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Linguistic Levels of Foregrounding in William Butler Yeats' *Deirdre*, *The Hour Glass*, and *Purgatory*: An Overview

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المستخلص: يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة الأسلوبية في مسرح الشاعر والكاتب المسرحي وليام بتلر بيتس، وهو شاعر حدائثي حائز على جائزة نوبل في الأداب، وقد ساهمت أعماله وكتاباتة في تشكيل وتوجيه الحركات الأدبية الإنجليزية خلال القرن العشرين. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد كل الدراسات التي تشمل دراسة أسلوب بيتس في مختلف مسرحياته، لا سيما من خلال تطبيق نظرية التقريب اللغوي في مستويات اللغة المختلفة. وتختص النظرية باتباع منهج التحليل الأسلوبي لنموذج العالمين اللغويين جيوفري لبيتس وميك شورت (1981)، من خلال منهجية علمية تحليلية. يمكن إيجاد تطبيق المناهج الأسلوبي المختلفة في نصوص بيتس الشعرية والنثرية بشكل أكثر من إبداعه المسرحي. ومع ذلك، فكانت الدراسات السابقة عن مسرحه شاملة وكافية وداعمة للبحث الأسلوبي. يهدف هذا البحث إلى تمهيد دراسة ثلاثة من مسرحيات بيتس الحدائثية من جوانب أسلوبية لغوية خلال مراحل مختلفة من مسيرة إبداعه المسرحي، وهي كالاتي: "ديدره" (1907)، و"الساعة الزجاجية" (1914)، و"المطهر" (1938)، بالإضافة إلى كيفية تنويعه للأسلوب في كل مسرحية من الأمثلة المقدمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأسلوبية؛ وليام بتلر بيتس؛ التقريب اللغوي؛ دراما؛ ميك شورت؛ جيوفري لبيتس

Abstract: The evaluation of stylistics in William Butler Yeats' theatre is the main subject of study in this paper. In addition, this study aims at identifying the diverse sum of knowledge by earlier scholars comprehensively in the stylistic studies on all of Yeats' plays, and especially in application of the theory of foregrounding on the different linguistic levels on his plays. The methodology in the linguistic theory of foregrounding follows the model of Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short (1981). The paper follows the qualitative method of analysis. The utilization of stylistic approaches has been widely applied in literature, most importantly on Yeats' poems and prose, but is to a lesser extent on his drama. However less it may be, the analysis of stylistic methodology in the dramatic literature of Yeats has been sufficient, diverse, and encouraging. In addition, earlier research and published literature have assisted in the use of stylistic methods within this context. This article paves the way to study the stylistic techniques of foregrounding in three of Yeats' verse plays namely, *Deirdre* (1907), *The Hour Glass* (1914), and *Purgatory* (1938). Each play represents a different example of Yeatsian stylistic language, and linguistic tools that he uses.

Key Words: Stylistics, William Butler Yeats, Foregrounding, Drama, Mick Short, Geoffrey Leech

Introduction

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) is an Irish poet and dramatist and a Nobel Prize Laureate for his literature canon that expresses the mood of the Irish nation. Yeats’ literary works reflect his influence of the Irish myths and tradition. He experimented with new techniques and forms in writing his dramatic works which made a new turn in the 20th century literature. He created modern stylistic features as distinctive of his Irish drama. Yeats immensely influenced later playwrights and poets like T.S. Eliot who wrote great verse dramas and gave tribute to Yeats’ efforts. In addition, the Irish playwright John Millington Synge who wrote many valuable plays including *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1909), was equally inspired by him and assisted Yeats in the revival movement of Irish literature. Furthermore, Yeats’ plays have certain features that distinguish them from his contemporaries like Synge, or Seán O’Casey. Yeats revived the technique of poetic drama which he innovated throughout his theatrical career through experimenting with different forms of drama like Greek drama, until developing a unique perspective of the Irish Noh drama by which Ezra Pound’s interest of the Japanese Noh drama immensely influenced. He also employed certain features in his plays like masks, dance and movement, and an exceptional style of language.

This article is written as an endeavor to investigate and evaluate the study of stylistics in William Butler Yeats’ theatre. In addition, this study aims at identifying the diversity of the sum of knowledge by earlier scholars generally in the stylistic studies on all of Yeats’ plays, and specifically in application of the theory of foregrounding on the different linguistic levels on Yeats’ plays. The focus in the linguistic theory of foregrounding is the model of Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short (1981). The paper follows the qualitative method of analysis. The utilization of stylistic approaches has been comprehensively applied in literature, most importantly on Yeats’ poetry and prose, but is to a lesser extent on his drama. However less it may be, the examination of stylistic methodology in the dramatic literature of Yeats has been sufficient, diverse, and encouraging. In addition, earlier research and published literature have assisted in the use of stylistic methods within this context.

The study uses the qualitative approach to explore how scholars examined the use of language in Yeats’ theatre. In addition, it will focus on how researchers

looked at the foregrounding techniques in Yeats’ plays throughout his dramaturgical career. It will scrutinize the present studies on the levels of foregrounding for his plays on all the linguistic levels. Foregrounding is a core stylistic approach. It is a concept introduced to the twentieth century literary and linguistic academia by Jan Mukařovský (1891-1975), the Prague scholar, in the Russian Formalism movement. The Foregrounding theory has developed from the turn of the twentieth century and is still significant to stylistic studies and their application on literary texts in our day. The tools of foregrounding used in examining drama within this context will include parallelism and deviation on all the language levels of analysis in the plays under discussion. This method of analysis generally attempts to touch on the mechanics of how writers foreground certain aspects in the plays through the use of language.

Jan Mukařovský critically defined the concept of foregrounding in his article “Standard Language and Poetic Language” (1983) as:

Foregrounding is the opposite of automatization, that is, the deautomatization of an act; the more an act is automatized, the less it is consciously executed; the more it is foregrounded, the more completely conscious does it become. Objectively speaking: automatization schematizes an event; foregrounding means the violation of the scheme. (p. 44)

Foregrounding, according to Mukařovský, is an act of nonconformity from the literary and linguistic principles. He defines this term as the deautomatization of an unconscious act to increase its conscious perceptibility. As quoted below, he further explains that in literary language, foregrounding becomes more prevalent and diverse in the means of expressing messages:

In poetic language foregrounding achieves maximum intensity to the extent of pushing communication into the background as the objective of expression and of being used for its own sake; it is not used in the services of communication, but in order to place in the foreground the act of expression... (p. 44)

Expression then is placed in a more prominent position through foregrounding and becomes more considerable than the act of communication. Moreover, Mukařovský links ‘foregrounding’ as a critical term in this groundbreaking paper to the dominant. The dominant is a concept well-defined in 1935 by Roman Jakobson, an

important Russian Formalist, as the main element in a work of art that controls and limits the other elements, and thus, holds the structure of the work in coherence and cohesion (*The Dominant*, p. 82).

The following quotation from the same article demonstrates how Mukařovský links the concept of foregrounding with the concept of dominant:

All other components, foregrounded or not, as well as their interrelationships, are evaluated from the standpoint of the dominant. The dominant is that component of the work which sets in motion, and gives direction to, the relationships of all other components. (p. 45)

Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short further developed the theory of foregrounding into a model that was expounded upon in *Style in Fiction* (1981). They classified stylistic analysis into five categories: “lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech ... cohesion and context, [and] semantic categories” (p. 61). This model follows a multi-level approach spanning from the phonological level to the discourse level. Additionally, in this model, foregrounding is classified into quantitative foregrounding and qualitative foregrounding. Both concepts are connected and complementary; the quantitative foregrounding leads to the qualitative foregrounding as a means to control the code in the literary text through a technique like deviation, a conscious irregularity of language:

So deviation is a matter of degree, and at some indefinite point it becomes significant not that a writer has chosen *x* rather than *y* or *z*, but that he has chosen *x* at all. To put it another way, the quantitative foregrounding (section 2.3) of a prominent pattern of choices within the code shades into the qualitative foregrounding (section 3.1c) which changes the code itself. (p. 111)

Influenced by Mukarovsky’s notion of foregrounding, Short and Leech developed the idea of ‘expression’ and identified it as ‘scheme’, and the ‘communication’ into ‘tropes’ related to the content, as detailed in this quotation:

Each qualitative foregrounding implicitly begs a question: what should have led the author to express himself in this exceptional way? For this purpose, the exceptional includes not only the sense deviations we earlier called tropes

(section 3.1c), but also the patterns or exceptional regularities of structure that we earlier called schemes ... foregrounded features can be observed on different levels of the code: tropes, such as metaphor, being chiefly associated with category violations (on the levels of syntax and semantics), and schemes being chiefly associated with structural patterns (on the levels of syntax and phonology). Tropes are therefore matters of content, and schemes matters of expression . (*Style in Fiction*, pp. 111-112)

As explained in this quote, they provide the metaphor as an example of tropes, which can be studied from specific levels, namely, the syntactic and the semantic levels. On the other hand, schemes are related to the patterns of structure, namely the syntactic and phonological levels.

Although Yeats’ plays are studied from various aspects, not many researchers endeavored to analyze his plays from a stylistic approach. Many studies are concerned with Yeats’ theatre from a plethora of other critical approaches, but this article attempts to evaluate the literature on Yeats’ plays from a new linguistic perspective, and to make an emphasis on his style of language. Most critics and researchers focused on studying the influence of Japanese Noh Drama on Yeats’ evolution of poetic drama. “The Poetics of Purgatory: A Consideration of Yeats's Use of Noh Form” is a significant study by Hae-Kyung Sung. In this paper, Sung studies how Yeats was inspired by the Japanese Noh Drama in the creation of his plays. In addition, it closely studies the similarities and differences of his play *Purgatory* to other Japanese counterparts form-wise. However, that study did not mention the stylistic aspects of the play (Sung, 1998). Eileen Kato’s study “W.B. Yeats and the Noh” is an exploration of Yeats’ fascination of the Japanese Noh Drama from the very start, with a special reference to his cycle of plays about Cuchulain, the mythical Irish hero. The paper mentions an account on *Deirdre* and *Purgatory* (Kato, 2010). However, it falls short on the main questions proposed by this paper. Other scholars and critics examined Yeats’ plays from different dramatic perspectives, but also without venturing into their stylistic aspects. J. Stewart Parker’s article “Yeats’ *The Hour Glass*” explores the dramatic scheme of the play and the influence of earlier plays on it (Parker, 1967). Teruo Yachi’s Japanese study “On *The Hour-Glass* by W.B Yeats” critically studies visions as a motif in this play and its overall significance to the messages of the play (Yachi, 1982). Notably, “Yeats’ Evolution from *The Shadowy Waters* to *At the Hawk’s Well*” by Angel

Perez Vazquez is a paper that studies the development of Yeats’ dramatic style in all the plays starting from *The Shadowy Waters* to *At the Hawk’s Well*. It has an interesting analysis on the style of *The Hour-Glass* (1900), and focuses on the shift between prose and verse in the play. This shift, according to Vazquez, signals the movement into different forms of reality (Vazquez, 1995). Nevertheless, it does not dive deeper into other stylistic aspects of *The Hour-Glass*. On a different note, “Yeats and the Mask of Deirdre: “That love is all we need”” by Maneck H. Daruwala is a research that closely studies the play *Deirdre* (1907) with a special focus on the autobiographical aspects in the play. It shows how the love life of W. B. Yeats influenced the process of writing this play and other plays (Daruwala, 2001). Remarkably, “The Chanting of Yeats’ *Deirdre*” by Ronald Schuchard is a commentary on how Yeats developed the music of *Deirdre* (1907). However, it does not expand on the linguistic aspects of the music in the play (Schuchard, 2007). After displaying a diverse sample of literature that provides a comprehensive overview of previous studies, it can be established that no other reference fully studies the linguistic levels of foregrounding in the selected plays nor has the same interdisciplinary features that this research traces. Accordingly, this research will outline the critical efforts done by scholars to identify the theory of foregrounding on all the linguistic levels of Yeats’ plays.

The traditional Japanese Nō plays are stylistically characterized by: masks, dances, songs, ghosts, trapped spirits that return to the main starting point of action, travelers, priests, the symbolic tree, musicians, and Masaru Sekine further explains in her article “*Noh and Yeats*” that the ideal Japanese Noh plot should be in the order of “Jo, Ha, Kyu (“introduction”, “development”, “conclusion”)” (1995, p. 2). Yeats wrote drama and revived the Irish heritage following the Japanese Nō form which he was first introduced to by Ezra Pound through Ernest Fenellosa’s *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*, a translation of Noh plays in 1913. It became clear to him that this medium is the best for his modernist contribution to Irish literature. He was certain, as expressed in his introduction to this book, that:

The men who created this convention [the Noh] were more like ourselves than were the Greeks and Romans, more like us even than are Shakespeare and Corneille. Their emotion was self-conscious and reminiscent, always associating itself with pictures and poems. (CNPJ, p. XV)

Inspired by the similarities between the Japanese and the Irish heritages, Yeats saw a chance for the birth of a new modernist form of English drama with a significant style. In the same introduction in *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*, he described the Japanese Noh theatre as of possessing “a noble form”(II) and an “aristocratic form”(II). Yeats' main focus was to create an aristocratic form of Irish drama using his poetic talent. He believed that poetry, specifically for its brevity and symbolism, has to be his main channel to achieve this aristocratic form. He has always wanted to create a noble drama to express and revive the Irish identity. Thus, the Japanese Noh drama was his haven of great potential that will be the main drive and unlocks Yeats' great skill and develop his mask theory as present in his following plays. In his introduction, Yeats expressed his fascination with the Noh plays, and how this form will help him with his project: "In fact, with the help of those plays, 'translated by Ernest Fenollosa and finished by Ezra Pound' I have invented a form of drama, distinguished, indirect and symbolic, and having no need of mob or press to pay its way . . . an aristocratic form" (CNPJ, II p. 221).

Before discovering this new form and deciding to introduce it to the Irish stage, he was already experimenting with similar forms in an attempt to create a mature noble drama. *Deirdre* (1907) is an early example of this experimentation in style and form of drama. In this play, one could see the similarities or early resemblances of what Yeats was trying to achieve with his drama before knowing of the Noh theatre. Yeats applied the Greek chorus to the play (the three musicians), an element similar to the musicians in Japanese Noh plays.

In his essay "Emotion of Multitude" (1961), we follow Yeats' train of thought to know why he chose the Greek drama as influence for his plays at this early stage of his playwriting career:

"I have been thinking a good deal about plays lately...The Greek drama has got the emotion of multitude from its chorus, which called up famous sorrows, even all the gods and all heroes, to witness, as it were, some well-ordered fable, some action separated but for this from all but itself." (*Essays and Introductions*, p. 215)

Drama in the nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland was mainly a recreation of previous classics chiefly from different genres like the novel and poetry. As further detailed in Chapter four on the history of the Irish theatre

especially that of Yeats in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama* (2004), Henrik Ibsen sparked the revival of the European theatre, and influenced aspiring Irish dramatists and poets like Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, and Oscar Wilde to step up and create with many other dramatists the Irish revival movement of Theatre (ed. Shaun Richards, pp. 47- 48). Ireland at the time was under the domain of the United Kingdom of England, and Irish nationalists sought to preserve the Celtic identity and heritage and the Gaelic language. Yeats, as an Irish nationalist, was a youthful adept poet when he decided at the end of the nineteenth century to found and lead in cooperation with others the National Literary Society in Dublin in 1892 as an association that created the Gaelic League in 1893 to revive the Gaelic Irish language, and later on, the Abbey theatre in Dublin in 1904 as a national theatre to express his national and political views (p. 51). Yeats’ modernist theatre was poetic. As a twentieth century modernist pioneer, he has experimented with many new techniques and renovated verse drama for the 20th century English audience, which inspired many modernist figures like T. S. Eliot, and Samuel Beckett. Most significantly, he was keen on creating a “noble” form of theatre that expresses the Irish nationalism, and preserves the Irish identity through utilizing diverse elements like Celtic mythology, a new dramatic form of plot, character tropes recurrent in his plays like the Fool, the Blind Beggar, Wise Man, a renovated form of the chorus, and most notably, the use of a modernist style of language that foregrounds his theory of antithesis or the Mask theory. The Mask theory is the best threshold to understanding the linguistic levels of foregrounding in Yeats’ use of language in dramatic texts. In the book chapter *The Theatre of William Butler Yeats*, Leerssen critically encapsulates Yeats’ theory of antithesis in his drama: “...the Yeatsian preference for extremes: king and beggar, poet and fool. If there is any sense of dialectics in Yeats’s plays, it derives from this dramatic juxtaposition of pauper and nobleman – a juxtaposition which was central to Yeats’s moral vision and which he held to be typical of Ireland, of all countries.” (p. 58).

This antithesis or ‘juxtaposition’ can be best expressed through the theory of foregrounding across the different levels of language in his play. It can be seen in his antithetical characters like the Fool and the Wise Man in the *Hour-Glass* (1914), Old Man and Boy in *Purgatory* (1938), Conchubar and Naoise in *Deirdre* (1907), Cuchulain and his son in *On Baile’s Strand* (1904), and Kathleen Ni Houlihan’s

character in *Kathleen Ni Houlihan* (1901) with his fellow writer Lady Gregory and *Countess Kathleen* (1899).

Joep Leerssen tackles three main topics related to the development of the theatre of William Butler Yeats, in the book chapter *The theatre of William Butler Yeats*. First, he starts with laying out the background of the European and British history of theatre and the influences that sparked Yeats' interest and innovation in dramaturgy. Second, he analyzes Yeats' outlook from philosophical, literary, and political perspectives. Third, he expounds on the drama of Yeats, his innovation in the theatre, and the politics of his theatre. Leerssen states that his theatrical style was realistic (p. 56). Yeats used his poetic adeptness in drama, thus, most of his drama is poetic (p. 58). Although Leerssen does not expound on the stylistic innovation in his plays, he concludes that Yeats' innovation lies in the revival of the twentieth century theatre for the English audience, specially verse drama, and he was able to place the Irish nationalism and Celtic culture into a globalized status. Furthermore, he specifies two plays in the 1930s that demonstrate Yeats' peculiar style's reach to its extreme maturity: *Words upon the Window-Pane* (1934) and *Purgatory* (1938) (p. 59). Nevertheless, foregrounding as a linguistic technique is not explored in Yeats' drama in the light of the previously stated aspects.

In collaboration with other Irish modernists, Yeats and Lady Gregory established the Abbey Theatre in Ireland as a national theatre with the main purpose to venue their cultural, political, and critical views to the Irish audience and revive the Irish nationalism. Mary Trotter, in this book chapter, *Gregory, Yeats, and Ireland's Abbey Theatre*, critically evaluates the efforts of innovation by Yeats and Lady Gregory in the Irish Revival movement in this period (2006, p. 87). This book chapter is part of the book *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama, 1880 – 2005* (2006) with the purpose to explore the development of drama in England and Ireland between the years of 1880 and 2005. This book chapter traces the history of the theatre of Gregory and Yeats. It also provides a critical account on the co-authored plays with the two prolific playwrights like "*Cathleen Ni Houlihan*" (1903). However, this study does not linguistically analyze the play, nor even a shade on Yeats' style of foregrounding. It further classifies Yeats' plays according to the stylistic features into plays written for the elite audience and plays written for the public middle-class Irish audience. Trotter specifies certain plays for the elite

which use stylistic characteristics like music, dance, mask, and elevated language. The elite plays include "*At the Hawk's Well*" (1916) and "*The Only Jealousy of Emer*" (1922) (p. 95). As for the plays designed for the middle-catholic class in Ireland, little analysis is provided by Trotter. However, stylistic elements like prose and simple language can be found more frequently in Yeats' plays like "*The Hour-Glass*" (1900), intended for the middle class catholic audience. This play is a morality play set in the middle ages with style and topics fit for the purpose of the modern twentieth century Irish audience.

In "*Style*", a book chapter in *W.B. Yeats: A Critical Introduction* (1990), Stan Smith explores the foregrounding techniques in Yeats' poetry. However, he does not apply this notion on his drama. He mentions how antithesis as a technique is a key stylistic feature for Yeats' verse, which is accurate as well in his verse drama. Smith argues that Yeats' style utilizes different literary and linguistic techniques as means to foreground his ideas. For example, Yeats' has mastered the iambic pentameter so much that he was able to create an "interplay between the metrical norm and the ordinary rhythms of speech" (p. 123). He was able to voice his world view of complementary opposing ideas through disrupting the norm of the unstressed/stressed syllables followed by a reconfirmation of the syllabic norm. In addition, Smith maintains that the syntax in Yeats' poetry is a "rhetorical power", and the use of sentence enjambment is a key structural feature that overrules a stanza in unity of one complete thought (p. 126). Moreover, inversion is another feature characteristic to Yeats' style (p. 131). Smith explored their usage in verse, but did not comment on their application in his verse drama. Yeats employs these rhetorical tools in his theatre. They can be vividly found in many of his plays including *The Hour-Glass*(1914), *Purgatory*, *Four Plays for Dancers*, *The Countess Kathleen*, *On Baile's Strand* (1904). However, they are present to a much less extent in other plays like *Deirdre*, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902), *The Hour-Glass* (1903 version), and *The Unicorn from the Stars* (1908). However, Smith provides a brief account on the stylistics of Yeats' drama. He argues that most of Yeats' dramas are "psycho-dramas" that demonstrate through dialogue between characters "shifts of mood and awareness" at the end of the play (135). Finally, he comments on the distinctiveness of Yeats' diction and the range of development of his vocabulary from early literary works to his later works, which is apparent in his

drama as well. It can be argued that Yeats' poetic diction in his drama is more powerful in his old age dramaturgy than that of his early career.

The study "Image, Symbol, and Style" by Richard Taylor in the "A Reader's Guide to the Plays of W. B. Yeats" (1984) explores three topics in Yeats' poetic and dramatic creation. First, he briefly mentions Yeats' use of imagery in poetry, and how it is mostly symbolic, but argues that imagery in his theatre is more prevalent. In addition, he states that in Drama, the purpose of imagery is not inclined towards symbolism, but more towards developing the action of the play through its connection to the characters and ideas. He gives examples of images in Yeats' drama like the chessboard in *Deirdre* or the burning brazier in *The Shadowy Waters* (p. 21). In *Deirdre*, the chessboard is a key image that drives and controls the action of the play. The interactions in the dialogue between the characters imitate the rules of interactions in the chessboard game, and the events depend on the moves of the characters in the play. For example, Deirdre considers the chessboard game an omen and refuses to play it with her husband, Naoise, awaiting their fate of treacherous death by Conchubar, rather deciding to control their fate and fight till death. The moment after their brave decision, King Conchubar and his messengers appear before the cottage, and the action of the play onwards becomes controlled by the dialogic turn taking between the characters as chessmen where Naoise's character becomes the Knight, with little power and possible moves, Deirdre as the Queen with the most resourcefulness and possible moves of resistance, and Conchubar as the King with the a limited number of possible moves, but with weighty strikes. At first, Deirdre's strategy against Conchubar is ineffective, and as a result, she fails to save Naoise and is killed by an usher from the King's messenger. Naoise's treacherous death by Conchubar's messenger is similar to the manner of the chess-men pawn striking the knight. By the end of the play after Naoise's death and the loss of all hope for Deirdre, her strategy through dialogue and action dramatically changes, and she assumes a mask of cold-bloodedness till she successfully checkmates Conchubar and escapes his clench through suicide by Naoise's side. This example of imagery in Yeats' theatre is a proof that he uses images in drama as a form of action development technique rather than a mere symbolic tool.

Correspondingly, Susan R. Gorsky in her significant article *A Ritual Drama: Yeats's Plays for Dancers* (1974), explicates Yeats’ main purpose of creating a new drama to the Irish audience: a ritual drama that “renews a ‘faith’ which man had ‘lost’” (p. 165). Yeats’ main purpose was to find a new form of drama that is noble, revives the Celtic morals and culture, and appeals to mediocre individual as well as the aristocratic individual. Gorsky states that he searched for a means of transforming his worldview of ideas into drama through diverse elements including proper stylistic use of language, dance, gesture, and staging (p. 167). Gorsky further demonstrates the change in form in Yeats’ drama throughout his career beginning from realism, towards the creation of Irish Noh drama, and finally to the creation of modernist predecessors of absurd drama in his later plays. She additionally mentions the use of the mask theory in some of his plays (p. 172). Nonetheless, she does not remark on the linguistic features in Yeats plays, nor does she analyze the theory of foregrounding in his ritual drama.

As for the syntactic features in Yeats drama, apart from the previously mentioned scholars who touched on the syntax of Yeats in his verse and theatre, there is little literature on the structural patterns in his drama. In the book chapter “Playing the Literature Game: A Public and Collective Norm” in the book *Language and Style* (2003), Edmund. L. Epstein generally studies the syntactic features in literature. He expands on the syntax of multiple poets including William Blake, John Keats, Dylan Thomas, and others. As for the poetry of Yeats, he specifies the syntactic aspects in some of his poetry, but does not analyze the syntax in Yeats’ theatre. Moreover, Epstein does not touch on any other linguistic features on any of the language features significant to Yeats’ style in general, and specifically the foregrounding techniques in his drama. Yeats, according to Epstein, uses syntax in poetry through several syntactic patterns in a way that intersects diverse contradicting levels of cognition, which leads to clearly portraying Yeats’ worldview best expressed in his mask theory of antithesis (p. 63).

Walter Pater’s stylistic and aesthetic influence on Yeats’ development of drama is fundamental in the study of Yeats’ style. The critic F. C. McGrath methodically studied this central influence in his paper *Paterian Aesthetics in Yeats’ Drama* (1979). McGrath observes the aspects of influence of Pater on Yeats, and how Yeats was primarily searching for the perfect form of drama for the Irish

literary movement. This paper, although it traces the nuances of development in Yeats’ drama, it does not explore the linguistic aspects in his theatre. In addition, McGrath does not comment on the development of his drama across the different linguistic levels. According to McGrath, Yeats was not keen on considering Pater’s superficial stylistic features, but rather “the essence of his thought”(p. 33). He clarifies the differences and similarities between Yeats and Pater from various angles. Although Yeats was heavily influenced by Pater’s “aesthetic subtlety” and implemented it in his drama, Yeats’ “vision of reality was substantially broader” (p. 34). Pater was an influential stylist of prose. Yeats’ utilized his aesthetic essences to develop his drama, and eventually furthermore develop his poetry. Yeats’ ultimate search was for a poetic drama characterized by lyric unity. At first, his poetry was symbolic, then he was encouraged to write realist drama, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, he found the form and characteristics of Greek drama to be significant for his theatre, and his theory of drama. Afterwards, with the inspiration of the Japanese Noh form of drama from Fenollosa’s *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*, Yeats was able to crystalize his new form of aristocratic drama, namely the Irish Noh drama, which was a more developed form of drama somehow similar to his render of his previous Greek inspired plays. Furthermore, McGrath touches on how Pater’s notion of a purified, simple, and intense form of art was an essential source of inspiration for Yeats’ ideation of drama as “a moment of intense life . . . reduced to its simplest form . . . an eddy of life purified from everything but itself” (Expl., 153-54).” Conversely, he expresses Yeats’ deviation from Pater’s use of music as a technique in literature. Yeats symbolized music and utilized it as an element that unifies and develops the imagination of the literary work (p. 39). In short, McGrath concludes that Yeats’ stylistic use of language was different from that of Pater (p. 46). Pater’s theories and notions were versatile and broad enough to allow a breadth of creativity for Yeats to develop his own use of language and theories of art, specifically drama through the influence of Pater’s essence of thought.

To conclude, this paper has explored the various linguistic literature on Yeats’ diverse dramaturgy. Yeats’ style has evolved across his writing career. As a prolific poet, and Irish nationalist at a young age, he sensed the need in Ireland for drama to channel his concerns. His style of drama as well as language developed from symbolist, to realist, to epic, till it reached the elevated predecessor of absurdist style of intense drama in his last plays. Some critics like Leerssen and Trotter

provided a historical reading for the development of Yeats' theatre with little shade on his stylistic use of language. Others like Gorsky and Taylor traced the origins and development of his dramatic theory, and its relation to his style. Scholars like Gorsky examined Yeats' style in drama, and how he managed to create a ritual drama with a peculiar style that developed across his writing career. McGrath as well touched on the origins of Yeats' drama, but in the light of the Paterian influences on his style, use of language, dramatic elements, and aesthetics. McGrath elucidated the differences between Yeats' and Pater's styles, how Pater was a pioneering prose stylist that influenced the twentieth century literary modernists, and how Yeats was able to synthesize the essence of his thought and ideals to imaginatively create an atypical style in drama and give tribute to Pater's efforts. Some scholars like Epstein provided a broad analysis on Yeats' style but only the syntax in limited literary works as previously specified. There are certain scholars who studied stylistics in specific plays. Vazquez explicates the development of Yeats' significant style of drama in all many of his plays starting from *The Shadowy Waters* to *At the Hawk's Well*. Schuchard is another critic who clearly comments on the development of musical features in Yeats' *Deirdre*. It was only Smith who comprehensively studied the foregrounding theory across several levels of language but only on some of Yeats' poetry, without further significant examination of his style in the dramatic texts.

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