

The Politics of Irish Drama analyses some twenty-five of the best-known Irish plays from Dion Boucicault to Sebastian Barry, including works of Shaw, Yeats, Lady Gregory and Beckett.

Show results in search Up to the arrival of W. Yeats in the s, the Irish theatre was colonial. Yeats, with a little help from his friends Edward Martyn and Augusta Gregory, made it anti-colonial. After the founding of the Irish Free State in it became postcolonial. Theatre and drama were thus not native art forms; the idea of a theatre in the conventional sense lay outside Irish culture. Needless to say, its appeal was always to a minority audience, the vast majority of the population being excluded. There were two main aims: The project was both ambitious and idealistic, appealing to the nationalist impulses of those who had been followers of Charles Stewart Parnell and were committed to Home Rule. With his experience as playwright for J. So he took a hand in rehearsals and tried to ensure that the programme was professional in style and production. This inauguration was to set the mould for the reception of controversial Irish plays hereafter. The Irish Literary Theatre then dissolved. Because of the incongruous involvement of the Benson Company, this venture was at best but an interesting episode. Yet while Moore and Martyn were happy to abandon the project Yeats was determined to press on in the search for a more authentic Irish theatre. A one-act play in Irish which completed the bill with Diarmuid and Grania in gave him his way forward. Yeats admired the simple acting style and made contact with Fay and his brother Frank, two enthusiasts who knew more about modern theatre than Yeats did, for they ran their own little company and were well aware of the new ideas on naturalism coming from Paris. They admired the Irish Literary Theatre but thought Yeats too immersed in vague symbolism. Our drama ought to teach us to face it. Let Mr Yeats give us a play in prose or verse that will rouse this sleeping land. The way was now open for the development of a form of realism which was close to the people, simple yet deeply moving, and staged with all the authenticity of setting, costume and acting style that naturalism commanded. The style thus evolved to suit the repertory, which was predominantly realistic but never entirely so: James Joyce, then only 22, disagreed violently with this new development of the Irish theatre and in *The Day of the Rabblement* accused Yeats of betraying the mission Ibsen had laid down for modern drama by turning to peasant life for theme and representation. In his only play, *Exiles*, Joyce remained true to Ibsen but showed how far removed his preoccupations were from this theatre. This little theatre capacity just over and its small stage only 21 feet at proscenium opening and just over 16 feet to back wall was to establish a remarkable repertory of new plays of Irish life. Yeats, Lady Gregory and J. Synge was the first genius to stamp the new dramatic movement with greatness. For him truthfulness and poetry were the primary ingredients for dramatic representation. *Riders to the Sea*, while only a one-acter, selects the lives of the Aran fisherfolk as representative of traditional and yet timeless endurance. *The Well of the Saints* was more subversive: But it was in his masterpiece, *The Playboy of the Western World*, that Synge showed himself at his most comically inventive and most iconoclastic. There is something mythic about this play, with its Oedipal implications, and at the same time something robustly anarchic and archetypal. A most versatile writer, Lady Gregory also wrote history plays, comedies, tragedies and what she called wonder plays, such as *The Dragon and The Golden Apple*. Although her plays are now little acted, she made an enormous contribution to the Abbey repertory and influenced many in characterization and the use of dramatic speech. The Abbey suffered a blow in when Miss Horniman withdrew her annual subsidy. But as the political situation worsened at home, culminating in the Rising and the Anglo-Irish war, the theatre was often under curfew and constantly struggling for survival. Somewhat taken aback, the government declined the offer and instead awarded the Abbey an annual subsidy, the first such in the English-speaking world. In its jubilee celebrations in the Abbey looked back on the production of no fewer than new plays though many of them were one-acters. The writers who had emerged since were mostly in the grimmer realistic vein, such as Lennox Robinson and T. Then Robinson suddenly provided what was to be his most successful play, *The Whiteheaded Boy*, a well-made comedy of rural family conflict. Robinson, who was manager at the Abbey, and director from , contributed over 20 plays during his long career, many of which were subsequently produced in London and

New York. In Ireland, where his reputation sadly declined after his death in 1902, the highly successful revival of *The Whiteheaded Boy* in 1903 by the inventive, mime-based Barabbas the Company showed young audiences just how clever a playwright Robinson was. The colonial period came to a violent end with the birth of the Free State and the ensuing civil war. These included Barry Fitzgerald, F. His contemporaries tended to be less iconoclastic. Murray and George Shiels showed that rural tragedies and comedies were by no means defunct, in *Autumn Fire* and *Professor Tim* respectively. This conservative streak in Irish drama was to persist for another generation, during which the Abbey repertory dwindled to predictable and conventional representations of mainly rural life. In that regard he stands as key to the culture itself in the 1920s and after. Paul Vincent Carroll provides evidence that the intellectual Catholic playwright the majority up to and including Johnston being Protestant could also be iconoclastic. The infuriated Carroll had the play staged in New York. The director, Hugh Hunt, then resigned from the Abbey. With the death of Yeats in 1937, following that of Lady Gregory in 1935, the Abbey fell into the hands of ultra-conservatives. The Abbey narrowed its ambitions. Under the management of Ernest Blythe, a former minister of finance and a fanatic for the restoration of the Irish language, there was a purging from the company of actors who were not bilingual in Irish and English, and at the same time an avoidance of anything experimental in form or content in the repertory. It became more respectable for authors to be rejected by the Abbey than to be staged. When the Abbey burned down in July 1931 there were those who said it had to be from spontaneous combustion, so conspicuous was the decline in artistic standards. Long runs of established Abbey favourites became the order of the day. New writers, such as M. Molloy and Walter Macken, continued in old moulds, inviting laughter rather than thoughtful discussion much less controversy. Irish drama was in the doldrums. Only in the basement theatres which sprang up in the 1930s was there hope of renewed vitality. The Pike Theatre in Herbert Lane was one of these. Simpson was convicted, and the legal costs which were incurred before the conviction was quashed by the Supreme Court led to the collapse of the Pike. The case highlights the repressive atmosphere of Irish society at the time. The result was the cancellation of the Dublin Theatre Festival. Beckett, it has to be said, had little to do with the Irish theatre. He did not write either for it or about Irish matters. He was the complete outsider in an age that began to worship the outsider. Ironically, Behan was assimilated into the new revolution in the British theatre in the 1930s. The *Hostage* kicked Irish drama out of its wartime isolation at last. Its postcolonial stance was altogether mocking. A new phase of that drama, now influenced by new ideas from abroad, was about to begin. In that sense, they were all iconoclasts, at a time when Ireland was about to undergo a massive series of social changes. Tom Murphy, the most outspoken of the three, was early rejected by the Abbey. In September 1957 Murphy then took his play to London, where it was a major success. Hugh Leonard, who actually learned his craft at the Abbey with a couple of early plays, saw success in London with his *Stephen D*, the hit of the Dublin Theatre Festival. A breakthrough was at hand. At first sight a fairly conventional Irish family play, this is actually a series of attacks on Irish certitudes. In particular the priest is held accountable for failing to provide the spiritual nourishment necessary to an emotionally famished family. Further, the main character is divided in two, played on stage by two actors *Private* and *Public*, which serves to define the psychic turmoil of a society torn between worship of authority and the need to be fully independent. These three writers developed in quite different ways from this decisive moment in the history of Irish drama. Murphy went on to write powerful dramatizations of the modern Irish spirit in search of wholeness, which involved a good deal of bitter denunciation of Irish religious authority, in plays from *Famine* through *The Sanctuary Lamp* to his masterpiece *The Gigli Concert*. Friel was somewhere in between, angry like Murphy but at the same time controlled and somewhat amused at the Ireland he saw around him, like Leonard. *Faith Healer* is undoubtedly his masterpiece in this line, although *Living Quarters* and *Aristocrats* are not far behind. Many of these plays saw life on the stage of the new Abbey, opened in July 1933 on the site of the old. With a similar seating capacity to the old Abbey, it was geared up for the technological age. Within five years an experimental annex, the *Peacock*, was added capacity, with totally flexible stage arrangements, and the position of artistic director was created the first being Hugh Hunt. The gap between the Dublin Gate and the Abbey then began to narrow, as the Abbey staged Chekhov, Wilde, Shaw and Shakespeare in the best modern designs, alongside exciting new productions of Irish plays, often by new writers such as Thomas Kilroy and Eugene McCabe. Room was

found for the plays of John B. Keane, whose *Sive* had been rejected by Blythe in . Of these, McGuinness has since proved the most successful, his *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* establishing an international reputation. In , when violence exploded in Northern Ireland, it seemed to many that a new Irish drama must emerge there to chart the events. There had, of course, been a strong Northern theatre prior to , and writers such as St John Ervine, Rutherford Mayne and Sam Thompson had shown the gritty, intransigent side of Northern life. The Lyric Players Theatre in Belfast made a valiant effort after to establish a genuinely artistic centre but was probably compromised by its undisguised nationalism in a community with a two-thirds unionist majority. The plays of Martin Lynch, for instance, could be seen as partisan, while a Protestant writer like Graham Reid felt more comfortable writing for the Abbey. Women playwrights such as Christina Reid and Anne Devlin offered much promise but failed to reconcile themes of tribal politics and feminist issues. It was an exciting episode in Irish theatrical history. But in the end the attempt to intervene politically in the Northern problem proved too great for Field Day, always hampered by the lack of a home base with a permanent theatre. The end was inevitable once Friel offered *Dancing at Lughnasa* to the Abbey in . Since the ceasefire was established in the North in theatre has expanded, especially in Belfast.

Chapter 2 : Irish theatre - Wikipedia

The Politics of Irish Drama analyzes some twenty-five of the best-known Irish plays from those of Dion Boucicault to Sebastian Barry, including works by Shaw, Yeats, Lady Gregory and Beckett. The book looks at political contexts for these plays and, in arguing for the outward-directed nature of.

Despite alterations to the interior, structurally the building remains exactly as it was designed and first constructed, and it is thus considered the oldest purpose-built theatre building in Ireland. Mountjoy started a fashion, and private performances became quite commonplace in great houses all over Ireland over the following thirty years. The Werburgh Street Theatre in Dublin is generally identified as the "first custom-built theatre in the city," "the only pre-Restoration playhouse outside London," and the "first Irish playhouse. Many of them went to Kilkenny to join a confederacy of Old English and Irish that formed in that city. Kilkenny had a tradition of dramatic performance going back to , and the Dublin company, much attenuated, set up in their new home. Ogilby was reinstated as Master of the Revels and returned to Dublin to open a new theatre in Smock Alley. Although starting well, this new theatre was essentially under the control of the administration in Dublin Castle and staged mainly pro-Stuart works and Shakespearean classics. As a result, Irish playwrights and actors of real talent were drawn to London. The Restoration[edit] An early example of this trend is William Congreve , one of the most important writers for the late 18th London stage. After graduating, Congreve moved to London to study law at the Temple and pursue a literary career. His first play, *The Old Bachelor* was sponsored by John Dryden , and he went on to write at least four more plays. The last of these, *The Way of the World* is the one Congreve work regularly revived on the modern stage. However, at the time of its creation, it was a relative failure and he wrote no further works for the theatre. With the accession to the throne of William of Orange , the whole ethos of Dublin Castle, including its attitude to the theatre, changed. However, the one constant for the next years was that the main action in the history of Irish theatre happened outside Ireland itself, mainly in London. The 18th century[edit] Oliver Goldsmith The 18th century saw the emergence of two major Irish dramatists, Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan , who were two of the most successful playwrights on the London stage in the 18th century. Goldsmith " was born in Roscommon and grew up in extremely rural surroundings. He entered Trinity College in and graduated in This latter was a huge success and is still regularly revived. Sheridan " was born in Dublin into a family with a strong literary and theatrical tradition. His mother was a writer and his father was manager of Smock Alley Theatre. His first play, *The Rivals* , was performed at Covent Garden and was an instant success. He went on to become the most significant London playwright of the late 18th century with plays like *The School for Scandal* and *The Critic*. The theatre burned down in , and Sheridan lived out the rest of his life in reduced circumstances. The 19th century[edit] After Sheridan, the next Irish dramatist of historical importance was Dion Boucicault " Boucicault was born in Dublin but went to England to complete his education. At school, he began writing dramatic sketches and soon took up acting under the stage name of Lee Morton. His first London production was *London Assurance* This was a great success and he seemed set to become the major writer of comedies of his day. However, his next few plays were not as successful and Boucicault found himself in debt. He recovered some of his reputation with *The Corsican Brothers* , a well constructed melodrama. These plays tackled issues such as urban poverty and slavery. Boucicault was also involved in getting the law on copyright passed through Congress. He wrote several more successful plays, including *The Shaughran* and *Robert Emmet* These later plays helped perpetuate the stereotype of the drunken, hotheaded, garrulous Irishman that had been common on the British stage since the time of Shakespeare. Boucicault is widely regarded as the wittiest Irish dramatist between Sheridan and Oscar Wilde " Wilde was born in Dublin into a literary family and studied at Trinity College, where he had a brilliant career. In he won a scholarship to Magdalen College, Oxford. Here he began his career as a writer, winning the Newdigate Prize for his poem *Ravenna*. His studies were cut short during his second year at Oxford when his father died leaving large debts. During a short but glittering literary career, Wilde wrote poetry, short stories, criticism and a novel, but his plays probably represent his most enduring legacy. He remains one of the great figures in

the history of Irish theatre and his plays are frequently performed all over the English-speaking world. Born in Dublin, Shaw moved to London in intending to become a novelist. Here he became active in socialist politics and became a member of the Fabian Society. He was also a very public vegetarian. His writing for the stage was influenced by Henrik Ibsen. Shaw was extremely prolific, and his collected writings filled 36 volumes. Many of his plays are now forgotten, but a number, including *Major Barbara*, *Saint Joan* usually considered his masterpiece and *Pygmalion* are still regularly performed. *Pygmalion* was the basis for the movie *My Fair Lady*, a fact which benefitted the National Gallery of Ireland as Shaw had left the royalties of the play to the gallery. A statue to the playwright now stands outside the gallery entrance. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925. A sea change in the history of the Irish theatre came with the establishment in Dublin in 1904 of the Irish Literary Theatre by W. B. Yeats. Equally importantly, through the introduction by Yeats, via Ezra Pound, of elements of the Noh theatre of Japan, a tendency to mythologise quotidian situations, and a particularly strong focus on writings in dialects of Hiberno-English, the Abbey was to create a style that held a strong fascination for future Irish dramatists. Indeed, it could almost be said that the Abbey created the basic elements of a national theatrical style. This period also saw a rise in the writing of plays in Irish, especially after the formation, in 1907, of *An Taidhbhearc*, a theatre dedicated to the Irish language. Mid 20th century[edit] The twentieth century saw a number of Irish playwrights come to prominence. Samuel Beckett is probably the most significant of these. Beckett had a long career as a novelist and poet before his first play, *Waiting for Godot* made him famous. This play, along with his second, *Endgame*, is one of the great works of absurdist theatre. Beckett was awarded for the Nobel Prize in 1969. The Damer produced both professional and amateur Irish language theatre. The theatre closed in 1978. Recent developments[edit] In general, the Abbey was the dominant influence in theatre in Ireland across the 20th century. Behan, in his use of song and direct address to the audience, was influenced by Bertolt Brecht and Denis Johnston used modernist techniques including found texts and collage, but their works had little impact on the dramatists who came after them. These companies nurtured a number of writers, actors, and directors who went on to be successful in London, Broadway and Hollywood or in other literary fields. In the 1970s and 1980s a new wave of theatre companies arrived. A number of these companies had a significant portion or, in some cases, all of their Arts Council funding cut at the beginning of the 1990s and it remains to be seen if they will continue to operate.

Chapter 3 : The Politics of Irish Drama: Plays in Context from Boucicault to Friel by Nicholas Grene

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Thinking back in old age on his early nationalist potboiler [sic] Cathleen Ni Houlihan, W. Modern Irish history has indeed been influenced both by the images of Ireland invented by poets and playwrights and by the failure of reality to live up to those ages. Pearse himself wrote plays and imagined the Rising as a dramatic ritual, part religious sacrifice, part street theatre. The line between Irish theatre and Irish history is not so clear after all. His notion of politics is, admittedly, rather narrow, for what he is concerned with here is the politics of nationality. This is, moreover, a very severe limitation, excluding as it does Farquhar, Sheridan, Wilde, almost all of Shaw and Beckett and such angular playwrights as M. Molloy, Teresa Deevy, John B. Keane, Paul Mercier and Marina Carr. More subtly, the focus on the representation of Irishness tends to privilege some plays by writers Grene does examine in depth over other, equally important, works by the same playwrights: And what, in any case is a theatrical representation of Ireland? But might not, say, Pygmalion, which anticipates Translations in its concern with language, representation and cultural dominance, be an even more profound reflection on the Irish situation even though all of its characters are English? In this sense, Grene can be said to perpetuate a conservative and narrow definition of what constitutes Irish theatre. Yet, such is the vigour and acuteness of his writing, he also provides a framework within which that very definition can be dismantled. It is, he argues, seldom concerned to represent its own audience to itself. At home, it tends to show people from the margins of Irish society to people who live at the centre. Abroad, it shows the exotic Irish to the British American metropolitans. But it is always out there, somewhere other than the metropolitan habitat shared more or less by playwright and audience alike. Nor does he ask how specific to Ireland this theatrical Othemess really is. How many of the Greeks who watched Oedipus or the Elizabethans who watched Hamlet were themselves kings or princes? Yet Irish drama, with its long relationship to London and its wildly disproportionate international dimension, is undoubtedly an extreme example of these universal conditions. It is true, as Grene argues, that Irish theatre never had the phase of urban middle-class self-reflection that most European cultures had. Grene is undoubtedly right to see this as a crucial factor in the constitution of what is generally understood to be Irish theatre. And within the terms he has set himself, Grene applies his argument brilliantly. Grene, refreshingly, recognises and reflects the centrality of Tom Murphy to 20th-century Irish theatre. It completes so authoritatively, indeed, the job of telling one kind of story about modern Irish drama that it clears the ground for a whole new look at what that story is or might be.

Chapter 4 : Irish drama - Drama Online

the Irish community of New York for his services to Irish drama. Replying to the tribute (and the gift of a statue of Tatters, Conn the Shaughraun's never-seen offstage dog) Boucicault claimed the play's.

Chapter 5 : Nicholas Grene : The politics of Irish drama

between Irish and Russian drama" () and the efforts made by modern Irish dramatists to rewrite, adapt, or translate the work of Chekhov, Tolstoy, TurÂ- genev, and Ostrovsky in terms that still seek to represent Ireland.

Chapter 6 : Review of Nicholas Grene, The Politics of Irish Drama, in The Irish Times (11 March).

The politics of Irish drama have previously been considered primarily the politics of national self-expression. Here it is argued that Irish plays, in their self-conscious representation of the otherness of Ireland, are outwardly directed towards audiences both at home and abroad.

Chapter 7 : Project MUSE - Politics & Irish Drama

The politics of Irish drama: plays in context from Boucicault to Friel. [Nicholas Grene] -- In this book Nicholas Grene explores political contexts for some of the outstanding Irish plays from the nineteenth century to the contemporary period.

Chapter 8 : The Form of the Nation Made Perfect: The Politics of Irish Historical Drama | Academica Press

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Chapter 9 : Politics of Identity in Irish Drama - E-bok - George Cusack () | Bokus

The political need of a people to have its ancestry represented, to be recognised as one people and explained to outsiders, gave rise to another key feature of the Irish play: the use of stage interpreters.