

TH337-15 The Author Dies Hard

20/21

Department

SCAPVC - Theatre and Performance Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Silvija Jestrovic

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

In 1968, the year of revolt, theorist Roland Barthes famously proclaimed the 'Death of the Author.' He has put to rest the notion of the author as originator/ God and placed the reader central stage. This module takes Barthes's provocation as a point of departure to explore authorial presence and absence on various levels of text and performance from its aesthetic aspects to its political dimensions. Text, as well as performance, consists of multiple writings and potential embodiments, 'issuing from several cultures and entering into a dialogues with one another, into parody, into contestation; but there is only one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and in this place is not the author [...], but the reader'(Barthes). The aim of this module is to investigate how 'the reader' (as also the spectator/participant) constructs 'the author'? Why is the construction of an 'author' in the reception process, and even within some participatory forms, important? How is the author constructed through imaginaries and re-imaginings, over-writings and mutations, repetitions and archiving, fictionalisations and theatricalisations? How is the authorial figure fashioned and constructed through self-referentiality and dramatic irony? How does the figure of the author appear as an intertextual and intertheatrical reference? How is the author/predecessor ghosted within texts and various kinds of performance practices?

The return to the question 'Who is/was an author?' is also to understand the multiple possibilities and limitations of the term along the lines of gender, ethnicity, class, and politics—not so much of authorship—but of the author as an accountable figure both self-fashioned and shaped through public imagination:

- How does the proclamation of the death of the author decentre those subjects that have historically never occupied the centre, who have historically been marginalised?
- What are the ethical implications of authorial presence/ absence?
- What/ where is authorial accountability if the subjectivity of the author is irrelevant?
- How do different kinds of authorial deaths destabilise the political dimensions of this concept (i.e. censorship, erasure)?

In order to grapple with these questions we will look at a range of works from Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of the Author* and Tim Crouch's controversial play *The Author* to postcolonial works such as Amie Cesaire's *A Tempest* that speak back to the canonical author; from Marina Carr's biographical play about Chekhov *16 Possible Glimpses to Dead Centre's* deconstructive Chekhov's *First Play* and Polly Teal's feminist intervention in her play *Bronte*; from Marina Abramovic's exploration of presence in the performance piece *The Artist is Present* to absence and censorship in the performances of artist/activists such as Wei Wei.

Our questions will be approached through a combination of close text/performance analysis, critical theory, discussion as well as practical workshop. In our learning approach, as well as in the assessment, we will combine written/discursive academic work (e.g. the portfolio) and creative practice (e.g. the performance exam) as a research tool and as a means of responding to some of the issues that will be raised in the module.

Module aims

The aim of this module is to investigate how 'the reader' (as also the spectator/participant/successor) constructs 'the author'? Why is the construction of an 'author' in the reception process, and even within some participatory forms, important? How is the figure of the author established and destabilised in various instances of text and performance? How and what does the authorial figure perform? How is the author constructed through imaginaries and re-imaginings, over-writings and mutations, repetitions and archiving, fictionalisations and theatricalisations? How is the authorial figure fashioned and constructed through self-referentiality and dramatic irony? How does the figure of the author appear as an intertextual and intertheatrical reference? How is the author/predecessor ghosted within texts and various kinds of performance practices? What are the ethical implications of authorial presence/ absence?

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1

Would Don Quixote be Written Even if Cervantes Was Never Born?: Introduction to relevant theoretical concepts. Preparatory readings: R. Barthes, 'Death of the Author' (essay)

Week 2

Authorial Gender Trouble; Readings: P. Teale, *Bronte* (play) also readings from Gilbert and Gubar *The Madwoman in the Attic*

Week 3

Intertextuality: Dialogues with the Dead: . Readings: Marina Carr, 16 Possible Glimpses; Dead Centre, Chekhov's First Play

Week 4

Ethics and the Author. Readings: M. Foucault 'What is an Author?' (essay), T. Crouch, 'The Author' (play), S. Burke, 'The Death of Paul de Man' from The Death and Return of the Author (essay)

Week 5

The Author is (Meaningfully) Absent. Reading: V. Havel 'Audience' ; viewing: 'Never Sorry' documentary about Wei Wei

Week 6 -- Reading Week

Week 7 (portfolio due) The Author is Present. Marina Abramovic

Workshop/ instructions (in preparation for the performance the exam)

Week 8-9

Workshop/ project development (in preparation to the exam)

Week 10

Performance Exam

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- By the end of this module students should be able to demonstrate a critical understanding of theories concerning the notion of the author, of concepts such as intertextuality, intertheatricality, performativity and romantic irony.
- By the end of this module students should be able to analyse contemporary theatrical, performative and literary practice in the light of cultural, political, historical, and philosophical debates on the aesthetics, ethics and politics of representation, self-representation, reception and participation
- students will acquire new set of conceptual models and analytic tools to make use of in thinking about the communication processes that unfold through artistic reception, performance and creation.

Subject specific skills

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Transferable skills

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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	9 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Project supervision	2 sessions of 1 hour (1%)
Online learning (scheduled sessions)	(0%)
Online learning (independent)	(0%)
Private study	50 hours (33%)
Assessment	80 hours (53%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

This includes readings and viewings of materials, as well as research assigned in preparation for the seminars.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
Portfolio	50%	40 hours
Portfolio includes 2 items 750 w each - research and analysis of a piece of critical writing (e.g. book chapter, essay) and a brief description and analysis of case study (e.g. a dramatic text, performance, installation, etc) both address issues and questions related to the module. The aim of the portfolio is to sharpen students research, analytical and writing skills relevant to the themes raised in the module and in general		
Performance/ Practical	50%	40 hours
This is a creative response to themes and issues studied in the module and a form of creative practice as a form of research. Students respond through group work to themes and questions raised in the module through the choice of one of these forms, performance, performative lecture or installation		

Feedback on assessment

written and verbal

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 4 of UENA-QW35 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies with Intercalated Year
- UTHA-W421 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 3 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 3 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
- Year 4 of UTHA-W422 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Core option list B for:

- UFRA-R1W4 Undergraduate French with Theatre Studies
 - Year 4 of R1W4 French with Theatre Studies
 - Year 4 of R1W4 French with Theatre Studies

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 3 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies