

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

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Annotation: This study examines the literary development of poetic drama in the works of 20th-century English poets, with a particular focus on **T.S. Eliot** and **W.B. Yeats**. Both poets revitalized poetic drama by blending traditional verse forms with modern themes, creating works that bridged the gap between classical influence and contemporary concerns. Eliot, through plays like *Murder in the Cathedral* and *The Family Reunion*, brought religious and philosophical depth to the stage. Meanwhile, Yeats infused Irish mythology and symbolism into his dramas, such as *At the Hawk's Well* and *The Death of Cuchulain*, contributing to the Irish Literary Revival. The annotation explores how these poets used poetic language not just for aesthetic value, but to explore identity, time, and spiritual conflict.

Key Words: Poetic drama, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, 20th-century English literature, Verse drama, Modernism, Symbolism, Irish Literary Revival, Religious and philosophical themes, Classical and mythological influence, Stage experimentation.

Аннотация: В этом исследовании рассматривается литературное развитие поэтической драмы в произведениях английских поэтов 20-го века, с особым акцентом на Т. С. Элиота и У. Б. Йейтса. Оба поэта возродили поэтическую драму, смешав традиционные стихотворные формы с современными темами, создав произведения, которые перекинули мост между классическим влиянием и современными проблемами. Элиот через такие пьесы, как «Убийство в соборе» и «Семейное воссоединение», привнес религиозную и философскую глубину на сцену. Между тем, Йейтс привнес ирландскую мифологию и символизм в свои драмы, такие как «У ястреба» и «Смерть Кухулина», способствуя ирландскому литературному возрождению. В аннотации рассматривается, как эти поэты использовали поэтический язык не только для эстетической ценности, но и для исследования идентичности, времени и духовного конфликта.

Ключевые слова: поэтическая драма, Т. С. Элиот, У. Б. Йейтс, английская литература XX века, стихотворная драма, модернизм, символизм, ирландское литературное возрождение, религиозные и философские темы, классическое и мифологическое влияние, сценические эксперименты.

Since Yeats, 'Uncle Wm' had by this time been dead almost twenty years it might be thought that Pound's speculation could not help but be retrospective, but his description of it as 'insemination' seems to suggest more fertile possibilities, even that he considers the relationship between two of the greatest poets writing in the twentieth century is still pregnant with possibilities. Later critics have almost uniformly agreed with Pound's estimation that the two writers were suspicious or hostile towards each other's work—although it is conceded that after Yeats was safely dead Eliot's attitude towards him softened, and that he made amends with a noble commemorative lecture in Dublin in 1940, and with the inclusion of Yeats as a significant element in the 'compound' ghost in his last great poem *Little Gidding*.

Reading the newly available letters between both poets, as well as hitherto uncollected articles and prose, suggests that the relationship between Yeats and Eliot was more complex and less antipathetic than has been hitherto thought, and I want to argue that under an apparent indifference, or lack of 'mutual illumination', the two men were not only far more conscious of each other than is generally recognised, but that, ironically, they were more alike in their thinking, or at least in sharing common concerns in their thinking, than they were like Pound—although he impinged more obviously, and boisterously, on both their careers. And there is this implication in Pound's very words. His regret is not that there was no 'mutual illumination' between Yeats and Eliot but that such a potential illumination regrettably lacked sufficient wattage, so that it did not refract and reflect as brightly as he thought it could and should have done. In this sense it is worth exploring just what was 'mutual' in the two poets' 'illumination', and in what ways they might be said to have 'neglected to develop' it. And we might remark that, as in the case of matches and flint, illumination may be generated from friction as much as from recognition and assent.

Yeats was already an established poet of forty-nine in 1914, when Eliot arrived in England for what turned out to be a permanent residence. His radical change in style and theme, increasingly evident after he had 'got down off his stilts' at the turn of the century, was unmistakably registered in his book *Responsibilities* of that year, a fact that Pound understood but Eliot did not. Indeed, Pound, if not the catalytic influence some critics have claimed, certainly encouraged Yeats to be bolder in his poetic experiments. He also exerted an important influence on Eliot—but again, as in his dealings with Yeats, this was less in converting him to new forms and styles than in encouraging him to persevere and develop the poetry he was already writing. Pound at once understood the precocity and individuality of the twenty-six-year-old Eliot, recalling later that he was so poetically gifted as to have evolved his own modernist style apparently by himself. This very self-fashioning kept Eliot aloof from Yeats. Whereas Pound had arrived in London, five years before him, eager to become a disciple (Dorothy Shakespear recalled in her journal that in February 1909 he 'talked of Yeats, as one of the Twenty of the world who have added to the World's poetic matter' and 'read a short piece of Yeats, in a voice dropping with emotion, in a voice like Yeats's own'⁴), Eliot needed no such addition to his poetic matter.

If not influenced by Yeats, Eliot was, from early in his English career, keenly aware of him and within a few months of his arrival in Oxford engineered a meeting. In February 1915 he intimated to Pound that he hoped to make Yeats's acquaintance, and Pound, who had recently

acted as Yeats's secretary, took the hint and brought him to one of Yeats's famous 'Monday Evening' gatherings, probably on 8 March. Thus by 4 April 1915 Eliot could report that he had 'had the pleasure of meeting Yeats': 'he is now in Ireland', he went on, but 'I am hoping for him to return—he is a very agreeable talker'.⁶ It is probable that the two bumped into each other reasonably often over the next few years, particularly given their shared friendship with Pound; there is evidence, for instance, that Eliot attended one of the exclusive performances of Yeats's first Noh play, *At the Hawk's Well*, in London in April 1916. On 2 March 1917 he was constrained to curtail the pleasure of Yeats's 'agreeable' talk by the intervention of a popular novelist when, as he reported in a letter to Eleanor Hinkley, he found himself at 'a gathering of a curious zoo of people known as the Omega Club, and was sitting on a mat (as is the custom in such circles) discussing psychical research with William Butler Yeats (the only thing he ever talks about, except Dublin gossip) when a red-faced, sprucely dressed man with an air of impertinent prosperity and the aspect of a successful wholesale grocer came up and interrupted us with a most disagreeable Cockney accent....

Conclusion:

The 20th century witnessed a profound transformation in poetic drama, led by visionary poets like T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats, who revived and reshaped the form to reflect the complexities of modern life. Through their distinct yet complementary approaches, both poets reestablished the dramatic potential of poetry, combining lyrical intensity with philosophical depth. Yeats drew upon Irish myth, symbolism, and spiritualism to craft poetic plays that explored national identity, destiny, and transcendence. Eliot, conversely, fused classical structure with modern existential concerns, infusing his plays with psychological realism and religious inquiry. Together, their works not only bridged the gap between poetic tradition and dramatic innovation but also redefined poetic drama as a powerful medium for intellectual and spiritual exploration in the modern age. Their legacy continues to influence both literature and theater, standing as a testament to the enduring vitality of poetic expression on the stage.

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4. *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume I: 1898–1922*, eds. Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), 103. Hereafter TSE, *Letters I*.