

Modern British and Irish Theatre and Drama: From William B. Yeats and Lady Gregory to David Bowie and Enda Walsh

This seminar will offer a broad introductory survey of British and Irish drama from around 1900 until today. The syllabus will focus on selected periods that galvanized theatrical production, highlighting the theatre as a principal cultural force in interaction with other media. Each section will include theoretical texts spotlighting specific features of dramaturgy and theatre.

To begin with, we will investigate how dramatists engaged with nationalism and state power in the first half of the last century. William Butler Yeats and Lady Gregory produced their play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902) in the context of a burgeoning Irish nationalism, and T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) was written in a Europe of emerging fascism; both dramas, with very different means, showcase individuals that take a stand, controversially and at a high cost, in the face of state authority.

The second focus will be on the explosion of new dramatic writing in the second half of the 1950s and the creative frictions between the concerns of the Theater of the Absurd (Samuel Beckett), on the one hand, and the theatre of the 'Angry Young Men and Women' on the other. The latter rediscovered the stage as a platform for attacking harsh social and gender inequality and for pressing towards greater diversity (John Osborne and Shelagh Delaney).

The third section will be dedicated to contemporary theatre which revisits the topic of nationalism in the context of Brexit, but also addresses a spate of new and current issues, from ecology to virtual reality. At the end of the semester we will attend and discuss a performance of *Lazarus* (2016) by David Bowie and Enda Walsh; student tickets (13 Euros) are reserved for our course. Bowie and Walsh's musical is one of the last two works Bowie completed before his death; it will be staged at Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg.

Some, but not all of the material will be made available through a reader.

Course requirements:

Regular attendance, excellent knowledge of the set texts and plays; regular course assignments during the semester and (to receive the maximum credit points) a term paper.