



# Plot as an invaluable Accoutrement of Dramaturgy

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## ABSTRACT

Plot, the sequential arrangement of actions in a play, is fundamental to any play production. It is the means by which a playwright's thoughts are planned, organized and honed towards the achievement of the purpose of the artistic projection and thematic preoccupation. The plot of a play is commensurate with the type of play a playwright has in mind to write- Tragedy, Comedy, Tragicomedy or any other type, as it is the way a plot is structured that determines this. Plot is to be laid down like the plot of foundation of a building, with subsequent structures built upon it. This is why Aristotle in his treatise on drama- Aristotle's Poetics identified plot as the most important of all the elements of dramaturgy. This paper examines how plots are crafted or adapted and the innate structural devices in plot that make plays interesting- such as ironies, flashback, aside, comic relief and soliloquy. It examines both conventional plots and Avant-garde plots, identifying "conflict" as an innate element of plot in the dramatic genre.

## INTRODUCTION

Generally in the literary and in the performing arts, plot refers to the various incidents that form the storyline or plan of action of either a play or a prose narrative. It occurs in narrative poetry also, such as we find in Twentieth Century Narrative Poems. It is a pattern of events selected, arranged and utilized in a narrative or dramatic work of art. Plot usually follows a natural order of causality; that is cause and effect, to explain actions

and relationships as the story progresses. It aims at enhancing conviction and plausibility in works of art. It is a pathway through which artistic works could be critically explored and evaluated. Our focus in this paper is the use of plot in the dramatic genre.

In modern literary criticism there is often a distinction between the plot of a work of art and the original story that engendered the work. While the story is the full sequence of all the events as they occur in a natural order, the plot is the aspect of this which a

creative artist has selected (plotted) for presentation to the audience or the reader. For instance, the plots of many of Shakespeare's plays are taken from historical sources. In their presentation writers select what they consider to be the most essential issues of the story, with consideration for the purpose for which the work is written. The purpose may be to entertain, to educate, to propagate certain norms and values of a society or for other reasons such as conscientization for political mobilization or psychotherapeutics, as done with plays classified as Psychodrama- plays that are used to treat/heal mentally ill people. Writers have to edit facts and incidents in the originating stories, before composing their own works for their target audiences or readers.

Writers have the liberty to extract those facts that are relevant in the stories, to form the plot of their own creative works. This is usually conditioned by their thematic preoccupations in writing the works. For example the plot of Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* uses an abridged version of the real Elesin oba story in Oyo Kingdom, Nigeria.

A creative writer may also change or partially alter incidents in the real story to form the plot of his or her work. Soyinka did this in the plot of the play just mentioned, in a number of ways. For example he made Olunde the son of Elesinoba to be a student of medicine, based in Britain. In the original story, Olunde was an itinerant clothes merchant who shuttled between Oyo town in Nigeria and Ghana. The change is obviously required because of the playwright's thematic interest.

Both the duo of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo of Kenya and their Tanzanian counterpart Ebrahim Hussein based the plot of their plays on historical realities of what happened in their countries - national insurrection by oppressed black people against their oppressive colonial masters. The history of the Mau-Mau and Maji-Maji uprisings in Kenya and Tanzania respectively had been written, based on colonial records kept by foreign colonial officers. The records portrayed the African insurgents as animalistic villains who detested the saving grace of civilization, progress and prosperity brought to Africa through colonization. In *The Trials of Dedan Kimathi* by Ngugi and Mugo and in *Kinjeketile* by Ebrahim Hussein, the playwrights debunk this jaundiced, erroneous and myopic fallacy. In their plays, they show that rather than being villains, the African freedom fighters were conscientious patriots, who fought for the liberation of their countries. They merely countered the reactionary violence of their oppressors with the revolutionary violence of the oppressed patriots, in order to liberate their countries!

History and true life stories are veritable sources of raw material for plot, especially the plot of plays, and it is a common convention that creative artists utilize these sources. On the other hand, a plot may not take its origin from any existing story or history. It may stand on its own, completely based on a writer's sole creative endeavour and imagination. Examples of plots of play that are totally original include Stephen Spender's *Trial of*

a judge, J.B. Priestley's *An Inspector Calls* and Josef and Karel Capek's *The Insect Plays*.

In the views of Marjorie Boulton (1977), every play has a source since the plot must have originated from somewhere. To him plots do not happen by accident! He however sees nothing wrong in crafting plots out of existing stories:

Nowadays originality is regarded as a merit, much more than in the days of Shakespeare, and on a few occasions has perhaps even been excessively cultivated for its own sake. The modern dramatist generally tries to take a plot from his own head or from some not well-known episode in history; or as an alternative, he may show his originality by taking a very old, well-known plot such as Greek myth or a well-known historical episode and handle it by throwing a new light upon it (p. 64).

It is our view that whether a plot is originally conceived or it is an adaptation of an existing story, the most important things are, the amount of ingenuity that is crafted into it, to make it interesting and appealing to audiences and readers, and its functional aesthetics - what the artist is able to use it to achieve. It is our view that since history is a continuous, unstoppable process (as long as human societies exist) it is an inexhaustible and invaluable source of raw material for the creative artist. Artist can then embellish it with creative imagination, to make it new and appealing to audiences. On the other hand, an artist commands more respect and recognition when he or she is able to produce a totally new, original work that is good enough to command attention, respect and commendation. Like Shakespeare then, creative artists may do well, oscillating between original works and adaptations.

### Constructing Plots to Serve Needs

Since Plots are designed to meet up with the thematic preoccupations of creative artists, they are necessarily affected by the vicissitudes of prevalent social realities. For instance during the period of the Russian revolution, plots of plays were honed towards Communist, Propagandist themes. Agit - Prop plays became popular and it became an official tool of the Soviet Communist Party's Committee for Agitation and Propaganda (Agit-Prop). The very significant use to which drama and theatre has been made and is being made in educational institutions at all levels has created a genre known as Educational Theatre / Drama. Popularly called Theatre in Education, the plot of this play type is designed for pedagogical purposes. It involves theatre as teaching and research instrument, and using plays as mnemonics (memory/learning aids). Prominent plays with educational values include Robert Grav's *Horses*. In some technologically advanced

countries of the world, drama is being used as a resource material to teach History. The particular dramatic form being used, is docudrama or documentary drama. According to S. Lipkin Docudramas “operate as artistic perception of history (2002: 17) Benicia DSA, in an article “Social studies in the Dark: Using Docudramas to teach History” asserts that feature films, once restricted to entertainment in theatres and, homes, have found their way into classrooms, as teachers now use them as substitute for books and sometimes as supplement to textbooks.

When plays are designed for educational purposes the plots are plotted accordingly to conform with this preoccupation.

In the same way, the development of the convention of choral speaking and a revolt against the realistic form of drama in the modern period led to such plays as T.S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral* which uses a chorus and poetic language. The need to educate and entertain children led to the development of “cartoon” plots which today have become the favorite of children.

It becomes obvious therefore that various exigencies often condition the crafting of plots, as plots are often built to be commensurate with needs, themes, conventions, political considerations and some other factors. In the modern period, plots that deal with historical issues are expected to be historically accurate to a large extent. The modern artist is therefore expected to base his/her writings on reliable research. This is more so in the realm of docudrama and historical plays which, as earlier said, are being used for educational purposes. In weaving the plot with history the dramatist is under obligation to select particular historical episodes and adopt aesthetic devices that make the work dramatically interesting. The pieces should also be connected with plausibility and verisimilitude in mind.

### **Supremacy of Plot as a Dramaturgical Device**

In the drama/theatre genre, Plot is sacrosanct. The plot of drama is what differentiates it from other literary genres. Unlike in prose and poetry that are merely narrated, the plot of a play is built systematically, the way a shipwright builds a ship, step by step. This is the reason writers of plays are called playwrights, and not players or play writers like writers of poems who are called poets or writers of novels who are called novelists.

The supremacy of plot is hinged on the fact that it is the main pillar on which virtually all other element of dramaturgy hangs. The plot dictates and directs the deployment of every other accoutrement of dramaturgy such as characterization, dramatic action, language, thought and the theatrical embellishments such as song and spectacle. This will be made obvious in the course of this discourse. The all-time literary colossus whose giant strides bestride the entire human world

- William Shakespeare rhetorically portrays the supremacy of plot, using building imagery:

When we mean to build  
We first survey the plot  
(Henry IV Part II, I, iii)

This apt and picturesque statement from the master craftsman of dramaturgy portrays the fact that the plot serves as the foundation on which the entire craft of play writing is built or based. It is obvious that in creating plays, what a playwright first preoccupies himself with (after adopting thematic preoccupations - major and minor) is the plot which would project those themes to the target audiences or readers. The plot design could be linear (when it follows a straight line pattern of beginning, middle and end), episodic (when it is in series of often independent episodes such as we have in Bertolt Brecht’s *Epic Theatre*) or *Avant-garde* (as we have in much of modern period’s bohemian theatres of the radical alternative). It is after a playwright has “plotted” his plot that he now thinks of characterization - characters that will go along with the plot at the various stages of the play and the dramatic actions involved. These would include major, minor, simple, complex, flat, round, static, dynamic, protagonist, antagonist, deuteragonist, tritagonist, quintessential and psychological characters. These are made to operate at different points of the plot, in order to project the playwright’s themes. After this, a playwright thinks of the language for each of the characters, languages that would be commensurate with their status and the roles allocated to them in the plot of the play. The “Embellishments” (song and spectacle) such as music, sets, lights, props, make-up and costumes are fixed into specific parts of the plot, in order to enhance the entertainment value of the play. “Thought” or the commitment of a play is embedded in, and manifested through the plot of a play. It is the way the plot is designed that determines whether a play is in the Utilitarian School or in the School of Aesthetics. While the plot of a Utilitarian play is packaged with functionalist ideals and social commitment (art for life’s sake) the plot of plays in the Aesthetics school is devoid of politics and commitment, but honed towards entertainment and the beauty of Art (Art for Art’s sake). It appears therefore, that the plot of a play is the skeleton holding the entire body of drama together, the steering rack of the vehicle of drama, the rudder of the ship of arts, controlling the direction of motion in dramaturgy.

### **Conventional Anatomy of Plot of Plays**

In a conventional (Aristotelian) play, the plot starts with Exposition. This is the beginning of the play where the playwright introduces the background information such as the settings (geographical, political, religious, psychological etc.) of the play. Here the characters are also introduced and the issues at stake are hinted on. With Complication, conflict is introduced to the plot. This is a struggle that develops as a result of the existence of two opposing forces in the play. The conflict could take various forms - as an internal conflict within the mind of

the characters (usually the protagonist), conflict between two characters, between a character and society, between man and the gods etc. It may be a conflict of religious, political or cultural beliefs. Conflict heightens interest in drama as it creates suspense, tension, competition, schemes and machinations by each opposing party to outwit and prevail above the other. The interest thus generated is akin to that of a football match, with each side struggling to win. The audience too watch with trepidation; since it is the shifts in the action and the side that wins that determines whether the play ends as a tragedy, comedy or tragicomedy. As the plot develops, the interest of the audience heightens. This continues till the "Crisis" point. When tension is at the peak, this is the 'Climax' of the play when the audience's interest is highest. After this point is the "Denouement", the resolution of the crisis, the unraveling of the plot, where all crises are resolved. While there is "rising action" from the exposition to the Climax (with a resultant heightening of interest of the audience) immediately after Climax there is "falling action" and a diminishing of audience's interest in the play. This continues till the end of the play.

### **Avant-garde/Unconventional/Complex Plots**

The plot that has just been described is the simple, conventional plot, based on the principles of Aristotle as contained in *The Poetics*. It is based on classical Greek and Roman traditions, dating back as far as the 4th century BC. In the modern period, playwrights that do not conform to the classical tradition have crafted new forms of plot. Some of such playwrights include the Avant-garde writers who deliberately go against established traditions in crafting their aesthetics. They include the plays of Absurdist writers such as Samuel Beckett, J.P Sartre, Alfred Jarry, Expressionists like Eugene O Neil, August Strindberg and the Epic plays of Bertolt Brecht.

Some of these plots are not simple but complex. Some of them do not follow the rules of causality (cause and effect) in the stringing together of dramatic actions; many of the plots are not linear (following a straight-line format of beginning, middle and end) but are episodic. In their structuring, there is no sequential order, some of the modern plots contain flashbacks that take the audience to the past, to reveal essential information. Structurally, the last scene (that should end the story) may be presented first, while the first is presented last in the play.

### **Aristotle's Poetics on Plot**

Aristotle, the great Greek philosopher, scholar and pioneer literary critic, in his highly cerebral and seminal work- *Poetics*, regards plot as the most important in his list of elements of drama. This according to him is due to the fact that plot provides the basic framework of the action. It is the story line, the scheme of action that enables the characters, ideas and other

ingredients to reveal themselves" (Whiting 1969: 146). Aristotle identifies other important elements of drama as Character, Language, Thought, Song and Spectacle, and showed the importance of each element in play writing.

In his analysis, he identifies two types of plot the Episodic and the Involved plots. The episodic plot is one in which events follow each other with little or no causal link. That is, one incident is not necessarily caused by a previous action or inaction. Aristotle regards this type of plot as weak and uningenious. In its stead he prefers an "involved" plot that is intricately woven, such as that of Sophocle's *King Oedipus*, in which the tragic hero's efforts to escape calamity brings him closer and closer to it. Aristotle recommends the play (*King Oedipus*) as a model for tragic playwrights.

Aristotle's submissions on plot are contained in chapters 7, 8 and 10 of *The Poetics*. In discussing the scope of plot, he submits that it needs to have a beginning, middle and an end. According to him the representation of the action is the plot., for the ordered arrangement of the incidents is what I mean by plot." (*Poetics*, p. 3a). He is of the opinion that well-constructed plots must neither begin nor end haphazardly, but must conform to a pattern that is seen to be beautiful. In giving aesthetic evaluation to plot, he affirms that beauty is bound up with size and order, and so plots should be appropriate, and of reasonable length, in order for it to be appreciated.

Aristotle advocates a "Unity of Plot" in *The Poetics*. This portrays his concept of the plot as a complementary whole, with all parts being essential and contributory to the overall realization of the aims of the play. He submits that all the incidents in a play should be so arranged that if anyone is removed or differently positioned, the completeness of the entire play would be affected. According to him, if the addition or removal of an incident in a play has no effect on the play, then that incident has no business being made part of the play in the first place! Renaissance critics interpreted this in rigid terms to mean that there should be no subsidiary plots in a play. This was the pontification of Ludovico Castelvetro in his own edition of the *Poetics* published in 1570.

Although Aristotle made about the most profound and pioneering efforts in dramatic criticism, some of his recommendations would be misnomers on the modern, contemporary stage because they are dated. Moreover, he based his treatise on Tragedy and Epic — the only two types of literature that were available in Greece then at the time he wrote. He also based his submissions on the works of Sophocles and Euripides; two of the leading playwrights of his time. However, much of his observations and recommendations are still relevant and in use today.

### **Conflict as an Innate Element of Plot**

Plot is made up of a number of devices. Some of these include irony, dramatic irony, flashback, suspense,

comic relief, soliloquy, Subsidiary or Under plots and Conflict. While these others may be absent or optional in a dramatic work of art, conflict is an inviolable part of dramatic plots. This justifies our further focus on conflict. Indeed there is no drama without conflict. This is because the innate conflicts in a play serve as the engine which moves the play from complication to crisis, to climax and denouement. Conflict may be physical and seen in concrete terms as is seen in the perpetual clash of the Capulets and the Montagues in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. It may be psychological as seen in the hatred and suspicion between the different races in the bulk of apartheid drama, or the psychological setting of religious extremism that is prevalent in Arthur Miller's *The crucible*. The conflict could be between man and the transcendental order (the gods, as in Sophocles' *King Oedipus*), between man and fellow man or man versus society. Conflict may arise out of inner contradictions, sour experiences, fears (phobia) and frustrations, as we have in many psychological characters in plays, like Funsho in 'Bayo Afolabi's *The Misogynist* and Okonkwo in the dramatized version of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

The importance of conflict, embedded within plot, is attested to by a number of theatre scholars. Ferdinand Brunetiere in late nineteenth century says:

The general law of the theatre is defined by the action of a will, conscious of itself and the dramatic species are distinguished by the nature of the obstacles encountered by this will.

(As reported in Brander Mathews *The Law of the Drama*,) p. 79.

In a translation of Brander's view on Brunetiere's Law, William Archer summarizes it thus:

Drama is a representation of the will of man in conflict with the mysterious powers or natural forces, which limit and belittle us. It is one of us thrown living upon the stage there to struggle against fatality, against social law, against one of his fellow mortals, against himself if need be, against the ambitions, the interests, the prejudices, the folly, the malevolence of those around him.

(William Archer in Introduction to Brunetiere's Law of the Drama,)

This theory of conflict in drama is analysed by Henry Arthur Jones who subsequently formulates his own "Universal Law of drama." To him conflict (in the plot) is what makes the totality of a dramatic performance:

Drama arises when any person or persons in a play are consciously or unconsciously 'up against' some antagonistic person, or

circumstance or fortune. It is often more intense when, as in Oedipus, the audience is aware of the obstacle, and the person himself, or persons on the stage are unaware of it. Drama arises thus, and continues when or till the person or persons are aware of the obstacle; it is sustained so long as we watch the reaction, physical, mental, or spiritual, of the person or persons to the opposing person, or circumstance, or fortune. It relaxes as this reaction subsides, and ceases when the reaction is complete. This reaction of a person to an obstacle is most arresting and intense when the obstacle takes the form of another human will, in almost balanced collision.

(Henry Jones in Introduction to Brunetiere's Law of the Dramas) pp. 36-37.

Allardyce Nicoll in *The Theory of Drama* affirms that all drama ultimately arises out of conflict, a cardinal part of the plot. He identifies conflict in tragedy as evident in the perpetual clash between forces physical or mental or both, in comedy in the constant conflict between personalities, between the sexes or between an individual or society. He avers that the "Pity and terror" which Aristotle refers to in tragedy issues out of conflict, just as in comedy the essence of the laughable is derived from the same source. (P.92)

According to Saviour Agoro:

Conflict is the basic raw material with which plot is constructed. The distinguishing factor between story and plot is shown in the presence of conflict in plot, which necessitates the causative development of events. Story is only concerned with the chronological arrangement of incidents, while plot ensures the causative or casual relationship between incidents". (P.14)

Few critics however feel that a play can exist without the plot having conflict(s). According to Frank Whiting,

Conflict is a powerful ingredient in the structure of most plots, but we cannot rely on it blindly. Too many outstanding plays like *Our Town* and *The Cherry Orchard* yield little of their true values through an analysis in terms of conflict (p. 146).

Asides providing motivations for dramatic actions, conflict also provides the element of excitement. It heightens interest and creates suspense as the audience wonders which of the conflicting parties would win. It is like warfare or a football match. In most instances, the way the conflict is resolved or terminated determines the type or nature of the play - tragedy (when

the conflict overwhelms the protagonist and brings him/her down) or Comedy (when the conflict is peacefully resolved and all ends well). It could also end as a tragicomedy, a farce, melodrama or any other form. Conflicts are usually dramatic, exciting and interest-generating. Conflict is a very powerful component of any dramatic plot.

### Adapting Plots from other Sources

As earlier discussed, the plot of plays could be crafted from original thoughts, imagination and inspiration of playwrights. Sometimes too, a playwright adopts plots or adapts same from other existing sources. An example is Ola Rotimi's adaptation of a much earlier play - Sophocles' *King Oedipus* as *The Gods are no to Blame*. In effecting this, he made a number of changes to the original plot, transferring the setting from Greece to Africa. Although there are changes made to other elements of dramaturgy, the plot remains basically the same. Because of Rotimi's great skill as a playwright, his own version of the play receive enthusiastic appreciation that is close to that of the original, each time it is performed.

Plots of plays could also be taken from novels and short stories and turned to dramatizations either for the stage or media. Wale Ogunyemi's epic play *Langbodo* takes its plot from the novel by D.O. Fagunwa titled *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale*. The plot of Shakespeare's *Othello* is taken from an Italian tale by Giraldi Cinthio, a contemporary of Shakespeare. It should be stated however that whenever a prose or poetry work is adapted to form the plot of drama, the onus is on the playwright to make the original stories conform with the peculiar needs of drama.

Direct translation of foreign plays to local languages is another form of adaptation of plot. For instance Miles Malleon translated several plays of Moliere from French to English. Henry Fielding did the same to Moliere's plays. Aaron Hill too translated several of the tragedies of Voltaire from French to English. Ambrose Philips translated Jean Racine's *Andromaque* as *The Distressed Mother*.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the tradition of adoption, adaptation and translation, in the crafting of plots is a perpetual one in dramaturgy.

### Other Innate Elements of Plot

There are some other issues that are associated with the plot of plays. Some of them are ancillary, some inherent and some complementary to plot. The important thing is that wherever plot is mentioned, these other ones often crop up. They include catharsis (as a result of sorrow, pity and fear in the plot of tragedies), flashback (dramatic retrospection), ironies, soliloquy, aside, comic relief, peripeteia, anagnorisis, the unities, suspense and *deus ex machina*.

Catharsis as recommended by Aristotle in *The Poetics* means the purgation of emotions of sorrow, pity

and fear - a function that every tragedy is expected to engender in an audience. Sorrow is aroused by the struggles and sufferings of the tragic hero. Pity is engendered by his unmerited/ undeserved suffering which makes the audience pity him. Fear is engendered by a feeling in the audience that what has befallen a fellow human being could also be their own lot too. In classical drama, the tragic hero is expected to become ennobled through suffering.

Flashback is a strategy in plot, in which an event or events that had happened in the past are shown in the present, to help the understanding of the audience. Such events are re-enacted or brought forward from the past because they have causal relationships to the events of the present. For example in 'Bayo Afolabi's psychological drama - *The Misogynist*, there are series of flashbacks to the past of the protagonist, to show those events in his childhood days that turned him into a hater of women in his adult life.

Ironies are usually used in the plot of drama to create passion and heighten interest. While in normal literary term/figure of speech, irony means a direct opposite of what is stated, in drama, ironical situations occur when a strange, coincidental event, action or utterance occurs, like when Queen Ojuola told the King (who unknown to her is also her son) in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*:

It is you I married, your highness,  
not my son. (act 2, Scene 4).

Dramatic Ironies occur in plots, in situations when a fact that is available to the audience is not available to the performers on stage. An example is Macbeth's speech inviting Banquo to a feast, whereas the audience knows he has planned to use the opportunity to murder the latter (Shakespeare's *Macbeth*).

Soliloquy is a plot device in which an actor or actress is made to talk to himself, usually when alone on stage. It is an opportunity the audience has, to listen to his inner thoughts, and the workings of his mind. This often explains actions of characters, and the audience is able to understand a character's behaviour from an almost omniscient point of view. It adds to plausibility and ensures causality in plays.

An Aside on the other hand is a side comment or words spoken by an actor or actress on stage, meant to be heard by the audience and not by other actors/actresses on stage. It is a way of giving an audience some essential information about what is going on, on the stage. This is usually done to enhance audience's comprehension of the dramatic action.

Comic Relief is a plot device in which humorous, amusing events are brought into the plot of an otherwise serious action on stage. The purpose is to relieve the tension created in the play by introducing humour or comedy. This is usually more effective in tragic situations. Comic relief may come in form of a subsidiary plot to a main plot.

In the plot of classical drama, Anagnorisis and Peripeteia are manifest. Anagnorisis means “recognition” or “discovery.” It is the point in a plot of tragedy when the tragic hero recognizes the fact of his situation or discovers that he/she has been operating in error. It is at this point that a reversal of fortune, called peripeteia comes into the plot. The hero therefore falls from grace to grass, and ends in a tragic way.

In the plot of classical tragedy the unities are sacrosanct. They are the unities of time, place and action. The unity of time stipulates that all dramatic action should take place within a single revolution of the sun, that is, within a day. Unity of place requires that a single location should be used for the plays, while Unity of action expects that the plays should have only one plot. There should be no subsidiary or underplots! Although the unities have been a subject of critical and metacritical discourses by critics, they reigned as major conventions of tragic plot for centuries. The ultimate purpose of the Unities is to achieve verisimilitude in play production and plausibility of plays before audiences. It was to enhance focus and concentration, for the purpose of achieving quintessence in the arts. As of that time, there was little or no technology and it would have been impossible to bring scenes from different distant locations together, within a day or a limited period of time. The same goes for place and action. Although in theatres all over the world and throughout the ages there is what Samuel Taylor Coleridge calls “a willing suspension of disbelief” by the audience, there is also the need to attain conviction in dramatic actions.

Suspense is a device within plot that heightens tension, engenders expectations in the audience through a systematic revelation of events in the plot. In suspense, some essential information which the audience expects are delayed, to heighten their interest in the play. The purpose of suspense is to capture audience’s interest and attention till the end of a play.

A Deus Ex Machina (God in a machine) is a device in plot when an external force, body or god is brought in, to resolve the crisis in a play. It refers to any sudden, unexpected intervention from outside the play’s plot to resolve the crisis or a difficult situation. In its original usage during the classical period, a god was lowered down on stage to solve the problem of plot resolution, instantly. The term is used in modern dramatic criticism for any implausible, unexpected plot resolution through extraneous means - a situation in which a playwright is confused or incapable of resolving the crises in his plot convincingly. According to the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* it is used to describe “any improbable or unexpected contrivance by which an author resolves the complications of the plot in a play or novel and which has not been convincingly prepared for, in the preceding action (p. 63-64).

## CONCLUSION

As has been established in this discourse, plot is a very integral part of dramaturgy. The term “plot” could be used as a noun and as a verb. It is an element of drama that controls virtually all the other elements. It is conditioned by need, as plots are designed to be commensurate with specific needs of plays. It could be described as the steering wheel of the ship of drama and theatre.

Inspiration for plotting of plot has been shown as coming from various sources - original thoughts and imagination of playwrights, history, myths and legends, adaptations and social realities - the society providing the raw materials with which a playwright crafts his plot. We have shown the difference between plot and a story, the former being a selection from, and a modification of the latter, for the purposes of attaining thematic projection. We have also shown how plots are tuned for specific needs of arts in society - for social, political, educational needs and portrayal of current traditions in vogue in society, e.g. choral speaking, cartooning for children etc. This work also examines other important, innate elements of plot and how they are used in the theatre.

But for space constraints and the need for focus, this discourse would have examined the use of plot in Interactive Drama. This involves the creation of drama in virtual worlds of computer- controlled characters. This involves computer animation in drama production. It has also not been included because it has new, peculiar characteristics of its own, and is better treated alone, separately.

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