**Performing the Georgian World: 18th century drama and theatre Spring Term 2020**

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**Week One No Class**

**Week Two *The Recruiting Officer***

**Workshop session Monday**

This session will consist of a general introduction to the Georgian theatre and an overview of the rationale and structure of the course.  It will also outline the disciplinary approaches of the course with reference to theatre history, performance studies, and literary and cultural studies and introduce key concepts of the repertoire, archive and memory.  An important resource for the class will be the Eighteenth-Century Drama database and I will also be introducing the class to its many riches!

**Seminar Wednesday**

This week's main text is George Farquhar's The Recruiting Officer (see week 2 reading list).

Preliminary questions to consider for seminar:

1.  How does The Recruiting Officer explore the relationship between the military and the theatre -- consider e.g. Kite's opening speech, Act 1 Sc 1.

2. How does the play explore the relationship between gender and performance?  Focus on Silvia as Brazen and the possibilities of homoeroticism e.g. III ii 'What, men kiss one another!'

3. How does Farquhar represent the society of Shropshire to a London audience?  What do you think might be the politics of the play? How does it define the 'nation'?

4.  How important is the character of Kite?  Consider e.g. II, iii, and his account of his background in Act III, i.

5.  Why do you think The Recruiting Officer has endured so long in the theatrical repertory and in many different global contexts?  Consider the casting in a 2012 London production -- <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/feb/15/the-recruiting-officer-review>

**Advice on reading for this week**

The reading for this week is intended to be a general guide to resources for the course as a whole.   Essential reading is Farquhar's The Recruiting Officer.  In addition, please read the article by Nathan Garvey and the chronology in The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, eds. Moody and O'Quinn.  The latter will give you a broad historical outline to the Georgian period which we will explore in more detail as the course progresses.

**Week 3 Venice Preserv’d**

Workshop Session Monday

The Georgian theatre was subject to a wide range of regulatory conditions including, from 1737, the censorship of plays prior to performance, a measure that lasted until as late as 1968.  (Poetry and prose fiction have never been subject to similar forms of censorship).  Why was theatre regarded as politically, socially, and morally dangerous?  How did theatre managers, performers, writers and audiences adapt to these conditions?  This session will explore these questions with reference to Otway's Venice Preserv'd and the material in David O'Shaughnessy's website on theatre censorship:  <https://tobeomitted.tcd.ie/list.html>

Questions for Seminar Discussion

1. 'The text is done and now for/ Application. (Epilogue).  What's meant by 'application'?  What are the ways in which Venice Preserv'd might be open to 'application'?

2. Whose tragedy is this?  Belvidera's, Pierre's, Jaffeir's?  How does the play explore the relationship between public and private loyalties?

3.  Joseph Addison wrote (in Spectator no. 44  1711) that ' the sounding of the Clock in Venice Preserv'd, make the Hearts of the whole Audience quake; and conveys a stronger Terrour to the Mind, than it is possible for Words to do.'  How important is stage effect to the impact of Venice Preserv'd?  Consider aspects of the play such as scene directions, props such as the dagger, sound effects, positioning of characters on stage.  Consider Johann Zoffany's portrait of David Garrick and Susannah Cibber in the roles of  Jaffeir and Belvidera in 1762-63 (jpg attached) as possible evidence of the play in performance.

Research exercises (5-10 mins)

1. Choose a particular actress e.g. Cibber, Siddons, etc, and give us some information about how she played the role of Belvidera.

2.  Give an outline of one of the following, with a brief indication of how your research has contributed to your interpretation of the play:

a) 1983 National Theatre production

b) 2017 RSC production (review in reading list)

Advice for this week's reading

Please read Venice Preserv'd and at least one secondary source.

**Week 4 The Beggar’s Opera**

**Workshop Session Monday**

So far in the course we have been considering the genres of comedy and tragedy.  But these 'mainpiece' genres were only part of a wide range of dramatic entertainments that audiences could see on a particular night, what was known as the 'whole show'.  In this session we'll explore the typical pattern of an evening in a theatre as well as the importance of the theatrical season.  From the 1720s theatre was facing increasing competition from other art forms, most notably Italian opera.  We will consider music in the theatre in this workshop session with reference to The Beggar's Opera, arguably the first modern 'musical'.

**Questions for Wednesday seminar**

1.  How is The Beggar's Opera structured?  Consider the introduction and the overture (e.g. in comparison with the prologues to The Recruiting Officer and Venice Preserv'd.)

2.  What exactly 'is' The Beggar's Opera?  How is Gay hybridising or subverting theatrical, dramatic, poetic, musical genres and cultural hierarchies?

3.  Come ready to discuss one of the airs in the play.

4.  Gay claimed that the message of the play was  ' ... the lower Sort of People have their Vices in a degree as well as the Rich: And that they are punish'd for them'.  What view of society, human nature, and gender does The Beggar's Opera promote?

**Research exercises (5-10 mins)**

1.  A short discussion of William Hogarth's painting <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hogarth-a-scene-from-the-beggars-opera-vi-n02437> .  What does it suggest about stage practice and the use of scenic space?

2.  A short discussion of the first Polly Peachum, Lavinia Fenton

3.  A short discussion of the significance of the theatre in which the play was first performed -- Lincoln's Inn Fields.

**Advice for reading this week:**

Please read (at least) the play and the book chapter by Calhoun.

**Week 5 Douglas**

**Workshop Session Monday**

This week's session will deal two main topics:

a) the opposition to the theatre as immoral or licentious, known as antitheatricalism, focussing on John Home's Douglas (1757)

b) stardom and celebrity with reference to David Garrick and in particular Sarah Siddons and William Henry West Betty, known as 'Master Betty' both of whom were strongly associated with Home's play in the roles respectively of Lady Randolph and Young Norval.  What did it mean for eighteenth-century audiences to read plays with performers and performances in mind?

For the workshop please read Alexander Carlyle text in Reading List for this week.

**Questions for Wednesday's seminar:**

a) What similarities or differences can you see between the roles of Belvidera and Lady Randolph?  Is it justifiable to see Douglas as a 'she-tragedy'?

b) Douglas has been seen as a formative text in the development of a distinctively British cultural identity in its echoes of Shakespeare and the English ballad 'Gil Morrice' combined with its Scottish setting.  How does the play imagine cultural identity and the British/Scottish family?

Research exercises (5-10 mins)

1. What was Home's role in the 1745 Jacobite rebellion?

2. What's the significance of Charles Macklin's 'Scottish' Macbeth (1772)?

3. A discussion of these two advertisements for Douglas as evidence of the history of the play's performance -- <https://www.ambaile.org.uk/detail/en/4747/1/EN4747-inverness-theatre-bill-advertising-the.htm>

<https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/colonial-life-today/entertaining-george-washington/> --  Douglas advertisement -- see below

**WEEK 6 The Critic and The Rehearsal**

**Workshop Session Monday**

This session will explore the history of the Georgian theatre in York.  We will begin with a tour of major sites connected with the theatre and conclude with a visit to the York Minster Library to examine some of its vast collection of playbills.  Meet at the entrance to King's Manor at 9.45.  I will reconfirm arrangements nearer the time.

**Seminar Questions Wednesday**

In this seminar we will be focusing on two notable plays about plays, The Rehearsal and The Critic, part of a long tradition of metatheatre in British theatre.  Read The Rehearsal as background.  We'll concentrate on Richard Brinsley Sheridan's afterpiece The Critic, produced in 1779 during a time of war when Britain was threatened with invasion.  Consider the following questions:

a) How does The Critic explore the relationship between the theatre and the print media, especially newspapers, at a time of national crisis?

b) What does it suggest about the role of the author in 18th century theatre in relation to other theatre artists?

c) Is the play a satire or a celebration of the theatre?

d) How does the play reflect on contemporary theatre trends such as sentimental tragedy or the historical tragedy?

e) Watch the 1981 BBC version and come ready with some observations about the interpretation.  What works or doesn't in your view?

**Research Exercise (5-10 mins)**

1) How was The Critic reviewed when it was first performed? Check Burney Newspapers database or Gale Primary Sources.

2) Who was 'De Loutherbourg'?

3) Who was the original Puff?

**Week Seven Omai and The Death of Captain Cook**

Workshop Monday

In the course of the eighteenth century, British theatre went global.  Plays such as The Recruiting Officer and Douglas were performed in America, the West Indies, India and New South Wales (Australia).  The theatre became an important expression of growing British imperial power and influence.  Theatre also became a means of mediating news of the British empire to audiences 'at home', in a way that changed British theatre in the process.

The workshop will explore Omai: Or, A Trip Around the World (1785) as exemplary of the multi-media enterprise that was the Georgian theatre.  It will also focus on changes to staging and theatre buildings in order to accommodate increasingly spectacular effects.

Seminar Wednesday Questions

1. What's the significance of the genre of Omai i.e. the pantomime, in relation to the 'whole show'? Come to the class having done some research on eighteenth-century pantomime.

2. How do Omai and The Death Captain Cook represent British encounters with the Pacific? Is it significant that the plays were staged in the wake of the loss of the American colonies and a number of years after Omai's visit to London and the death of Cook?

3. Using the resources in the Routledge Anthology of Eighteenth-Century Performance, think about a) what audiences would have brought to these entertainments in terms of knowledge about the Pacific and b) how Omai was mediated to audiences and readers in terms of newspaper commentary, playbills etc.

4.  How innovative and important were the costumes in Omai?  Consult the National Library of Australia catalogue using search terms 'De Loutherbourg' and 'Omai'.

Research exercises

1) Who was John O'Keeffe?

2) Who was Purea/Oberea and who played her in the 1785 production of Omai?

**Week 8 The Times and The Belle’s Stratagem**

**Workshop Session Monday**

The theatre was an important venue for artistic expression by women, as performers, as we have seen, and also as playwrights.  As a context for this week's seminar on Griffith and Cowley, the workshop will outline the career of Elizabeth Inchbald.  Using Inchbald as an example, we will examine the relationship between the theatre and the book trade.  What was entailed for a woman in particular to become a playwright?  How (and in what contexts) were plays published, disseminated, and read?

**Seminar Questions Wednesday**

1.  What kind of comedy is The Times?  How is Griffith using comedy and the theatre to critique contemporary society?

2.  How do Griffith and Cowley explore the opportunities and risks for women who engage in public culture (especially fashionable society in the 1770s?  Consider the character of Mrs Racket.

3.  How does Cowley explore the theatricality of the masquerade in The Belle's Stratagem?

**Research exercises (5-10 mins)**

1.  What were the debating clubs of the early 1780s?  In what respect are they relevant to both plays?

2.  How many editions of The Belle's Stratagem can you locate on ECCO?  Where were they published?  What conventions do they follow e.g. paratextual material such as advertisements, information about performances, inclusion of prologues and epilogues.

3.  Give us some information about how The Belle's Stratagem was interpreted in Edinburgh in 2018 -- see <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/abo/vol8/iss1/3/>

**Week Nine Our Country’s Good and A Laughing Matter**

Workshop Session Monday

In this final week we'll turn to two contemporary playwrights who have engaged with the eighteenth-century theatre, Timberlake Wertenbaker and April De Angelis.  This session with consist of a debate about performing eighteenth-century drama in the twenty-first century -- details to be confirmed later.

Seminar Questions Wednesday

1.  'The Meaning of Plays' -- how does Our Country's Good debate the meaning and value of the theatre?  Can you identify any resonances with the response to Home's Douglas or the metatheatre of The Critic?  Consider Sideway's reference to Hamlet.

2.  How does Our Country's Good explore issues of race -- consider Black Caesar and the Aborigine.  Do you see any resonances with Omai?

3.  Is April De Angelis's A Laughing Matter strictly a museum piece or is she using the precedent of eighteenth-century theatre to explore the meaning of theatre today?

No Research Exercises this week