

ENGL10002

Literature & Performance

Notes

Week 1, Lecture 1 – Introduction

Possibilities of staging a play:

- Morality; morally uplifting
- Provides community or escapism
- May be considered a waste of time in face of other urgencies
- Grants dignity
- Potential to improve or rehabilitate
- o Consider: Reflexivity, referentiality, intertextuality, theatricality
- o Genre as tacit framing

Cultural politics:

- Risk of historicization
- What it means to bring theatre into society
- World remade over time; allows for new models and speculation
- New ways of thinking/provoke

Summary:

- Literature/theatre has a range of uses, value, effects
- Subject to debate over time
- Reflect / produce social realities
- Serve to challenge conditions
- While successful works are highly distinctive, they are never singular
- Genre describes this patterning of such works, and informs what reader/audience expectations and frameworks for interpretation
- Aesthetic qualities and innovations in such works often sit in an “intertextual” relation to other works and the canon
- Meaning does not reside solely in the life of intentions of the Author (emerges through interaction of author, reader and work)

Key Considerations:

- Multiple ways of engaging
- Historical context and afterlife (contemporary iterations)
- Conditions of production and reception, beyond the singular author
- Role and function of cultural/other differences in the creation and interpretation of these works
- Think about literature and theatrical performance as a dynamic; a duality
- Writing and theatre: connections through context/history

The nature and activity of reading:

- “.. in some ways about the loss of self” (Tory Young, *Studying English Literature*, 2008)
- We fall away/disappear when we read
- Context is everything
- Posture / physical body / place
- Maryanne Wolf “Reader, Come Home,” 2018
- Robert Eaglestone “Doing English,” 2009

Week 1, Bonus Lecture: Poetry Analysis

Case Study: "Animal Tranquillity and Decay" by William Wordsworth

- Not strictly iambic pentameter but has rhythm
- Person walking: da-dum, da-dum
- "Little hedgerow birds"; "regard him not" = youth
- "Moves with thought" = wisdom
- "Subdued to settled quiet" = alliteration
- Old versus young; the experience of ageing
- "Peace so perfect" = alliteration
- Lots of commas – resemble a walking, consistent pace/pattern
 - Narrator observing old man walking; the commas end when the man stops observing
- "Thought..." = distracted
- Nature as active force leading him along
- Several iterations
- Theme: death, ageing, youth, decay, cycles, deterioration, mortality

Week 2, Lecture 1 – Doctor Faustus, Christopher Marlowe

- General Plot: Doctor Faustus sold his soul to the devil for 24 years of whatever he wants
- Repentance, sin – "high stakes, high drama"
- Inspired other works: Stein, Mann, Goethe

Biography:

- Marlowe born same year as Shakespeare in 1564, Canterbury
- Died young, 1593
- Son of a shoemaker; not elite
- Went to school (1580): encountered Renaissance, resurgence in interest in classical cultures and studies
 - Rethinking individuals as individuals; colonialism; relationships of gods and humans
- Marlowe wrote 5 plays total

Context:

- Reformation: Elizabeth 1st is Queen at the time Doctor Faustus is written

Doctor Faustus:

- Based, at least part, on:
 - German "Historia von D. Johann Fausten" (1587)
 - Translated as "The English Faust Book" (1592)
- First performed 1594, September 30, by Lord Admiral's Men (a theatre company)
- Debate over which parts written by Marlowe
 - A-Text (1604) and B-Text (1616)
- 9 quartos published between 1604 and 1631
- Soliloquy at end of play: Faustus wants to repent, realises what he has done, and is dragged off to Hell
- Marlowe as a spy – archival evidence, disappearance from University, etc.
- These questions resonate with the meaning of the play itself – doubles, duplicates

Literature and Performance as a dynamic:

- Contextual: encounter a moment where they were dynamic
- Shakespearian era: theatre/text combined
- W.B. Worthen: "dramatic performativity"
 - Complexity of integration between literature and performance in history
 - Emerging publishing/print industry plus increasing professionalism of theatre
 - From performance to print