

CONTEXTUAL MATERIAL ON DRAMA IN THE C20TH.

Time line of British drama – postwar to *Our Country's Good*:

- 1946 Terrance Rattigan *The Winslow Boy* (an example of a well-made play)
text available here: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Winslow-full-introduction-Drama-Classics/dp/1854594672>
- 1948 Eugene Ionesco *The Bald Soprano* --- absurdist drama; the anti-play
(see Martin Esslin 'The Theatre of the Absurd' *The Tulane Drama Review*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (May, 1960), pp. 3-15: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1124873?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents See also Esslin, M. *The Theatre of the Absurd* (3rd ed). London: Methuen, 2001)
- 1951 The Mermaid Theatre opens; Festival of Britain year.
- 1953 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II; Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop.
- 1955 Samuel Beckett *Waiting for Godot* - performed in Britain at the Arts Theatre, London.
- 1956 Suez Crisis; Hungarian uprising suppressed by Russian troops; Brecht's Berliner Ensemble visits London; English Stage Company; Royal Court Theatre London – new writing centre --- Influence of Brecht on Epic Theatre
- We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within a particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help to transform the field itself.
(from 'A Short Organum for the Theatre'
http://www.tenstakonsthall.se/uploads/139-Brecht_A_Short_Organum_for_the_Theatre.pdf)
- John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* performed at Royal Court - new drama opposed to the idea of the well-made play; the idea of the angry young man
- 1957 Harold Macmillan Prime Minister
- 1958 Harold Pinter's first play *The Room* performed at Bristol University then transferred to the Royal Court. Arnold Wesker's *Trilogy* opened in Coventry before transferring to the Royal Court.
- 1959 Osbourne's 'Letter to England' in *The Tribune*:
My hatred for you is almost the only constant satisfaction you have left me, My favourite fantasy is four minutes or so non-commercial viewing as you fry in your democratically elected hot-seats in Westminster ... There is murder in my brain and I carry a knife in my heart for every one of you ... [and] for seven out of ten Americans too ... [D]amn you England England. You're rotting now --- quite soon you'll disappear.
- 1962 Charles Marowitz and Peter Brook collaborate on a Theatre of Cruelty at LAMDA:

I believe in the word in classical drama because the word was their tool. I do not believe in the word much today because it has outlived its purpose. Words do not communicate, they do not express much and most of the time they fail abysmally to define.

<http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/staffhome/siryan/academy/theatres/theatre%20of%20cruelty.htm>

See also: Helga Finter and Matthew Griffin, 'Antonin Artaud and the Impossible Theatre: The Legacy of the Theatre of Cruelty,' *TDR* (1988-) Vol. 41, No. 4 (Winter, 1997), pp. 15-40:

http://www.jstor.org/stable/1146659?sid=primo&origin=crossref&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

- 1963 National Theatre opens; Littlewood's production of *Oh, What a Lovely War*.
- 1965 Vietnam War begins; Theatre in Education Movement founded.
- 1966 Joe Orton *Loot*; Tom Stoppard *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*.
- 1968 Abolition of stage censorship; Kenneth Tynan *Oh, Calcutta!*
- 1974 Joint stock Theatre Company established; co-founded by Max Stafford-Clark. The company developed writers such as David Hare, Howard Brenton and Caryl Churchill with 'The Joint Stock Method' of research and workshops
- 1975 Monstrous Regiment Theatre Company: feminist theatre
- 1975 Shared Experience established: focus on physical/textual theatre
- 1979-93 Max Stafford-Clark: artistic director of the Royal Court Theatre; fostered new writers such as Howard Barker, Andrea Dunbar, Hanif Kureishi, Sarah Daniels and Jim Cartwright.
- 1983 Timberlake Wertenbaker resident writer for Shared Experience
- 1984/5 Timberlake Wertenbaker resident writer for the Royal Court Theatre;
- 1988 *Our Country's Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker; directed by Max Stafford-Clark**