

Summer School 2013: Scottish Gothic Fiction or How to Win a Game of Hangman

Honestly, I did not really know what to expect when Prof. Schaff first presented her program for 2013's Summer School in Edinburgh: Scottish Gothic Fiction. And to be even more honest, the fact that students of this class were asked to read five different books did not seem to be very student-friendly. However, my other self had the feeling that talking about Scottish literature while being in Scotland could be a once in a student's lifetime opportunity. And looking back now, I guess I should let this other self make all decisions in my life as this class was not only the most interesting but also the most valuable class I ever participated in in my English studies so far.

As I expected, it was a very special feeling to talk about James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* while having Arthur's seat right in sight from the classroom's window. And it was even more special to talk about Intertextuality concerning Hogg and James Robertson's *Testament of Gideon Mack* and having the opportunity to ask Mr Robertson himself. He as well as our other guest lecturers Louise Welsh (*The Cutting Room*) and Ian Campbell who all were very open and friendly and offered us a totally new perspective on their own works. These are only few examples of the many different approaches Prof. Schaff invited us to take in order to get a deeper inside into the various texts we discussed. We also went to the vaults of Edinburgh one evening, tried to find out about the marketing of Gothic elements in town, considered the difference between the Fantastic, the Marvelous and the Uncanny and finally learnt how to take advantage of our new gained knowledge in our everyday lives and for our future academic career. (If you have not tried yet: “**Caledonian Antisyzygy**” is one of the best words I ever used to win a game of “Hangman”!! I have not been beaten so far although some opponents claimed that I made up that word!)

So I am fully convinced that principles like the discourse about Unreliable Narration or Intertextuality will be very useful in many different academic contexts that are yet to come and that we will therefore keep our Edinburgh experience in mind for a long time. And even if some of us still think that five books were a huge challenge for just fourteen days, I am sure that many of us will appreciate this very special class when writing their next “Hausarbeit“ or thesis. So I think I am right if I say that we are all very thankful for Prof. Schaff's great commitment for this class and hope that we will keep up her great attitude to offer these kinds of special classes to many future students as well!

Report by Anonymous Participant