MODL M2044 EUROPEAN LITERATURE OF IDEAS: PHILOSOPHY IN/OF LITERATURE

UNIT DESCRIPTION

This unit explores how the relationship between literature and philosophy has developed in European and foreign cultures since the French Revolution, looking at the three defining cultural movements which have explored and at times exploded this association during this period: Romanticism, Modernism and Postmodernism. The unit will be team-taught, drawing upon a broad but coherent range of examples from a ‘literature of ideas’ across at least three different foreign languages. The precise choice of texts may vary from year to year, but major contributions to each movement will be selected. These selections will facilitate a variety of critical responses in order to observe and evaluate how literary writing and philosophical ideas have interacted since 1789, from the expressivity of the Romantic sovereign self to the brutally stripped-down subjectivity of Postmodernism. Emphasis will be placed on the intersections and tensions between these various discourses, framed within two critical contexts: firstly, that of the literary turn taken by moral philosophy from the 1980s onwards; and secondly, by extension, that of Plato’s so-called ‘ancient quarrel’ between philosophy and poetry.

UNIT STRUCTURE

Texts will be taught in translation. There will be 11 fortnightly seminars in total, lasting one and a half hours each, to include a mini-presentation from the relevant tutor and student presentations / papers (on an agreed rota).

Each of the three cultural movements will be allocated three seminars each. It is intended that each seminar will focus on one primary text, to be supplemented by secondary reading if necessary. For each movement, at least one of the primary texts should be a work of philosophy or critical thinking.

There is of course no obligation for any critical consensus on the relationship between literature and philosophy to emerge within or across these movements. Indeed, contemporary criticism highlights the need for discord as much as harmony between the two practices in order to develop a dynamic understanding of human experience.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
(FURTHER READING LISTS MAY BE DISTRIBUTED BY TUTORS)

1. Set Reading for Introductory Session:
   ‘An Ancient Quarrel? Philosophy and Literature’

Plato, Republic, Book 10

2. Recommended Introductory Reading (available in Bristol’s library holdings)

Booth, Wayne C., The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) on order
Lamarque, Peter, The Philosophy of Literature (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009) PN49.LAM

3. Reading on Romanticism

——— Beyond Representation: Philosophy and Poetic Imagination (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1996) PN49 BEY
———— *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) PN603 DEM

4. Reading on Modernism

Davies, Steffan and Ernst Schonfield (eds.), *Alfred Doblin: Paradigms of Modernism* (Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 2009) PT2607.O35 ALF
5. Reading on Postmodernism

Fish, Stanley, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980) PN81 FIS
Jameson, Fredric, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991) CB430 JAM
McHale, Brian, *Constructing Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1992) PN3503 MAC

6. Background Reading

Barry, Peter, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester University Press, 1995) PN81.BAR
Hollis, Martin, *Models of Man: Philosophical Thoughts on Social Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) BD450 HOL

Leatherbarrow, William and Derek Offord (eds.), *A History of Russian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) DK189.2 HIS

Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Why Fiction?* tr. by Dorritt Cohn (University of Nebraska Press, 2010) on order


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