

FEMINISM: SILENCES AND ABSENCES IN ENGLISH LITERATURE – 5 creds.

María-José de la Torre Moreno (mjtorre@ugr.es), Gerardo Rodríguez Salas (gerardor@ugr.es), Adelina Sánchez Espinosa (adelina@ugr.es).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a hands-on course on how feminist epistemologies can be applied to literary texts across genres and history to generate readings that underscore, enhance, shift and/or problematise the received interpretation of texts. This is addressed in three sections, each of them taught by a lecturer specialised in the literary works chosen for analysis from a feminist perspective. We have joined our strengths to add to the solidity of the course, and have taken special care to harmonise our teaching methodology and evaluation criteria.

The first section appropriately brings the more solid theoretical component, which is nevertheless made not only reader-friendly but engaging by interspersing theory with selected texts illustrating very specific concepts, establishing a pattern of critical reading which is to be followed for the whole course. Students will become familiar in very general terms with French feminist theories (Cixous, Irigaray and Kisteva) and gynocriticism (Showalter, the latter with an application of selected fragments of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and Alice Walker's "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens"), thus gaining a brief yet comprehensive theoretical framework that they will be to apply to the selected literary readings for the course.

The second part taps into feminist ideas and channels them into a more unfamiliar, perhaps even unexpected, territory in this field. Now that students have gained a foothold on feminist readings, two new paradigms - genre and period - are introduced in the study of the Anglo-Saxon epic poem *Beowulf*. Precisely due to the very remoteness of the poem, straddling two very different, even antagonistic cultures and worldviews, this Old English poem lends itself very aptly to feminist scrutiny. Applying this perspective to *Beowulf* will help "establish the unspoken in the text" (C. Belsey). After helping students bridge the time gap with Anglo-Saxon times by taking an updated look at a fascinatingly exotic and surprising society, attention will be brought to the two different societal constructions of gender clashing in *Beowulf*: the Germanic-derived one vs. the Christian recoding of womanhood. This polarity, which will underpin the whole poem, will take us to accounting for some of its conflicts and ambivalence, and ultimately will point towards a female-based structural symbolism in the poem.

The third section will start with a brief introduction of the concept of power in literary and visual discourse. Attention will be devoted to the issues of feminist reconstructions of official canons, re-readings of canonical texts (both literary and visual texts) and feminist methodologies for the critique of representation. There will be two sessions dealing with the structures of the gaze, women as visual signs and the politics of spectatorship and visual pleasure. The concepts will then be applied to a selection of visual and written which will include Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, Jane Campion's *The Portrait of a Lady* and Sally Potter's *Orlando*.

CONTENTS

Part 1 (Prof. Gerardo Rodríguez)

1. Feminist theories. Introduction.
 - Gynocriticism. Showalter and Woolf
 - Womanism. Walker
 - Poststructuralist Feminism: Kristeva, Irigaray, Cixous
 - Postmodern Feminism
 - Performativity. Butler
 - Cyborg Theory. Haraway
 - Nomadic Subjects. Braidotti

Part 2 (Prof. Adelina Sánchez)

2. Gender, art and literature: the representations of women in literary and visual discourse.
 - The WASP canon. Feminist writings; feminist readings.
 - Feminist re-readings of canonical texts.
 - Women, Literature, Art and Power.
 - The critique of representation.
 - The structures of the gaze: women as visual signs, spectatorship and visual pleasure. Illustration: Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*
 - Adapting the gaze: from literature to film. Two case studies: Jane Campion and Sally Potter.

Part 3 (Prof. María-José de la Torre)

3. From pagan folklore to Christian tradition: tracing two different constructions of the female gender. Ambivalence and ideological conflict on women's identity in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The case of *Beowulf*.
 - Relevance of the Feminist Approach.
 - Women's Studies in the Early Ages.
 - Vestiges of women's prominence in Germanic societies (archaeology, myth, folklore, etc.)
 - Pagan & Christian gender identities
 - a) Christian re-coding of female gender.
 - b) Misogynistic categorisation of women
 - The social centrality of violence and war.
 - a) Women as "peace-weavers."
 - b) Dual reading of the female role as peace-weaver in the "comitatus".
 - Character analysis.

EVALUATION

Class attendance and active participation are mandatory. The final grade will be awarded on consideration of both on a 10/90 ratio.

The student's performance will materialise in the oral presentation which must be submitted (either individually or in groups) at the end of any of the course sections taught by Profs.

Sánchez and De la Torre. The oral presentation topic must be discussed with and approved of by the lecturer in question, and its progress will be checked in supervision tutorials as often as determined by them.

Marks will be given to aspects such as:

- design or plan;
- clear, consistent and illustrated argumentation;
- an appropriate use of sources;
- attention to supervisor's guidelines/corrections;
- keeping deadlines;
- effective group work, when appropriate;
- clear, fluent delivery.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Part 1

BUTLER, Judith. 1990. "Bodies That Matter". *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Nueva York: Routledge. 1-34.

MORRIS, Pam. 1996 (1993). "Writing as a Woman: Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and *Ecriture Féminine*". *Literature and Feminism*. Oxford: Blackwell. 113-135.

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RODRÍGUEZ SALAS, Gerardo. 2006. "La imitación intencionada (I): el feminismo 'restaurador' y Julia Kristeva". *La marginalidad como opción en Katherine Mansfield: posmodernismo, feminismo y relato corto*. Granada: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Granada. 367-392.

---. 2007. *Hijas de la Diosa Blanca: Ginocrítica y Feminismo Restaurador en la narrativa de Katherine Mansfield*. Oviedo: Septem.

Part 2

Readings

Mulvey, Laura. 1975;1989. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" *Visual and Other Pleasures*. London: Macmillan. Pp. 14-26.

Sánchez Espinosa, Adelina. 2011. "Feminist Approaches to Close Reading". In

Buikema et al. Eds. *Researching Differently. Theories and Methodologies in Postgraduate Feminist Research*. Series: *Routledge Advances in Feminist Studies and Intersectionality*. London and New York: Routledge

Sánchez Espinosa, Adelina & Costa Villaverde, Elisa. 2011. "The film text as palimpsest: translating women's gaze from page to screen. *The Portrait of a Lady* as a case in point" in Federici, Eleonora. Ed. *Translating Gender*. Amsterdam et al.: Peter Lang.

Smelik, Anneke. 2007. "Feminist Film Theory." In Cook, Pam. Ed. *The Cinema Book*. London: British Film Institute. 3rd revised edition. Pp. 491-504. Online

Viewings

Campion, Jane. 1995. *The Portrait of a Lady*
Hitchcock, Alfred. 1960. *Psycho*
James, Henry. 1881. *The Portrait of a Lady*

Part 3 (Specific selections will be found on SWAD, “BIBLIOGRAFÍA GRAL. Y ESPECÍFICA”)

- AGUIRRE, M. (1993) "Ring-giver, Hoard-guardian: Two World Views in Beowulf" > Proceedings of the IV International Conference of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature. Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago, 9-18.
- ALBANO, R.A. (1994) "The Role of Women in Anglo-Saxon Culture: Hildeburh in Beowulf and a Curious Counterpart in the Volsunga Saga". *English Language Notes*, 32, 1: 1-10.
- ANDERSON, C. (2001) "Gaest, Gender and Kin in Beowulf: Consumption of the Boundaries". *The Heroic Age*, 5, 18 pp.
- BLOOMFIELD, J. (1994) "Diminished by Kindness: Frederick Klaeber's Rewriting of Wealtheow". *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 93, 2: 183-203.
- CARR PORTER, Dorothy (2001) "The Social Centrality of Women in *Beowulf*: A New Context". *The Heroic Age*, 5, 12 pp.
- DE LA TORRE (2006) "La invisibilidad del cuerpo femenino en Beowulf: transferencias metonímicas y simbólicas del poder femenino orientadas a su ocultación y demonización", en *Cuerpos de Mujer. Miradas y representaciones*. Granada: Universidad de Granada.
- DE LA TORRE (2012) "["Through the mists of ancient time": una aproximación a las mujeres anglosajonas desde el Paganismo germánico al Cristianismo temprano](#)" > *Into Another's Skin: selected essays in honour of María Luisa Dañobeitia* (M. Aguilera, M.J. de la Torre & L. Torres, eds.). Granada: Servicio de Publicaciones, 3-18.
- FEE, Christopher (1996) "Beag and Beagbroden: Women, Treasure and the Language of Social Structure in *Beowulf*". *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 97, 3: 285-294.
- FRANK, Roberta (1991) "Germanic Legend in Old English Literature" *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature* (Malcolm Godden & Michael Lapidge, eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 88-106.
- HERBERT, Katherine (1997) *Peace-Weavers and Shield-Maidens: Women in Early English Society*. Anglo-Saxon Books.
- LOCHRIE, K. (1994) "Gender, Sex, Violence and the Politics of War in the Old English Judith" > *Class and Gender in Early English Literature: Intersections* (G. Overing & B. Harwood, eds.). Bloomington e Indianapolis: Indiana University Press: 1-42.
- NILES, John D. (1998) "Pagan Survivals and Popular Belief", *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature* (M. Godden & M. Lapidge, ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 126-141.
- OSBORN, Marijan (1999) "The Wealth They Left Us: Two Women Author Themselves Through Others' Lives in *Beowulf*". *Philological Quarterly* 78, 1 & 2: 49-76. (Available as Electronic Journal in the Faculty's Library)
- OVERING, Gillian (2000) "The Women of *Beowulf*: A Context for Interpretation" > *The Beowulf Reader* (P. S. Baker ed.). Londres y Nueva York: Garland, 219-260.
- POTKAY, M.B. (1997) "Redeeming Ornament: Women in Old English Literature" > *Minding the Body. Women and Literature in the Middle Ages, 800-1500* (M.B. Potkay y R.M. Evitt). Londres: Prentice Hall, 31-46.

- ROBINSON, F.C. (1998) “*Beowulf*” > *Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature* (M. Godden & M. Lapidge, ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 142-159.
- SHIPPEY, T.A. (2001) “Wicked Queens and Cousin Strategies in *Beowulf* and Elsewhere”. *The Heroic Age*, 5, 18 pp.
- TAYLOR, K.P. (1994) “*Beowulf* 1259a: The Inherent Nobility of Grendel’s Mother”. *English Language Notes*, 31, 3: 13-25.



WOMEN, LITERATURE AND CINEMA IN IRELAND – 5 Credits.

Pilar Villar-Argáiz (pvillar@ugr.es)

I. PRESENTATION AND OBJECTIVES

This master course will give students the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the different aspects of Irish culture, history and society, and it will also encourage the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas and insights within the broad field of Irish Studies. It will also expand the students’ knowledge on subjects such as Irish literature, which has been traditionally concealed in the syllabus of European universities under headings such as “British Literature”.

In particular, the main objective of this master course is to explore the different and contesting representations of Irish femininity in a large corpus of cultural texts. In the Irish context, womanhood has been a metaphor intrinsically connected with national identity. By maintaining the traditional Irish association between woman and land, and by inscribing a female motherly voice that speaks on behalf of an oppressed community, many early twentieth-century poets and rebels have depended on women as motifs in their poetry and oratory. Whichever the medium of expression, Irish women have been doubly silenced, both as national(ist) icons and idealized custodians of tradition, and also as beloved muses of the male artist. I will use jointly feminist, postcolonial studies, and multicultural theories in order to explore how some Irish women have been doubly marginalized and constructed as subordinated ‘Others’ by colonialism and/or patriarchy.

As we intend to analyse both real women and their artistic representations, the cultural manifestations we will look at will cover this complexity:

- First of all, we will focus on the literary arena, and we will select some key examples of the different genres of poetry, novel, short story and drama, in order to analyse comprehensively works written both by men and women.
- Secondly, we will pay attention to other forms of cultural manifestations that will give us a clue of how ‘womanhood’ is perceived and/or understood in Ireland. In particular, we will see the extent to which music, the media, the film industry and the advertising perpetuate and/or deconstruct conventional representations of Irish femininity.

Such a multidisciplinary approach to the notion of 'Irish womanhood' implies other complementary approaches that will enrich our initial object of study: analysis of conventional and innovative representations of women in Ireland, and hence, in the West; contrastive analysis of masculinity vs. femininity; contrastive analysis of male and female authors in Ireland; and finally, comparative analysis of how women have been represented in Ireland and other once-colonized nations. This analysis of Irish femininity is also the starting point from which to tackle other representations of the so-called 'Otherness' that prevail in a society where everything that distances itself from the masculine canon is secluded to the margins (i.e. homosexuals, immigrants, travellers, gypsies, the poor, etc.)

Taking all these priority thematic lines into account, the specific aims of the course are:

- To study the concept "womanhood" as perceived and understood in some key examples of Irish poetry, fiction and drama, written both by men and women in the 20th and 21st centuries. We will particularly focus on how contemporary Irish literature (re)formulates stereotypical notions of femininity such as the 'mother', the 'wife', the 'new Eve', the 'witch' and the 'whore'. We will also carry a contrastive analysis of literary and mythological creations, and ordinary heroines. In order to do so, we will focus both on canonical and marginal authors, in order to study their perpetuation or subversion of conventional myths and their reinterpretation of canonical literature. The corpus of authors we will use in this literary study will be the following:
 1. Poetry: Eavan Boland, Paula Meehan, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Dorothy Molloy, Colette Bryce, Mary O'Donnell, Mary O'Malley; Sarah Clancy, etc.
 2. Novel: Patrick McCabe, Roddy Doyle; Mary O'Donnell; Julia O'Faolain
 3. Short Story: James Joyce; Anne Enright; Claire Keegan; Eilís Ní Dhuibhne; Mary O'Donnell, etc.
 4. Drama: W.B. Yeats, Brian Friel
 5. Autobiography: Frank McCourt, Nuala O'Faolain
- (1) To analyse changing representations of womanhood during the second half of the twentieth century, as observed within a range of popular music lyrics and the images associated with them. Principal objects of analysis will be the work of Irish musicians such as the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, Christy Moore, Van Morrison, U2, Enya, Sinéad O'Connor, Joni Mitchell, and the musical *Once*.
- (1) To analyse representations of gender, nationhood and ethnicity in Irish films: *Michael Collins*, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, *The Commitments*, *Angela's Ashes*, *Once*, *New Boy*, *Happy Ever Afters*, *Adam and Paul*, *The Front Line*, and *Pavee Lackleen*.
- (1) To analyse women in Irish society, with special attention to a paternalist text of vital importance, the Constitution, and to other sociological aspects of great relevance: domestic violence, abortion, the use of contraceptives and divorce.
- (1) To carry out a comparative literary analysis of Irish women and other "Others" present in 21st century Ireland (immigrants, homosexuals, handicaps, the poor) bearing in mind how they are represented in all cultural mediums of expression.

- (1) To encourage discussions of understandings of Ireland as a postcolonial country and to contest 'Orientalist' perceptions of Ireland abroad, by analysing the American reception and success of writers such as Eavan Boland, Frank McCourt and Nuala O'Faolain.

II. SYLLABUS

1. IMAGINARY, IMAGINED AND REAL WOMEN IN IRISH CULTURE: TOWARDS A DECONSTRUCTION OF IRISH FEMININITY

1. The Celtic Heritage: Sovereignty goddesses; Sheela-na-gigs; Celtic heroines
 2. British (imperialist) representations: Hibernia, Britannia, and John Bull
 3. The National Muse: Mother Ireland, Dark Rosaleen, Cathleen Ni Houlihan.
 1. The "aisling" tradition
 2. The Irish Literary Revival: the Abbey Theatre, Mangan, Pearse, etc.
 3. Eamon de Valera and the 1937 Constitution
 4. The Ireland of the 1930s: Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*
 4. Conventional and contesting representations of womanhood in traditional Irish music and pop music (Christy Moore; Sinéad O'Connor; The Corrs, musical *Once*)
- ### 2. TWENTIETH-CENTURY WOMEN WRITERS: A SUBVERSIVE FEMININITY
1. A new national muse: '(M)Other Irelands' in Edna O'Brien, Eavan Boland, etc.
 2. New perspectives on maternity: Paula Meehan, Eavan Boland, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, etc.
 3. New perspectives on sexuality. The Female Body in the Foreground: Eavan Boland, Susan Connolly, Nuala Archer, etc.
 4. Gender and class: Paula Meehan (Poetry and documentary) and *The Commitments*
 5. The 'Orientalist' reception of Irish Literature in the 'West'. Eavan Boland's *The Lost Land*, Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*, Nuala O'Faolain's memoirs

3. BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY: 'IRISH' FEMININITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

1. A 'new' unrecognizable Ireland: Eavan Boland, Paula Meehan, Vona Groarke, Caitríona O'Reilly, etc.
 2. Is feminism still necessary?: Domestic Violence and rape in Dorothy Molloy, Sinéad Morrissey, Leanne O'Sullivan, Eavan Boland
 3. The interplay of gender, race and multiculturalism: Paula Meehan, Colette Bryce, Leontia Flynn, Mary O'Donoghue, Mary O'Donnell, Michael O'Loughlin, Roddy Doyle
 4. The immigrant in contemporary Irish literature: *Literary Visions of Multicultural Ireland*
4. 'Mother Ireland' in film
 - 4.1. Conventional and contesting representations of womanhood and history in *Michael Collins* (1996) & *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (2006)
 - 4.2. The immigrant in Irish films: the musical film *Once* and discussion of other films recently released.

III. DETAILED PROGRAMME AND TASKS (to be confirmed in February 2013)

IV. METHODOLOGY

The programme consists of

- Lectures by myself, Irish renowned artists Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin and Mary Coughlan, and some invited keynote speakers who will take part of *Las Segundas Jornadas de Estudios Irlandeses*.
- Theoretical-methodological seminars which discuss the state of a given field or methodological/theoretical approach on the basis of selected texts (feminist, postcolonial, and multicultural theory in particular). These theories will be applied to the discussion and (re)interpretation of particular literary texts, films and other cultural texts.
- Student papers: presentation of participants' research projects followed by discussion.
- Tutorials: individual discussions of participants' research with participating scholars

V. EVALUATION METHODS

- Attendance and active participation in class: 10%
- Tasks: 20%
- Oral Presentation: 30%
- Final Essay: 40%

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY: UGR Library

Barros del Río, María Amor. *Metáforas de su tierra: breve historia de las mujeres irlandesas*. Oviedo: Septem, 2004.

Berresford Ellis, Peter. *Celtic women: women in celtic society and literature*. London: Constable, 1995.

Cleary, Joe and Claire Connolly. *The Cambridge companion to modern Irish culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Cullingford, Elizabeth Butler. *Ireland's others: ethnicity and gender in Irish literature and popular culture*. Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press: Field Day, 2001.

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Palacios Manuela and Laura Lojo (eds.). *Writing Bonds: Irish and Galician contemporary women poets*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009.

Pierce, David. *Irish writing in the twentieth century: a reader*. Cork: Cork University Press, 2000.

Villar Argáiz, Pilar. *New territory for the Irish woman in Eavan Boland's poetry: a feminist and postcolonial approach*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2005

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ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Éire-Ieland: A Journal of Irish Studies

Irish journal of gothic and horror studies

Irish University Review

Irish studies review

New Hibernia Review

Irish Political Studies

The Irish Book Review

