

Genre: An Introduction to Literary Studies (MT 2024)

Lecturers: Nicky Grene, Stephen O'Neill, Tom Walker

Module Description:

This module examines the concept of genre in order to introduce some of the key structures, themes, reading skills and critical perspectives that underpin English literary studies. We will focus on three major literary genres – poetry, drama and prose fiction – and discuss the ways in which these have evolved from the classical through to the contemporary eras. The module lecturers will explore a range of set texts to illustrate particular formal, stylistic and thematic qualities, and to consider the relationship between literary genre and various social, historical and cultural contexts. The module will also introduce some important critics and theorists of genre and reflect on the role of criticism in the formation of literary canons and traditions.

Learning Outcomes:

On completion of this module students will:

- Understand the evolution of literary genre in its major forms from the classical to the contemporary era
- Be able to locate specific literary genres in historical and cultural context
- Develop awareness of the critical frameworks and categories relevant to the study of literary genre
- Acquire a critical vocabulary relevant to the discussion of literary genre and related concepts
- Gain interpretative skills in reading a selection of illustrative texts from different periods in literary history.

Module Outline:

Week 3

a) What is Genre?

b) Reading Genre

Text: Aristotle, 'Poetics'.

Week 4

a) What is Poetry?

b) Reading Poetry

Texts: Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy* (c.1580) [extracts]; William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems* (1802).

Week 5

a) Lyric and the Sonnet

b) Texts: Christina Rossetti, 'Monna Innominata' (c.1881); Tony Harrison, from *The School of Eloquence* (1978).

Week 6

a) Epic

b) Texts: Alexander Pope 'The Rape of the Lock' (1712–17); Derek Walcott, *Omeros* (1990) [book 1].

Week 7

a) Greek Tragic Theatre

b) Text: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*

Week 8

a) Drama and the Comic Genre

b) Text: William Wycherley, *The Country Wife* (1675)

Week 9

a) Changing Forms of Theatre

b) Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days* (1961)

Week 10

a) What is a Novel?

b) The Rise of the Novel and Social Realism:

Text: Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son* (1848) – chapters 1–16.

Week 11

a) Modernist Fiction: Time, Narrative and 'Story'

b) Texts: D.H. Lawrence, 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' (1909); Virginia Woolf, 'The Mark on the Wall' (1917); Katherine Mansfield, 'Prelude' (1918).

Week 12

a) Postmodernism and Metafiction

b) Text: Angela Carter, *Nights at the Circus* (1984).

Primary Texts:

All primary texts will be made available via Blackboard or through one of the TCD library's databases, with the exception of Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*. You will need to purchase this novel. It is readily and cheaply available secondhand and online.

Secondary Reading:

Secondary reading suggestions will be signposted via Blackboard, as well as in the lectures and tutorials. Do use these suggestions or ask your lecturers and tutors for further guidance. Do not just trawl the internet. The below offer some useful initial places to explore background reading:

POETRY

Attridge, Derek, *Moving Words: Forms of English Poetry* (2013)

Hurley, Michael and Michael O'Neill, *Poetic Form: An Introduction* (2012)

Lennard, John, *The Poetry Handbook* (2006)
Matterson, Stephen and Darryl Jones, *Studying Poetry* (2011)
Ramazani, Jahan, *Poetry and Its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres* (2013)

DRAMA

Bentley, Eric *The Theory of the Modern Stage* (1968)
Brook, Peter, *The Empty Space* (1968)
Carlson, Marvin, *Theories of the Theatre* (1993)
Meisel, Martin, *How Plays Work* (2007)
Steiner, George, *The Death of Tragedy* (1961)

PROSE FICTION

Eagleton, Terry, *The English Novel: An Introduction* (2005)
Hale, Dorothy, ed., *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory* (2006)
Levine, Caroline, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015)
McKeon, Michael, ed., *Theory of the Novel* (2000)
Prince, Gerald, *Narratology* (1982)
Shaw, Valerie, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* (1983)

Module Convenors

Stephen O'Neill: oneillsb@tcd.ie

Tom Walker: walkerto@tcd.ie