

Gastvortrag von

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"#LedaToo: stylistics and the teaching of sexual ethics"

Abstract:

Yeats' poem *Leda and the Swan* has been the subject of classic stylistic analyses (Halliday 1966, Widdowson 1976) which link a particular grammatical phenomenon (its use of the definite article and demonstrative pronouns) to its effect. It thus illustrates the central tenet of literary stylistics: that analysis of linguistic detail can contribute to understanding literary meaning.

As such this poem has - until recently - always seemed to me to be a perfect opening example for the course on literary stylistics which I teach to third-year undergraduates at King's College London. Not only is it a powerful, vivid, memorable and expertly crafted sonnet; it also neatly illustrates the explanatory power of stylistics. It is also however a depiction of a rape. Cullingford (1994) describes it as "pornography" and an example of canonical status granting immunity from censure to works which legitimise the violent subjugation of women. In this it is by no means alone among literary works. Nor is the subjugation of women the only topic on which mores have dramatically changed in recent years. My aim in this talk and the subsequent discussion is to explore the extent to which changing ethics should affect our choices and approaches in the teaching of literary stylistics.

References

- Cullingford, E.B. 1994. Pornography and Canonicity: The Case of Yeats' 'Leda and the Swan'. In Heinzelman and Wiseman (eds.). *Representing Women: Law, Literature, and Feminism*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, pp. 165-187.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1966. Descriptive linguistics in literary studies. In: A. McIntosh, A. & M.A.K. Halliday (eds.). *Patterns of Language: papers in general, descriptive and applied linguistics*. London: Longman, pp.56-69.
- Widdowson H.G. 1976. *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature*. London: Longman, Ch 2, pp. 7-26.

Wann: Donnerstag, 6. Dezember 2018 um 11 Uhr s.t.

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