NEW FORMS OF TEXTUALITY

The aim of the programme is to open up new frontiers in the understanding of what text and textuality mean in our contemporary world, in which meaning is mediated through a wide variety of texts including literature, cinema, television, and the internet. Taking into account the importance of fictional texts in both representing and creating meaning, the programme will focus on new textual forms that have become essential to understanding and (re-)interpreting past and present times. We shall explore new approaches in the analysis of such texts in order to understand how meaning is created in response to our urge to grasp human reality. We shall also concentrate on the way(s) in which past texts are reconstructed and reinterpreted today to suit discursive needs. Special attention will be paid to issues that have become the object of pressing current debate, such as ageing, gender, sexuality, identity, violence, feminism, and multi-culturalism.

Supernatural Heroines and the Construction of Gender

— ISABEL SANTAULARIA

The course is divided into two parts. The initial sessions will be devoted to the study of heroines in fiction, cinema, and television and their evolution from romantic interests and sidekicks to action heroines fighting bad guys and uglies single-handedly in genres such as detective fiction, science fiction, and action. Subsequent sessions will focus specifically on contemporary cult fantasy and telefantasy texts with supernatural action heroines as protagonists in order to see how gender is constructed in these narratives and to reach conclusions on the heroines’ function as reflections of changes in gender relations or as aspirational figures intended to disseminate a feminist agenda. The heroines and texts we will be using as case studies are the following:

- Anita Blake in Laurell K. Hamilton’s novel *Guilty Pleasures*.
- Buffy in selected episodes from the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.
- Max in selected episodes from the TV series *Dark Angel*.
- Sara Pezzini in the film *Witchblade: The Movie*.

References


**Multiculturalism and the Dark Underbelly of the Celtic Tiger: Redefinitions of Irishness in Contemporary Ireland**

— Carmen Zamorano

The dramatic economic changes undergone by Ireland since the mid-1990s have set off a number of socio-cultural changes that have determined the need to redefine the dominant twentieth-century definitions of ‘Irishness’. The economic depression and consequent new wave of mass emigration in the 1980s was soon followed by the beginning of a completely new experience in Ireland: from being a country of net emigration it became a country of net immigration, not only of returnees or people of Irish descent, but also of political and economic refugees who, for the first time in the country’s history, were attracted to Ireland for its new prosperity. The tourist industry was quick to promote and commercially benefit from a marketable form of Irishness: the pub culture, the Emerald Isle boasting its forty shades of green – according to the Tourism Ireland board – its myths and traditions, leprechauns, Riverdance, etc. However, a good number of artistic productions have started to raise questions about these vacuous images of Irishness, and about previous literary and political constructs of Irish identity. In this course, we will analyse a number of films, plays and works of fiction that contribute to questioning past and present constructs of Irishness. We will see the ways in which these works contribute to a redefinition of a multicultural Ireland and how they challenge the glossy brand image of ‘Celtic Tiger Ireland’ to uncover what the film director John Boorman has called “the dark underbelly of Ireland.”

**Course material – obligatory**

New Voices in Ancient Forms: Dramaturgical Trends in Contemporary English Theatre

— Núria Casado

Introduction: As one of the most ancient literary forms, drama has constantly been reformulated and transformed by adopting the aesthetic tendencies and technical improvements of every historical period. Throughout its long history and up to the early twentieth century, drama and its theatrical manifestations both served and rebelled against the societies out of which they emerged, oscillating between the contradictory territories of social prestige and marginalization but always succeeding in their spectacular reflection of political, historical and social fractures, as well as in their unique capacity to flesh out the mysteries of the human soul. However, technological advancements and new forms of global communication expanded the notion of performativity in the mid- and late-twentieth century, both challenging and enriching the theatre as a traditional art form and, hence, establishing a critical contrast between drama and more popular manifestations of textual representation, such as the cinema, TV and the Internet.

Course description: This course will look at several English playtexts that were written and produced in the late-twentieth century and the early twenty-first century in order to explore the ways in which contemporary theatre has addressed present-day social, political and philosophical debates. Through this examination, the theatre’s capacity to reinvent itself as a new form of textuality will be studied. The course is aimed at PhD students who would like to expand their knowledge of English drama and contemporary theatre in general, as well as at those who are interested in multidisciplinary artistic forms with either a scholarly or a creative inclination.

- Dramatizing postmodern riddles:
  - Howard Barker’s Scenes from an Execution
  - Michael Frayn’s Copenhagen
- Re-presenting the battle of the sexes:
  - Patrick Marber’s After Miss Julie
  - Patrick Marber’s Closer
- Voicing new cultural identities:
- Ayub Khan-Din’s *East Is East*
- Trish Cooke’s *Running Dream*
- **Fleshing out the human soul:**
  - Joe Penhall’s *Blue/Orange*
  - Sarah Kane’s *Psychosis 4.48*
- **Exploring theatrical new and old forms: celebrating the theatre:**
  - Kneehigh’s *The Baccae*
  - Theatre of Complicite’s *Mnemonic*

**Bibliography**


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**The ‘Dirty Old Man’ in Recent English Fiction**

— Maricel Oró

The myth of the ‘dirty old man’ has been the motif of humorous stories and irreverent mockery since the time of the Ancient Greeks. Behind the chuckle that this myth may cause, the ‘dirty old man’ figure embraces a number of cultural beliefs that have survived until present times. The risible aspect of love and sex between an older man and a younger woman resides in the perceived ugliness, loss of physical vigour, and probable impotency of the male body in old age. This course aims to introduce the figure of the ‘dirty old man’ as it has survived and is represented in recent English fiction in order to move to a wider understanding of the contradictions that exist between an increasingly ageing population and the cult of physical youth. In order to achieve this aim, a number of novels and short stories will be analysed and commented on, such as: Paul Bailey’s *Old Soldiers*; Julian Barnes’s *The Lemon Table*; Hanif Kureishi’s *The Body and Other Stories*; and Deborah Moggach’s *These Foolish Things.*

**Bibliography**
Changing Concepts of the Self:  
Modern Literary Autobiographical Fiction  

– **Billy Gray**

The aim of the course is to examine the extent to which the growth in literary autobiographical texts is linked to what V.S. Naipaul has referred to as “the crisis of the novel.” Equally, we shall be examining the autobiographical works of various authors in relation to changes within the cultural, political and social landscape, in an attempt to chart how changing concepts of identity and the self impact upon various texts.

**Course material – obligatory**


**Bibliography – Further reading**

Popular Shakespeare: Adopting and Adapting the Bard for the New Millennium
_— Nela Bureau and Gordon Collier_

Why has Shakespeare been a darling of the Hollywood film industry even before the spoken word, then throughout the twentieth century, gaining renewed acclaim after actor-director Kenneth Branagh adapted and interpreted _Henry V_ in 1989? What accounts for the boom in plays inspired by Shakespearean comedies, tragedies and poetry? Why are Shakespeare courses flourishing in English Departments all over the world? To what extent are people aware that references to and representations of Shakespearean texts saturate popular culture, showing up even on tote bags and coffee cups?

In an attempt to answer the questions previously formulated, the aim of this course module is threefold:

- we shall concentrate on the ways in which film adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays offer new cultural narratives that work within and against the discourse of Shakespeare’s world;
- we shall also gain an insight into a great variety of contemporary plays that are indebted to Shakespeare’s drama and poetry in (un)expected and surprising ways;
- and, Holmes-like, we shall trace and identify a myriad of contemporary texts and references in a variety of media, including the internet, that remake Shakespeare to suit a variety of aesthetic, ideological, and cultural interests.

**Movies**

- _Hamlet_ (Belgium, 2000) directed by Michael Almereyda. Starring: Ethan Hawke, Julia Stiles [Hamlet]
- _Romeo + Juliet_ (aka _William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet_; USA, 1996), directed by Baz Lurmann. Starring: Leonardo DiCaprio, Clare Danes [Romeo and Juliet.]
- _West Side Story_ (USA, 1961), directed by Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins. Starring: Natalie Wood, George Chakiris, Russ Tamblyn [Romeo and Juliet.]
- _The Tragedy of Othello: The Moor of Venice_ (Morocco, 1951), directed by Orson Welles. Starring: Orson Welles, Michael MacLiammóir, Suzanne Cloutier [Othello.]
- _Kiss Me Kate_ (USA, 1953), directed by George Sidney. Starring: Kathryn Grayson, Howard Keel [The Taming of the Shrew.]
Prospero’s Books (Netherlands, France, Italy, 1991), directed by Peter Greenaway. Starring: John Gielgud, Erland Josephson [The Tempest.]

Plays


Bibliography


Looking In Our (M)Other’s Mirror: A Contemporary Reader’s Approach to Experiences on Motherhood

— Emma Dominguez

Motherhood within a patriarchal society constitutes a common concern in the fiction by writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Gaskell, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ellen Glasgow and Joanne Harris among others. Wollstonecraft’s fiction borrows the conventions of the female Gothic to convey the contradictions of women’s experience of motherhood within an oppressive reality, sometimes depicting horrors that do not end with her escape from the haunted castle. The Gothic confusion of the boundaries of ordinary reality — self/other, past/present, reality/fantasy — is used to reveal a looking-glass world where assumptions of the female as the persistent ‘Other’ are reversed. This course will attempt to establish links among these authors through their protagonists’ experience of motherhood. Our analysis will focus on mothers and daughters and shall place emphasis on the circle of powerlessness that reveals the daughter’s inability to escape her mother’s fate, while hinting at the empowering possibilities of female affiliation as a potentially liberating alternative.

Main Primary Texts

In the world of literary creation in Africa, women had seldom been given any prominence, when it is well-known that Black African women’s literature started long before women in Africa were allowed to go to school and learn how to read and write. It is the women who fulfilled the role of custodians of the traditions, through oral expression that has preceded the written texts. But nowadays African women claim loudly to be heard and their participation in literary discourse is increasingly lively. What had once been the sole preserve of male writers and critics is challenged by the ever-growing corpus of literature by African women writers and a new generation of critics and journalists, many of them women. Orature and literature are the means many women employ to communicate their feelings and pass on the cultural values and traditions of their societies from one generation to the next, and to generations of international readers. The course will focus on stories written by Black African female writers that present gender-specific qualities, celebrating those women who have transmitted and written down past traditions and have dealt with both the positive and negative aspects of such traditions, sometimes as a life-giving force but often as sources of oppression of the female characters in their works.

Main Primary Texts

- Ama Ata Aidoo. Changes, A Love Story
- Buchi Emecheta. The Joys of Motherhood
- Buchi Emecheta. Kehinde
- Bessie Head. The Collector of Treasures
- Bessie Head. Maru
- Flora Nwapa. Efuru
- Flora Nwapa. Idu

Bibliography


**English Fiction post-9/11**
— **Brian Worsfold**

Many creative artists concurred in the prophecy that the attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York, on the morning of 11th September 2001, would have a profound impact on Western aesthetics, would alter the way we perceive our world, and would change the way we live our lives. There is evidence in our current life-styles that this prophecy is gradually becoming a reality. This course, therefore, will study some recent works of fiction by established writers in an attempt to discover precisely how the world has changed since the two Boeing airliners crashed in sequence two-thirds of the way up the twin towers, causing them to implode in clouds of toxic dust. The course will also try to determine how writers of modern fiction textualize this kind of event.

**Bibliography**

**Virginia Woolf:**
**Breaking Moulds, Making Moulds**
— **Maria O’Neill**

The search for new shapes and forms, which was the dynamo of all of Virginia Woolf’s works (essays, articles, journals, novels), has infused the spirit of both modern and contemporary writing. This course will explore the nature of the influence of Virginia Woolf via the following facets and writers:

– Setting the roots of the confessional poetry movement, especially in the work of Sylvia Plath;
• The female voice in literature: Eavan Boland and the women writer’s dilemma;
• Woolf and feminism: to what extent has she been adopted as an icon of feminism?
• Creating and re-creating the self: Virginia Woolf’s role as mediatic icon.

Bibliography