad:

And now to patient judgments we appeal

And speak for Faustus in his infancy.

Now is he born of parents base of stock

In Germany within a town called Rhode;

At riper years to Wittenberg he went

Whereas his kinsmen chiefly brought him up.

So much he profits in divinity

That shortly he was graced with doctor's name

Excelling all, and sweetly can dispute

In th' heavenly matters of theology;

Till swoll'n with cunning, of a self-conceit,

His waxen wings did mount above his reach

And melting, heavens conspired his overthrow!

For falling into a devilish exercise

And glutted now with learning's golden gifts

He surfeits upon cursed necromancy:

Nothing so sweet as magic is to him

Which he prefers before his chiefest bliss—

And this man that in his study sits.

Epilogue:

This is the direct opposite of the prologue. It is presented at the end of the play. It sums up the action of the play and in some cases, makes a statement (an advice or a lesson to be learnt) on the action or events presented in the play.

Interlude:

An interlude in a play is a short piece of entertainment that is presented between the acts or major scenes in a play. It is believed that the term came into drama during the Renaissance Period to describe the dramatic form of early Tudor Period. It was then referred to as Tudor Interlude. Queen Elizabeth loved entertainment, funfair and ceremonies so much that she was accompanied by extravagant display of affluence each time she made public appearance. These displays included some dramatic shows among which the interlude was most popular.

(5) Soliloquy:

Soliloquy is a speech made by a character when he is alone. The audience hears it but the other characters are not expected to hear it. It is very common in Renaissance plays. Shakespeare in particular made use of soliloquies in his play a lot. Playwrights use this device to reveal the thoughts or the feelings of specific characters in reaction to certain events or situations. "Customarily, the soliloquy is a means of giving expression to a complex state of mind and feeling, and in most cases the speaker is seen struggling with problems of utmost consequence."³¹ This accounts for the intensity we find in soliloquy. Here, the character thinks aloud as he talks to himself. He pretends that the audience is not there. Soliloquy also offers the dramatist a means of providing a point of view on the action of the play. Apart from serving as a means for revealing characters, it is used to make significant commentaries on events of the play. In the first soliloquy in *Hamlet*, Hamlet presents the state of his mind and his view on the world:

O that this too solid flesh would melt,

Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,

³¹ Aristotle's Poetics, translation by S.H Butcher, (Orange Street press classic,1997) part-4, P.43

Or that the Everlasting had not fixed

His canon against self-slaughter. O God! God!

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable

Seem to me all the uses of this world!

From it we learn of his father's death, the incestuous affair between his mother and his uncle and it foreshadows the catastrophe at the end of the play when he predicts that the affair will come to no good. He continues:

But two months dead- nay, not so much, not two-

So excellent a king, that was to this

Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother

That he might not permit the winds of heaven

Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth,

Must I remember? Why, she would hang him

As if increase of appetite had grown

By what it fed on. And yet within a month-

Let me not think on it- Frailty, Wer name is woman-

A little month, before those shoes were old

With which he followed my poor fathers's body,

Like Niobe, all tears- why, she-

O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason

Would have mourned longer- married with my uncle, ...

She married- O most wicked speed! To post

With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!

It is not, and it cannot come to good

Break my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

(Act i scene ii)

Aside:

Aside is a dramatic convention in which a character speaks to himself or makes a comment in the presence of another character. However, that other character is not expected to hear the comment but the audience hears it. There is an actual stepping aside of the character who utters an aside from the other characters on the stage. This makes it more unrealistic because it is not possible for him to make the remark in their presence and they will not hear it. An aside is a very brief remark and in most cases it is indicated in the stage direction. Here is an example taken from *Hamlet* when Hamlet feigns madness and is discussing with Polonius:

POL. [*Aside*] though this is madness, yet there is method in it. Will We walk out of the air my lord?

Dramatic Illusion:

Drama thrives on illusion because what is presented is not reality but an illusion of reality. Whenever we are watching any dramatic presentation, we very well that they are 'pretending' to be what they are not yet we empathize with the characters. Dramatic illusion involves a willing suspension of disbelief. If the play *Hamlet* is presented on stage and as we watch the graveyard scene, Ophelia's burial, for instance, we would see the actress being 'buried'. In reality, the actress' name may not be Ophelia; she has not died; the grave is not a real grave; and the grave diggers may be wealthy professionals but we enjoy the play without bothering about whether they are real or not. In other words, we pretend that what we are watching is real.³²

³² Ibid. P-76

The Fourth Wall:

The fourth wall refers to the fourth wall of the room that is pulled down for the audience to watch the play. In reality, a room has four walls so if a play, especially events of the play stage performances, is to be presented with the four walls intact nobody can see the action. That is why a good playwright should always have the stage in mind when he is writing his play. The removal of the fourth wall helps to enhance the illusion of reality in drama.

Chorus /Narrator:

The use of chorus is a dramatic convention that was adopted by playwrights, especially in the Classical Age, to comment on the events of the play. In any play that has a chorus/narrator, the playwright uses it to supply the information that could not be woven into the dialogue. In many cases it serves as the authorial voice. The chorus is not usually part of the main cast so does not participate actively in the action of the play. In most cases they stand or sit by the side of the stage and make their comments at the appropriate time. Some playwrights use the chorus to comment on the events of the play. In *Oedipus Rex*, the chorus is made up of the elders of Thebes. The narrator performs the same function as the chorus. The difference is that usually the chorus is made up of two or more characters while the narrator is only one character. Each playwright uses the chorus or the narrator to suit his purpose.

The Three Unities

Classical plays are expected to treat one serious action but later in the sixteenth centuries, dramatic critics in Italy and France added to Aristotle's recommendation of unity of action, two other unities to constitute the rules of drama known as "the three unities." It became a dramatic convention then. They contended that for the dramatist to achieve an illusion of reality, the action presented in a play should "approximate" the actual conditions of life being represented in the play. They imposed the "unity of place" (that the action be limited to a single location) and the "unity of time" (that the time represented should be limited to the two or three hours it takes to act the play, or at most to a single day of either twelve or twenty-four hours). Their decision may have been influenced by Shakespearean plays that involved frequent changes of setting and the passage of many years. In the modern period it is no longer a convention but a playwright might still wish to adhere to it. The three unities are the unities of time place and

action. It means the principles of dramatic structure that involves action, time and place, The principle of the unity of action entails that the action of the play should contain one subject. There is no room for sub - themes or sub- plots. The unity of place requires that the action of the play must take place in one location. The unity of time insists that the play should not last for more than one day. A playwright decides what to use and how to use them.

Types of Drama:

Tragedy:

We are familiar with the words 'tragedy' and tragic as they are associated with misfortune. Usually, they are used to describe personal misfortunes that do not concern the rest of the society. For example, the breakdown of a marriage or death of a dear one in an accident or even natural causes could be described as tragic. Also, some public events that are unpleasant like the assassination of a head of state or a political leader, natural or human disasters like earthquakes, flood disasters, plane crashes and other such disasters are referred to as tragedies. Tragedy according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* is "a play of a serious or solemn kind ... a very sad event, action or experience." The last part of the definition explains why the word is used to describe misfortunes, natural and human disasters in everyday life. Tragedy in drama is believed to have originated from the Greek worship of Dionysius, the god of wine and fertility. During the festival, the dithyramb, a choral lyric in honour of the god is sung and danced around the altar by fifty men dressed in goat-skin (goat was the sacred animal of the god). This is perhaps from where tragedy got its name because in Greek, "tragoedia" meant 'goat song'. During this song, a story about the god was improvised by the choral leader but later Thepsis stood out and instead of singing in honour of Dionysius, sang as Dionysius. However, the song continued but a minimal part of it was acted by one actor. As time went on, the spoken part was increased and Aeschylus added a second actor while Sophocles added a third actor. Thus tragedy was born. The scope of the plays increased as they started including myths concerning other gods. The plays became so popular that by 534 BC, the state gave official recognition to tragedy and instituted a prize for the best tragedy presented at the annual Donysian festival. Tragedy is the most esteemed of all the dramatic genres. It has attracted many definitions and rules, from the days of Aristotle, who is the first person to write on the circumstances of and what tragedy should be, to the present day. According to him in his **Poetics**: "*Tragedy is an imitation of an*

action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornaments, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting a proper purgation of these emotions.³³ Aristotle explains all the aspects of this definition and moves further to give the elements of tragedy as plot, character, thought, diction, music and spectacle. These principles have continued to influence the definition till date. However, some dramatic scholars agree with him while some others disagree with him. In drama, tragedy is a serious play that deals with the misfortunes of man. It presents a man (tragic hero) who is not too virtuous or too vicious but one who aspires for higher ideals. He tries to improve himself and the world around him. In the course of this, he makes a mistake, or commits an error of judgment. This leads to his fall. Traditionally, in classical tragedies, the hero must be of noble birth, suffer and is overwhelmed in the end. Tragedy presents injustice, evil, pain, misfortunes, paradoxes and mysterious aspects of human existence. Greek tragedy has a set pattern or structure. It starts with the prologue which introduces the play with the episodes of the play and the choral songs in between and finally the exodus. The play contains a "single integral plot" which is presented in a very short period with one setting. The action could be simple or complex and contains a reversal of fortune or discovery or both. They are very short plays and many of them were presented in trilogies. The tragic hero is drawn from princes and kings. He is a man who is not pre-eminently good, virtuous or vicious but who commits an error of judgment. *Oedipus Rex* is a good example of classical tragedy. It has a single plot, the story of how Oedipus killed his father and married his mother. The setting is just in front of the palace. Oedipus, the tragic hero is a king who by the end of the play discovers the truth about himself; his fortune reverses from good to bad. His catastrophe is caused by his tragic flaw which is arrogance. The plays were based on myth and legends drawn mainly from the legends of the house of Atreus and the events of the Trojan wars. They were presented as a part of a great festival and the state was involved. Music, songs and dances were important elements of the plays. To maintain a single setting, indoor actions and violence were reported on stage. As part of a religious festival, the plays were used to show how vices like arrogance and pride lead men to destruction. The gods also play important roles in Greek

³³ Ibid. P-12

tragedy. However, the dramatists differ in their attitudes to the gods as characters in their plays. Many critics argue that there are no tragedies in the modern period. The argument is based on the fact that many playwrights do not adhere to the Aristotelian principles of tragedy especially as regards the treatment of the subject matter, tragic hero and the language. Modern playwrights feel that they should not be restricted by any rules. According to them, drama reflects the society, so they should reflect their society in the works. In the modern society, little or no attention is paid to kings, princes and their exploits so a poor man who is hard working can rise to esteem. The society also encourages him to rise. He also has the capacity to fall into misfortune through an error of judgment and according to Arthur Miller, since kings and monarchs are no longer available, tragedy should be based "... on the heart and spirit of the average man."³⁴ Contemporary issues and human beings should, therefore, be treated in tragedy. The important factor is that the tragic hero pursues a particular goal he believes in relentlessly to its logical conclusion even if he loses his life in the pursuit. Tragedy attempts, therefore, to ask some basic questions about human existence like, is there justice in the world?

Comedy:

We use the words 'comedy' and comic to describe something that is funny in our everyday lives. These include a joke, or a fantastic story that is full of nonsense, or an absurd appearance that makes us giggle, smile or laugh. Comedy is not inherent in things or people but the way things/people are perceived. Comedy is a deliberate presentation of events/experiences drawn from real life but not the same with real life. We should therefore not expect dramatic comedy to be the same as real life. Generally, the plays have good endings or resolutions, so when a play ends happily, we refer to it as comedy. In most comedies, the principal characters begin in a state of opposition either to one another or to their world or both. By the end of the play, their opposition is replaced by harmony. Aristotle in his "Poetics" insisted that in tragedy men are shown "better than they are", while in comedy "worse than they are".

For him it is an artistic imitation of men of inferior moral bent, not in every way but only in so far as their shortcomings are ludicrous. These shortcomings cause no pain. In the

³⁴ Dukore, B. F. (1974). *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greek to Grotowsky*. (New York: Holt Reinhart and Winston), P-897

classical period there was no mixture of genres Horace maintains that tragic characters must be noble while comic characters are ignoble and of lower birth and foolish. Moliere believed that his audience could learn from the dramatization of ridiculous and universal types. Comedy therefore teaches through laughter, sees it as an imitation of common errors of life which is presented in the most ridiculous and scornful manner so that the spectator is anxious to avoid such errors himself. It should aim at being delightful though not necessarily by provoking laughter.

We recognize comedy through its style, characterization, diction and other elements of style. The purpose of comedy is to delight, to teach and to entertain the audience through the presentation of characters, situations and ideas in a ridiculous manner. This helps to keep man close to sanity, balance and to remind him of human frailties. It helps to keep him humble and mindful of what he is rather than what he might wish himself to be. Modern scholars believe that the purpose of comedy is to correct vices therefore should not exclude any class. Satire is an important instrument in comedy because nothing reforms majority of men like the portrayal of their faults. It is easy for people to endure being made fun of. Many people may have no objection to being considered wicked but are not willing to be considered ridiculous. The audience is thus expected to learn from the stupidity of the characters and try to avoid such pitfalls because nobody likes to be made an object of ridicule. Generally speaking, comedy adopts a different approach from that of serious drama. It presents the incongruity in people and situations. In doing this, the playwright suspends the natural laws; for instance, a man falls flat on the floor but does not really hurt himself. Comedy is usually presented as a moral satire used to attack vices like greed, hypocrisy, lust, laziness, or ignorance. The aim is to correct social ills, social injustice or to ridicule a particular human fault or social imbalance. It thrives on exaggeration of situation and character to show mankind worse than it really is. Since drama is a conscious and deliberate presentation of events/experience based mostly on real life but not the same with real life, one should, therefore, not expect comedy to be the same with real life.

Melodrama:

The word melodrama is coined from **melo** (music) and **dran** (drama). It is, therefore, a play that utilizes music extensively. But the utilization of music is not the only factor in

melodrama, what really makes it melodrama is its portrayal of the protagonist and the antagonist.³⁵

The protagonist suffers a lot but triumphs in the end while the antagonist suffers. So, melodrama can be defined as a play that has serious action caused by a villain and a destruction of the villain which brings about a happy resolution in the play. The hero is usually involved in very dangerous circumstances, but is rescued or he disentangles himself at the last possible moment. The rescuer is usually a benevolent character who identifies himself with the good role of the protagonist. An ideal melodrama, therefore, must have a protagonist and an antagonist. The protagonist always fights the antagonist who is usually poised to destroy goodness. In the end, the characters are easily identified by the audience. The protagonist is admired and the antagonist is hated. It is this identification by the audience that provides the grounds for poetic justice because the antagonist loses in the end.³⁶

This explains why some critics insist that melodrama is an honest dramatic form. According to them, it is the only form of drama that expresses the truth of human condition as they are perceived most of the time. This is a condition where vice is condemned and virtue applauded or where the bad man is punished and the good man rewarded. Like tragedy, melodrama deals with characters in critical situations. The main difference is in the point of view. Outwardly, it tries to create the illusion of real people at genuine risk or in jeopardy but the playwright manipulates the play in such a way that it ends with a reprieve or a rescue, a reform or a triumph for the protagonist. There is always an escape from danger in the plot line. In melodrama, there is always serious excitement, suspense and thrills for the audience. The plot is built on tension and great excitement but this is transitory and lends no substantial significance to the action of the play. The plot therefore contains stories with colorful but brave characters. It creates opportunities for strong sensational scenes, powerful emotions, and strong characters that struggle against deadly odds. Sometimes they are trapped in precarious situations but they must hold on until there is help ultimately. The melodramatic hero is usually a one-dimensional figure who pursues a goal in a straightforward manner. The opposition comes from the world around

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Aristotle's Poetics, translation by S.H Butcher, (Orange Street press classic, 1997) part-4 , p.12

him. He does not always think well before taking an action. Consequently, he gets involved in entanglements or dangerous situations which a more rational person might avoid. The characters are usually simple in mind and heart and are conditioned or influenced by their backgrounds and environment. Melodrama contains most of the serious conflicts and crises of daily life. In melodrama, we are resigned as we realize that our failures are not our fault but caused by others and our victories are as a result of help from other people. It is a serious play because most of the time, they rely on strong story lines but lacks the essential magnitude in character and the action is usually over exaggerated.

Tragic-comedy:

We have seen that tragedy is a serious play that ends on a sad note, while comedy ends happily. In traditional tragedy, playwrights are not allowed to bring in any comic action. In *Oedipus Rex*, for instance, we will observe that the atmosphere is tense from the beginning to the end. As time went on, even from the Elizabethan period, comic characters were included in tragic plays. This is called comic relief. Tragic-comedy is a play that mixes both comic and tragic elements in equal proportion of each. It therefore elicits both tragic and comic emotions.

Farce:

Farce which is referred to as comedy of situation, is a humorous play on a trivial theme usually one that is familiar to the audience. The themes that are treated in farce include mistaken identity, elaborate misunderstanding, switched costume (men in women's clothes) heroes forced under tables, misheard instructions, discoveries, disappearances and many such situations. Farce is not considered an intellectual drama because it does not appeal to the mind. It deals with physical situations and does not explore any serious idea. It presents physical activities that grow out of situations like the presence of something when something is not expected or the absence of something when something is expected. Farce does not treat serious social issues.³⁷

Sometimes it does not tell a full story or present a logical plot. A good example is somebody walking and slipping on a banana peel and falling in an exaggerated manner. The

³⁷ Dukore, B. F. (1974). *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greek to Grotowsky*. (New York: Holt Reinhart and Winston, p.14

main objective is to entertain by evoking laughter. It presents mainly mechanical actions to show that human life is mechanical, aggressive, and coincidental. .

Textual Analysis:

Textual analysis in drama is the evaluation of a written play. In the evaluation, we are expected to read the play very well and highlight how effectively or otherwise the playwright has utilized the elements and devices of drama in the composition of his play. The dramatic techniques used are also discussed. As we analyze a play, we are expected to identify the theme, how appropriate the characters are, if they are consistent and their actions are properly motivated. The language is another area that needs attention as to determine if there is any consistency. The relationship between the message of the play and the method used to relay the message is also examined. The following steps are considered effective for better textual analysis: a) Read the play for the first time and enjoy the story. b) Read the play again with Wer notebook and dictionary by Wer side. Use the dictionary to find out the meaning of the words We are not familiar with and form notes on the plot, theme, characterization and other relevant information. d) Read it again and again to fill in the gaps and ensure that We have obtained the required information. e) Rewrite Wer note properly, and revise it as many times as possible.

Content/Theme:

In the analysis of a play, the first issue that comes to mind is the theme. Theme is the main idea in a play that permeates its entire. How do we identify the theme of a play? Themes are identified through the dialogue, actions and manifestations in the actions of the major characters as they interact with other characters in the play. The interpersonal relationships of the characters help to highlight and advance that particular idea.³⁸

Themes in drama include corruption, love, revenge, and many others. The theme is the message which the playwright wants to send across to his audience and a play could have more than one theme. The playwright could draw his germinal idea from an incident or event in his contemporary society. It could also be drawn from history, legend, myth or folklore but the important factor is that there is a message he sends to the audience. Most playwrights try to make

³⁸ Ibid. p-79

their societies better through the exploration of the negative impacts of these ideas in the societies. A playwright is normally influenced by his background and this is reflected in his plays. In Nigeria many contemporary playwrights explore the themes like military dictatorship, insecurity unemployment, bad leadership, bribery and corruption.

The playwright is said to be the conscience of his society, a teacher and an entertainer. He therefore strives to educate, inform and entertain his audience. This explains why he presents his theme through an interesting story and chooses the most appropriate dramatic form. For example, Bernard Shaw decides to dramatize the themes of love and war through comedy, while Shakespeare presents his theme of revenge through tragedy. The theme of the story is what gives it significance because without a recognizable and definable theme, a story will be trite and pointless. A clearly focused theme is the story's "motivating force". In *Oedipus Rex* for instance, the theme is man's quest for his identity. The sub-theme is man's helplessness in the hands of fate or the gods. If we take the main theme, we will see that Oedipus' search for his true parents leads him to kill his father and marry his mother, while his search for the cause of the plague in his kingdom and the murderer of King Laius leads to his search for his own identity. The search for his own identity leads to his doom. Consciously or unconsciously, every playwright has his theme in mind in choosing the style to adopt. The characters, the setting, the language, the plot, are chosen in such a way that should advance the major theme of the story. However, the fact must be noted that a story may have one or more themes.³⁹

It is also possible that each reader may discover a different theme or a multiplicity of themes in the same play. The theme of a play could be given in one word but ideally it is presented in sentence or statement. A play could be complex and it might be difficult to give the theme or the central idea in one word.

Finally, theme is the controlling idea in a play which the reader extracts consciously as he reads the text. It could be literal or symbolic. It is that idea or message which the playwright wants to share with or convey to his audience. In most cases, the theme emerges after the exploration of the entire play. Some plays have more than one theme. The major one which stands out is the main theme while the others are called the sub-themes.

³⁹ Ibid. p-19

Subject Matter:

The subject matter is the topic of discussion in the play. It is easier to get the subject matter from the title of the play. Theme is the central idea of the play while the subject matter is the object of discussion from which the theme is extracted. It means therefore that the theme is subsumed in the subject matter. In *The Lion and the Jewel*, for instance, the subject matter is the fame of Sidi (the Jewel) a Weng and beautiful girl and her seduction by the Bale (the Lion) who is sixty two years old. From this example, we conclude that the subject matter is indeed the object of discussion which other events and incidents in a text or work help to highlight. This is the statement the play makes about the social world. In most cases, plays treat common human problems and make statements that have universal validity or relevance for all ages. Each playwright treats any of these human problems from his own perspective to give it a touch of originality and uniqueness. This is the style.

Characterization:

Characters are the persons in a dramatic work. The playwright endows them with moral and dispositional qualities which are expressed in their words and actions. The reasons for the character's action, his speech, his temperament constitute his motivation. In textual analysis, one could evaluate the character through the stage direction where some playwrights have some comments on the character's disposition, his age, his physical attributes, his mode of dressing and other information that could be found there. The next thing is to evaluate his interactions with other characters through which we discover whether he is a flat or round character. A flat character remains unchanged in his outlook and dispositions from the beginning to the end but a round character could undergo a gradual or radical change which is brought about by events in the play. It is difficult to predict the actions of a round character because he is usually very close to real human beings.

Anything if written about a character must be contained in the text. We should therefore not infer, guess or suggest a characteristic moral disposition or physical attribute that cannot be identified in the text. For instance, we can rightly say that Baroka in *The Lion and the Jewel* is a crafty rogue who excels in self-indulgence. One of the characters said that about him and his

action too in the scene where his current wife is pulling the hairs in his armpit and also in his seduction of Sidi.

Setting:

Setting is the place or the time where or when the action of the play takes place. In textual analysis, setting is also discussed.⁴⁰

Setting could be a tribe, a village a town or a country depending on the disposition of the playwright. In some plays like *Oedipus Rex*, *Arms and the Man*, *Hamlet* and many others, the playwrights mention specific towns/countries like Thebes, Bulgaria, and Denmark. However, in some other plays like *The Marriage of Anansewa*, *the Lion and the Jewel*, and *The Song of a Goat*, the setting of each play is identified through the names of characters or other landmarks. In *The Lion and the Jewel* for instance, the reference to 'sango' by some of the characters highlights the Yoruba background of the play. Setting in terms of time, period, or locale can be mentioned, implied or alluded to in the text.

Language:

Language seems to be the most essential technique in the analysis of any dramatic text. It is through language that the playwright communicates his ideas; so he manipulates it to suit his intention. Language could be in form of speech, gestures or other bodily signs/symbols. Dramatic language is not just an ordinary language because the playwright is compelled to incorporate descriptions about setting, character and the overall presentation of the story through the characters. The language must therefore be very economical, vivid and expressive. In *Oedipus Rex*, for example, the language is concise but loaded with meaning. Let us look at the following exchange in which Teiresias sums up the misfortunes of King Oedipus.

Oedipus: Man, must We wrap up Wer words in riddles?

Teiresias: Where We not framed for skill for solving riddles?

Oedipus: We taunt me with the gift that is my greatest.

⁴⁰ Aristotle's Poetics, translation by S.H Butcher, (Orange Street press classic,1997) part-4, p.18

Teiresias: Wer great misfortune and Wer ruin.

In the last line of this exchange, the Blind Seer states that by solving the riddles and becoming the king of Thebes, Oedipus paved the way for his misfortune, which is marrying his mother after having killed his father. Consequently, there is a plague in Thebes and this leads to the search for a solution. In the course of this search, Oedipus discovers his true identity and this leads to his ruin. Another good example of condensed language in *Hamlet* is Polonius' advice to his son, Laertes: "*Neither a borrower nor a lender be / for loan often loses itself and friendland borrowing dull that edge of husbandry*". So, in dramatic language, the dramatist must think in terms of the characteristics of the characters, their speeches, their actions and the environment in which they operate and incorporate them in language.⁴¹

This is important because unlike in prose, where the novelist has enough time and space to describe everything and this includes probing into the inner beings of the character, the dramatist relies only on dialogue to explore characters, describe incident, and create environment, atmosphere and mood. This is the reason why he pays attention to the diction. Diction is the choice or selection of the words which forms the dialogue through which the playwright communicates his ideas to his audience. The diction could be simple or difficult. A play that has very simple diction invariably will have a simple and direct language so is said to be accessible to a wider audience. This is because more people will read and understand it. Also, when it is presented on stage, people will understand the story and absorb the message with ease. In a play with simple diction, the playwright uses familiar and simple words. On the other hand, some plays are difficult to understand. They are usually filled with unfamiliar words, terms, and symbols. Such plays are said to be obscure and the playwright is said to be writing for a select audience. This is because many people will find it difficult to understand and appreciate the play. The problem here is that if we do not understand a play, we would not enjoy it or be entertained by it.

⁴¹ Dukore, B. F. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greek to Grotowsky*. (New York: Holt Reinhart and Winston, 1974) p.20

Other Devices

Imagery:

A playwright could employ literal or connotative language in his work. A literal language gives a direct meaning of the words while a connotative language gives more than one meaning to the word. The language here determines how we mentally visualize the object or situation. This is called **imagery**. It also shows the playwright's attitude towards a particular character or situation. In *The Lion and the Jewel*, for example, Baroka is referred to as a 'fox', a 'crafty rogue', 'wiry', 'goated', 'tougher than his sixty-two', these references help the reader to have a mental picture of Baroka.⁴²

The image of a character and his mode of dressing as described in a stage-direction helps us, to a large extent, to evaluate the character's disposition, personality, and the attitude of the playwright towards that character.

Symbolism:

In everyday life, we come across symbols and even use them at times. Symbols are objects or things that communicate meaning or messages without using words for example, a cross or a bible symbolizes Christianity. It could be a character, an object, or an incident which represents an idea, a person, a quality, a profession or situation.

Symbolism is an artistic device through which the playwright uses factual language in a way that it deviates from its simple function of describing or recording but used to stand for or represent something else not directly named. This means, therefore, that in a play, we could have symbolic action, symbolic object and symbolic character.

Irony:

A playwright uses irony to add flavor to his story. Here, a playwright uses words or action to create certain kinds of discrepancy between appearance and reality; between what is

⁴² Dukore, B. F. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greek to Grotowsky*. (New York: Holt Reinhart and Winston, 1974) p.57

said or done and what is meant or intended. The types are verbal irony, dramatic irony and situational irony.

Verbal Irony:

This is the simplest and commonest type of irony. It is a figure of speech where the word is the opposite of what is meant; for example, when he is a giant or the tallest man refers to a very short man.⁴³

Dramatic Irony:

Here, there is a contrast between what the character says or does and what the reader knows as the truth. If a speech is meant to be understood in one way by a certain character in a play but the audience understands it in a different way, the scenario becomes a dramatic irony. In other words, a character is under a delusion of a certain fact which has been overtaken by an intervening circumstance.

Situational Irony:

In irony of situation, the expectation does not come out in the way it is anticipated. It is a situation of appearance versus reality. The action of a character here is at variance with the consequences or result of the action.

Ancient Drama:

A number of ancient texts suggest that dramatic performances in ancient Egypt celebrated royal coronations and major religious holidays. Much more detailed records of drama come from classical Greece, where beginning in the 6th century BC the state organized annual dramatic festivals to honor the god Dionysus. A prize was given each year for the best *tetralogy*, a series of three related tragedies and a *satyr play*. The satyr play, which dealt comically or satirically with gods or heroes, provided a kind of comic relief after the seriousness of the tragic trilogy. The tragedies considered then and ever since as preeminent among dramatic forms, took their subjects from myth and history. Accompanied by commentary on the play's action by a

⁴³ Aristotle's Poetics, translation by S.H Butcher, (Orange Street press classic, 1997) part-4, p.54

chorus, tragedies brought their leading characters through suffering and often to the moment of death so they might achieve an insight into a higher law beyond normal human understanding.⁴⁴

The only complete tragic trilogy that has survived is the *Oresteia* (458 BC) of Aeschylus, which tells the story of Agamemnon, the leader of Greek forces in the Trojan War; his wife, Clytemnestra; and their children Electra and Orestes.

Renaissance Drama:

By the advent of the Renaissance in the 15th and 16th cent., most European countries had established native traditions of religious drama and farce that contended with the impact of the newly discovered Greek and Roman plays. Little had been known of classical drama during the Middle Ages, and evidently the only classical imitations during that period were the Christian imitations of Terence by the Saxon nun Hrotswitha in the 10th cent.

Medieval Drama:

The tradition of classical drama disappeared with the end of the Roman Empire in the 5th century A.D., and after almost 400 years a new tradition grew out of the rituals of the medieval Christian church. Certain sung passages from the liturgy were elaborated into short dialogues based on passages from the Bible, and these dramas, performed only in churches and monasteries, spread throughout Europe from the 10th to the 13th centuries. Around 1200 these plays began to be performed outdoors, and between then and 1350 they became more and more elaborate in size, subject matter, and physical staging. Instead of single biblical scenes or stories, they often included several stories. In England religious plays presented major events from the entire Bible in long cycles, from the creation of the world to the last judgment. Although still sponsored, written, and organized by church authorities, they involved entire communities in their staging and performance, which sometimes continued for several days.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Dukore, B. F. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greek to Grotowsky*. (New York: Holt Reinhart and Winston, 1974) P-31

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* P-32

In France, plays based on the lives and legends of saints rivaled biblical dramas in popularity. Some scholars have called these *miracle plays*, because they depict the miracles performed by saints, and have termed the plays based on the Bible *mystery plays* (from *mysterium*, Latin for “service” or “office,” referring to the members of trade guilds who often performed them). But the terms are often used interchangeably today. Another popular type of religious drama from the 14th century onward was the *morality play*, which taught religious lessons using allegorical characters such as Good Deeds, Riches, or ⁴⁶ Vice. The most famous morality play is *Everyman* (1500?), which describes Everyman's encounter with Death. Not all medieval drama was religious. Many secular plays have survived from the Netherlands, France, and Germany. Most common are short farces—rather crude and earthy pieces designed only to stimulate laughter. Often they involve pranks and trickery, as in the most famous of the plays, *Pierre Pathelin* (1470) from France. The oldest surviving secular play, *Le jeu de la feuillée* (The Play of the Greensward, 1276) by French poet and composer Adam de la Halle, mixes elements from folktales and fairy tales. His later *Jeu de Robin et Marion* (1283) *The Play of Robin and Marion*, with its songs and dances, has sometimes been called the first comic opera. Still other dramatic activities developed in late medieval royal courts. Tournaments—originally contests among knights—and court costume parties called *mummings* or *disguisings* gradually became more symbolic and elaborate. With the addition of scenery and scripts the mummings became the court masques of the Renaissance, which featured poetry, music, and dance, and told allegorical or mythical stories.

Italy :

The translation and imitation of the classics occurred first in Italy, with Terence, Plautus, and Seneca as the models. The Italians strictly applied their interpretation of Aristotle's rules for the drama, and this rigidity was primarily responsible for the failure of Italian Renaissance drama. Some liveliness appeared in the comic sphere, particularly in the works of Aristotle and in Machiavelli's satiric masterpiece, *La Mandragola*. The pastoral drama—set in the country and depicting the romantic affairs of rustic people, usually shepherds and

⁴⁶ Aristotle's *Poetics*, translation by S.H Butcher, (Orange Street press classic, 1997) part-4, P-45

shepherdesses—was more successful than either comedy or tragedy. Notable Italian practitioners of the genre were Giovanni Battista Guarini (1537-1612) and Torquato Tasso.

The true direction of the Italian stage was toward the spectacular and the musical. A popular Italian Renaissance form was the intermezzo, which presented music and lively entertainment between the acts of classical imitations. The native taste for music and theatricality led to the emergence of the opera in the 16th cent. And the triumph of this form on the Italian stage in the 17th cent. Similarly, the **commedia dell'arte**, emphasizing comedy and improvisation and featuring character types familiar to a contemporary audience, was more popular than academic imitations of classical comedy.

France :

Renaissance drama appeared somewhat later in France than in Italy. Estienne Jodelle Senecan's tragedy *Cleopatre captive* (1553) marks the beginning of classical imitation in France. The French drama initially suffered from the same rigidity as the Italian, basing itself on Roman models and Italian imitations. However, in the late 16th century in France there was a romantic reaction to classical dullness, led by Alexandre Hardy, France's first professional playwright.⁴⁷ This romantic trend was stopped in the 17th cent. by Cardinal Richelieu, who insisted on a return to classic forms. Richelieu's judgment, however, bore fruit in the triumphs of the French neoclassical tragedies of Jean Racine and the comedies of Molière. The great tragedies of Pierre Corneille, although classical in their grandeur and in their concern with noble characters, are decidedly of the Renaissance in their exaltation of man's ability, by force of will, to transcend adverse circumstances.

Spain:

Renaissance drama in Spain and England was more successful than in France and Italy because the two former nations were able to transform classical models with infusions of native characteristics. In Spain the two leading Renaissance playwrights were **Lope de Vega** and **Pedro Calderón de la Barca**. Earlier, **Lope de Rueda** had set the tone for future Spanish drama with

⁴⁷ Dukore, B. F. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greek to Grotowsky*. (New York: Holt Reinhart and Winston, 1974) . p.46

plays that are romantic, lyrical, and generally in the mixed tragicomic form. Lope de VEGA wrote an enormous number of plays of many types, emphasizing plot, character, and romantic action. Best known for his *La vida es sueño* [life is a dream], a play that questions the nature of reality, Calderón was a more controlled and philosophical writer than Lope.

England :

The English drama of the 16th century showed from the beginning that it would not be bound by classical rules. Elements of farce, morality, and a disregard for the unities of time, place, and action inform the early comedies *Gammer Gurton's Needle* and *Ralph Roister Doister* (both c.1553) and the Senecan tragedy *Gorboduc* (1562). William Shakespeare's great work was foreshadowed by early essays in the historical chronicle play, by elements of romance found in the works of John Lyly, by revenge plays such as Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (c.1586)—again inspired by the works of Seneca—and by Christopher Marlowe's development of blank verse and his deepening of the tragic perception. Shakespeare, of course, stands as the supreme dramatist of the Renaissance period, equally adept at writing tragedies, comedies, or chronicle plays. His great achievements include the perfection of a verse form and language that capture the spirit of ordinary speech and yet stand above it to give a special dignity to his characters and situations; an unrivaled subtlety of characterization; and a marvelous ability to unify plot, character, imagery, and verse movement. With the reign of James I the English drama began to decline until the closing of the theaters by the Puritans in 1642. This period is marked by sensationalism and rhetoric in tragedy, as in the works of John Webster and Thomas Middleton, spectacle in the form of the masque, and a gradual turn to polished wit in comedy, begun by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher and furthered by James Shirley.⁴⁸

The best plays of the Jacobean period are the comedies of Ben Jonson, in which he satirized contemporary life by means of his own invention, the comedy of humors.

Drama from 1750 to 1800 :

The second half of the 17th century was distinguished by the achievements of the French neoclassicists and the Restoration playwrights in England. Jean Racine brought clarity of

⁴⁸ Aristotle's Poetics, translation by S.H Butcher, (Orange Street press classic, 1997) part-4, p.32

perception and simplicity of language to his love tragedies, which emphasize women characters and psychological motivation. Molière produced brilliant social comedies that are neoclassical in their ridicule of any sort of excess. In England, Restoration tragedy degenerated into bombastic heroic dramas by such authors as John Dryden and Thomas Otway. Often written in rhymed heroic couplets, these plays are replete with sensational incidents and epic personages. But Restoration comedy, particularly the brilliant comedies of manners by George Etherege and William Congreve, achieved a perfection of style and cynical upper-class wit that is still appreciated. The works of William Wycherley, while similar in type, are more savage and deeply cynical. George Farquhar was a later and gentler master of Restoration comedy.

Eighteenth-Century Drama:

The influence of Restoration comedy can be seen in the 18th century in the plays of Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan. This century also ushered in the middle-class or domestic drama, which treated the problems of ordinary people. George Lillo's *London Merchant; or, The History of George Barnwell* (1731), is an important example of this type of play because it brought the bourgeois tragic hero to the English stage.⁴⁹ Such playwrights as Sir Richard Steele and Colley Cibber in England and Marivaux in France contributed to the development of the genteel, sentimental comedy. While the political satire in the plays of Henry Fielding and in John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (1728) seemed to offer a more interesting potential than the sentiment of Cibber, this line of development was cut off by the Licensing Act of 1737, which required government approval before a play could be produced. The Italian Carlo Goldoni, who wrote realistic comedies with fairly sophisticated characterizations, also tended toward middle-class moralizing. His contemporary, Count Carlo Gozzi, was more ironic and remained faithful to the spirit of the commedia dell'arte. Prior to the surge of German romanticism in the late 18th cent., two playwrights stood apart from the trend toward sentimental bourgeois realism. Voltaire tried to revive classical models and introduced exotic Eastern settings, although his tragedies tend to be more philosophical than dramatic. Similarly, the Italian Count Vittorio Alfieri sought to restore the spirit of the ancients to his drama, but the attempt was vitiated by his chauvinism. The *Sturm und Drang* in Germany represented a romantic

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p-76

reaction against French neoclassicism and was supported by an upsurge of German interest in Shakespeare, who was viewed at the time as the greatest of the romantics. Gotthold Lessing, Friedrich von Schiller, and Goethe were the principal figures of this movement, but the plays produced by the three are frequently marred by sentimentality and too heavy a burden of philosophical ideas.

Nineteenth-Century Drama:

The romantic movement did not blossom in French drama until the 1820s, and then primarily in the work of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas père, while in England the great Romantic poets did not produce important drama, although both Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley were practitioners of the closet drama.⁵⁰ Burlesque and mediocre melodrama reigned supreme on the English stage.

Although melodrama was aimed solely at producing superficial excitement, its development, coupled with the emergence of realism in the 19th cent., resulted in more serious drama. Initially, the melodrama dealt in such superficially exciting materials as the gothic castle with its mysterious lord for a villain, but gradually the characters and settings moved closer to the realities of contemporary life. The concern for generating excitement led to a more careful consideration of plot construction, reflected in the smoothly contrived climaxes of the "well-made" plays of Eugène Scribe and Victorien Sardou of France and Arthur Wing Pinero of England. The work of Émile Augier and Alexandre Dumas fils combined the drama of ideas with the "well-made" play. Realism had perhaps its most profound expression in the works of the great 19th-century Russian dramatists: Nikolai Gogol, A. N. Ostrovsky, Ivan Turgenev, Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov, and Maxim Gorky. Many of the Russian dramatists emphasized character and satire rather than plot in their works.

Related to realism is naturalism, which can be defined as a selective realism emphasizing the more sordid and pessimistic aspects of life. An early forerunner of this style in the drama is Georg Büchner's powerful tragedy *Danton's Death* (1835), and an even earlier suggestion may be seen in the pessimistic romantic tragedies of Heinrich von Kleist. Friedrich

⁵⁰ *ibid.* p- 43

Hebbel wrote grimly naturalistic drama in the middle of the 19th cent., but the naturalistic movement is most commonly identified with the "slice-of-life" theory of Émile Zola, which had a profound effect on 20th-century playwrights.

Henrik Ibsen of Norway brought to a climax the realistic movement of the 19th century and also served as a bridge to 20th-century symbolism. His realistic dramas of ideas surpass other such works because they blend a complex plot, a detailed setting, and middle-class yet extraordinary characters in an organic whole. Ibsen's later plays, such as *The Master Builder* (1892), are symbolic,⁵¹ marking a trend away from realism that was continued by August Strindberg's dream plays, with their emphasis on the spiritual, and by the plays of the Belgian Maurice Maeterlinck, who incorporated into drama the theories of the symbolist poets.

While these anti-realistic developments took place on the Continent, two playwrights were making unique contributions to English theater. Oscar Wilde produced comedies of manners that compare favorably with the works of Congreve, and George Bernard Shaw brought the play of ideas to fruition with penetrating intelligence and singular wit.

Twentieth-Century Drama:

During the 20th cent., especially after World War I, Western drama became more internationally unified and less the product of separate national literary traditions. Throughout the century realism, naturalism, and symbolism (and various combinations of these) continued to inform important plays. Among the many 20th-century playwrights who have written what can be broadly termed naturalist dramas are Gerhart Hauptmann (German), John Galsworthy (English), John Millington Synge and Sean O'Casey (Irish), and Eugene O'Neill, Clifford Odets, and Lillian Hellman (American).

An important movement in early 20th-century drama was expressionism. Expressionist playwrights tried to convey the dehumanizing aspects of 20th-century technological society through such devices as minimal scenery, telegraphic dialogue, talking machines, and characters portrayed as types rather than individuals. Notable playwrights who wrote expressionist dramas include Ernst Toller and Georg Kaiser (German), Karel Čapek (Czech), and Elmer Rice and

⁵¹ *ibid*

Eugene O'Neill (American). The 20th century also saw the attempted revival of drama in verse, but although such writers as William Butler Yeats, W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot, Christopher Fry, and Maxwell Anderson produced effective results, verse drama was no longer an important form in English. In Spanish, however, the poetic dramas of Federico García Lorca are placed among the great works of Spanish literature.

Three vital figures of 20th-century drama are the American Eugene O'Neill, the German Bertolt Brecht, and the Italian Luigi Pirandello. O'Neill's body of plays in many forms—naturalistic, expressionist, symbolic, psychological—won him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1936 and indicated the coming-of-age of American drama. Brecht wrote dramas of ideas, usually promulgating socialist or Marxist theory. In order to make his audience more intellectually receptive to his theses, he endeavored—by using expressionist techniques—to make them continually aware that they were watching a play, not vicariously experiencing reality. For Pirandello, too, it was paramount to fix an awareness of his plays as theater; indeed, the major philosophical concern of his dramas is the difficulty of differentiating between illusion and reality.

World War II and its attendant horrors produced a widespread sense of the utter meaninglessness of human existence.⁵²

This sense is brilliantly expressed in the body of plays that have come to be known collectively as the theater of the absurd. By abandoning traditional devices of the drama, including logical plot development, meaningful dialogue, and intelligible characters, absurdist playwrights sought to convey modern humanity's feelings of bewilderment, alienation, and despair—the sense that reality is itself unreal. In their plays human beings often portrayed as dupes, clowns who, although not without dignity, are at the mercy of forces that are inscrutable.

Probably the most famous plays of the theater of the absurd are Eugene Ionesco's *Bald Soprano* (1950) and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953). The sources of the theater of the absurd are diverse; they can be found in the tenets of surrealism, Dadaism and existentialism;

⁵² Dukore, B. F. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greek to Grotowsky*. (New York: Holt Reinhart and Winston, 1974) p.86

in the traditions of the music hall, vaudeville, and burlesque; and in the films of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. Playwrights whose works can be roughly classed as belonging to the theater of the absurd are Jean Genet (French), Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt (Swiss), Fernando Arrabal (Spanish), and the early plays of Edward Albee (American). The pessimism and despair of the 20th century also found expression in the existentialist dramas of Jean-Paul Sartre, in the realistic and symbolic dramas of Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Jean Anouilh, and in the surrealist plays of Jean Cocteau.

Some what similar to the theater of the absurd is the so-called theater of cruelty, derived from the ideas of Antonin Artaud, who, writing in the 1930s, foresaw a drama that would assault its audience with movement and sound, producing a visceral rather than an intellectual reaction. After the violence of World War II and the subsequent threat of the atomic bomb, his approach seemed particularly appropriate to many playwrights.⁵³

Elements of the theater of cruelty can be found in the brilliantly abusive language of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) and Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), in the ritualistic aspects of some of Genet's plays, in the masked utterances and enigmatic silences of Harold Pinter's "comedies of menace," and in the orgiastic abandon of Julian Beck's *Paradise Now!* (1968); it was fully expressed in Peter Brooks's production of Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade* (1964).

During the last third of the 20th century a few continental European dramatists, such as Dario Fo in Italy and Heiner Müller in Germany, stand out in the theater world. However, for the most part, the countries of the continent saw an emphasis on creative trends in directing rather than a flowering of new plays. In the United States and England, however, many dramatists old and new continued to flourish, with numerous plays of the later decades of the 20th century (and the early 21st cent.) echoing the trends of the years preceding them.

⁵³ Ibid. P-46

Realism in a number of guises—psychological, social, and political—continued to be a force in such British works as David Storey's *Home* (1971), Sir Alan Ayckbourn's *Norman Conquests* trilogy (1974), and David Hare's *Amy's View* (1998).⁵⁴

In such Irish dramas as Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) and Martin McDonagh's 1990s Leenane trilogy; and in such American plays as Jason Miller's *That Championship Season* (1972), Lanford Wilson's *Talley's Folly* (1979), and John Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation* (1990). In keeping with the tenor of the times, many of these and other works of the period were marked by elements of wit, irony, and satire.

The late decades of the 20th century were also a time of considerable experiment and iconoclasm. Experimental dramas of the 1960s and 70s by such groups as Beck's Living Theater and Jerzy Grotowski's Polish Laboratory Theatre were followed by a mixing and merging of various kinds of media with aspects of postmodernism, improvisational techniques, performance art, and other kinds of *avant-garde* theater. Some of the era's more innovative efforts included productions by theater groups such as New York's La MaMa (1961-) and Mabou Mines (1970-) and Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Co. (1976-); the Canadian writer-director Robert Lepage's intricate, sometimes multilingual works, e.g. *Tectonic Plates* (1988); the inventive one-man shows of such monologists as Eric Bogosian, Spalding Gray, and John Leguizamo; the transgressive drag dramas of Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theater, e.g., *The Mystery of Irma Vep* (1984); and the operatic multimedia extravaganzas of Robert Wilson, e.g. *White Raven* (1999).

Thematically, the social upheavals of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s—particularly the civil rights and women's movements, gay liberation, and the AIDS crisis—provided impetus for new plays that explored the lives of minorities and women. Beginning with Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), drama by and about African Americans emerged as a significant theatrical trend. In the 1960s plays such as James Baldwin's *Blues for Mr. Charley* (1964), Amiri Baraka's searing *Dutchman* (1964), and Charles Gordone's *No Place to Be Somebody*

⁵⁴ Aristotle's *Poetics*, translation by S.H Butcher, (Orange Street press classic,1997) part-4, p.45

(1967) explored black American life; writers including Ed Bullins (e.g., *The Taking of Miss Janie*, 1975).⁵⁵

Ntozake Shange (e.g., *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, 1976) and Charles Fuller (e.g., *A Soldier's Play*, 1981) carried these themes into later decades. One of the most distinctive and prolific of the century's African-American playwrights, August Wilson, debuted on Broadway in 1984 with *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and continued to define the black American experience in his ongoing dramatic cycle into the next century.

Feminist and other women-centered themes dramatized by contemporary female playwrights were plentiful in the 1970s and extended in the following decades. Significant figures included England's Caryl Churchill (e.g., the witty *Top Girls*, 1982), the Cuban-American experimentalist Maria Irene Fornés (e.g., *Fefu and Her Friends*, 1977) and American realists including Beth Henley (e.g., *Crimes of the Heart*, 1978), Marsha Norman (e.g., *Night Mother*, 1982), and Wendy Wasserstein (e.g., *The Heidi Chronicles*, 1988). Skilled monologists also provided provocative female-themed one-women shows such as Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* (1996) and various solo theatrical performances by Lily Tomlin, Karen Finley, Anna Deveare Smith, Sarah Jones, and others.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* P-45

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* P-98