Drama: The Especially Dynamic Genre

Major Developments in Drama

(Roberts 873-79)
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As literature
1. Text is printed (Roberts 862-63)
   a. Dialogue
   b. Monologue
   c. Stage directions
2. Text uses formal literary elements (863-64)
   a. Characters—protagonist; antagonist; round; dynamic; flat; static; realistic; nonrealistic; stock; choric figure; foil; raisonner; symbolic
   b. Plot
   c. Conflict
   d. Point of view—who’s on stage; what occurs off stage; soliloquy vs. dialogue
   e. Setting
   f. Tone—gestures, lighting, music, voice, side remarks, etc.
   g. Dramatic irony—partial/incorrect/unwitting understanding of what is happening
   h. Symbolism—universal & contextual
   i. Subject & theme—aspect & ideas about humanity explored (863-69)
3. Characters develop through speech & action (863-67)
   a. Vivid language in the script
   b. Highly-focused, often classic oppositions/conflicts in the plot
   c. Subplots
   d. Freytag Pyramid (five basic stages of plot)
      i. Exposition/introduction
      ii. Complication & development
      iii. Crisis/climax
      iv. Falling action
      v. Denouement/resolution/catastrophe (in tragedy)

As performance
1. “plays are meant to be acted . . . immediate, exciting, and powerful” (869)
2. Actors—“trained . . . to make their characters real to us” (869)
3. Producer & director—“financing & arranging production” . . . guides actors & specialists to portray his/her vision for the play (870)
4. Stage—proscenium (picture-frame/room w/ one wall missing; thrust stage; theater-in-the-round; 870)
5. Sets/scenery—“constructed and decorated to indicate a specific place”; “many producers use single fixed-scene sets & mark changes w/ movable props” (871); unit set has multi-levels to indicate different places; realistic for verisimilitude & nonrealistic settings for symbolic meaning
6. Lighting—out of necessity, then for special effects (color filters, dimmers, simulated fires, etc.); used for emphasis, time markers, mood, isolate parts of setting (872)
7. Costumes & makeup—“makes plays vivid”; help audience detect occupation, mental outlook, socioeconomic conditions, age, mood, etc. (872)
8. Audience—“direct witnesses to [the present] dramatic action from start to finish”; “even though they are isolated by the darkness in which they sit, they respond communally”; “[audience’s] provide instant feedback to the actors and thus continually influence the delivery and pace of the performance”; “no intermediary . . .no narrator as, in prose fiction, and no speaker, as in poetry” (873)