THEATRE 150: Theatre History I

Final Research Project on Production History

There are two options for this assignment:
1. You can research either a Medieval morality play or Renaissance play
2. You can research a medieval festival of plays (i.e. Corpus Christi Cycle, also known as mystery or miracle cycle plays)

FOR OPTION ONE:
You are a research dramaturge working closely on a major production of a Medieval morality play or Renaissance play. The director of the upcoming play is really interested in finding a fresh take on a classic while incorporating aspects of famous or important productions from the past. S/he has asked you to find information about past productions of a play of your choosing.

The director is very particular and wants clear, rigorous, well-argued and efficient explanations as to why this play would be interesting to stage. S/he also wants to know why the past productions of this play that you are researching would be interesting to incorporate into the current production. What aspects – in particular – do you think are compelling/interesting/important? When considering how to solve this creative problem, think back to your Antigone project and consider all of the possible ways you can help the director. Different past productions might tackle different kinds of dramaturgical issues: issues of translation, interpretation, acting style, design, historical/political context, place/space in which the play is performed, audience.

Your first task is to decide which Medieval morality play or Renaissance play you wish to read, analyze and research for this final project.

- It cannot be a play we have read in class
- It should not be too obscure
- After reading through many performance reviews, select THREE reviews that you believe represent significant productions that you wish the director to use as inspiration in the upcoming production
- If you select a Renaissance play one of the reviews must be at least 100 years old
- If you select a Medieval morality play one of the reviews must be from before 1980

Submission
- This submission should be in the form of a Dramaturgical Notebook
- Double-spaced 12 point font
- Include a cover sheet with your name, date, name and author of play
- Notebook should be divided into sections (as outlined below)
- Reviews should be included in a separate section and clearly labelled
- If you have additional information (pictures, for instance) or other materials that may be helpful for the director you can include them in an appendix section
- Abide by all rules regarding syntax, grammar, citations, etc.
- You will present your findings to the class in advance of submitting your dramaturgical notebook
THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION MUST BE INCLUDED IN YOUR DRAMATURGICAL NOTEBOOK:

1. **In 4-5 pages discuss the rationale for your play selection. You should include:**
   - A full summary of the play
   - A discussion of why you think this play is relevant or interesting to stage in 2017. For instance, are there aspects of it that are timely? Or is there another reason for selecting the play?
   - You should incorporate textual analysis from the play into the creative case you make for the play’s relevance.
   - You should incorporate information from at least three scholarly articles in order to demonstrate to the director that your research into the reasons for selecting this play are thorough.
   - You should use full and correct citations with a work cited page in this section

2. **Locate and Include a total of THREE performance reviews:**
   - One review for each of the three productions is the minimum requirement
   - If you select a Renaissance play one of the reviews must be at least 100 years old
   - If you select a Medieval morality play one of the reviews must be from before 1980

3. **In 3-4 pages make an argument for why the director should consider using aspects from each of the three productions you have included in number 2.**
   - This is the equivalent to an extended version of your thesis, so you want to ensure that each of the productions you suggest highlights different aspects that could enhance the upcoming project, and that they aren’t repeating themselves.

   - Depending on why you think a past production is important (historical context, translation, acting style, design innovation, directorial choices, etc.) you will want to elaborate on the issue you wish the director to consider as s/he plans for the upcoming production: Why is the historical context important, for instance? Why is the design considered innovative? Why is the acting style interesting to consider? Did the acting style divert from the conventions of the time, for instance? Or maybe it is quintessential? Is the relationship to the audience central to how the production realized the play?

   - You can write this section as an academic argument or couch your argument in the form of a persuasive letter written to the director.
FOR OPTION TWO:

You are a research dramaturge working closely on a major festival -- the main feature is the medieval mystery cycle of plays (also known as Corpus Christi Cycle, or miracle plays). The director of the upcoming festival of plays is really interested in finding as much as s/he can about how other cities have performed the cycle. The director is wanting a fresh take on this tradition while continuing to include authentic aspects from the medieval cycle play tradition. S/he has asked you to find information about the cycle plays that were performed in medieval England that might help with this upcoming festival. S/he also wants you to locate at least two contemporary articles/essays/performance reviews which discuss contemporary productions of the cycle plays in either the U.K. or North America.

The director is very particular. S/he wants clear, rigorous, well-argued and efficient explanations as to how the upcoming festival can build on both the medieval tradition and other contemporary productions. From your research into these festivals in both medieval and contemporary eras, what aspects – in particular – do you think are compelling/important? Different past productions might tackle different kinds of dramaturgical issues: acting style, design, historical/political context, place/space in which the play is performed, civic planning, use of technology, audience.

Your first task is to research the history of the York, Chester, and Wakefield mystery cycle performances.

- You must investigate the mystery cycles in each of these three cities (which you will find mostly in books; in some cases you can also find information in scholarly essays)
- You must locate at least two contemporary articles/essays/performance reviews which discuss contemporary productions of the cycle plays in either the U.K. or North America (which you will find in newspaper and/or journals; in some instances there may be online reviews)

Submission

- This submission should be in the form of a Dramaturgical Notebook
- Double-spaced 12 point font
- Include a cover sheet with your name, date, name and author of play
- Notebook should be divided into sections (as outlined below)
- Reviews should be included in a separate section and clearly labelled
- If you have additional information (pictures, for instance) or other materials that may be helpful for the director you can include them in an appendix section
- All rules regarding syntax, grammar, citations, etc. are fully in operation
- You will present your findings in advance of submitting your dramaturgical notebook to the class
THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION MUST BE INCLUDED IN YOUR DRAMATURGICAL NOTEBOOK:

1. In 4-5 pages discuss the history of the Wakefield, York and Chester play cycles. You should include:
   - A summary that explains the mystery cycle of plays. This summary includes where, when, and why the mystery or miracle play cycles were performed in these three English cities
   - A discussion of why you think it is relevant or interesting to stage this festival of plays in 2017? For instance, are there aspects of the cycle that are timely? Or is there another reason for staging the festival of medieval plays?
   - You should incorporate and cite details from your research into the creative case you make for the festival’s relevance.
   - You should use full and correct citations with a work cited page in this section

2. Locate and include a total of TWO performance reviews, and at least 4 pictures/images from contemporary productions

3. In 3-4 pages make an argument for why the director should consider using aspects from the productions you have included in number 2.
   - This is the equivalent to an extended version of your thesis, so you want to highlight different aspects/elements on the play cycle performances that you discuss that could enhance the upcoming festival.
   - Depending on why you think a past production is important (historical context, acting style, design innovation, directorial choices, civic engagement, relationship to audience, etc.) you will want to elaborate on the issue you wish the director to consider as s/he plans for the upcoming production: Why is the historical context important, for instance? Why is the design considered innovative? Why is the acting style interesting to consider? Did the acting style divert from the conventions of the time, for instance? Or maybe it is quintessential? Is the relationship to the audience central to how the production realized the play? What is the relationship to the city? What kinds of practical aspects to performing a cycle of plays in a city would you need to keep in mind?
   - You can write this section as an academic argument or couch your argument in the form of a persuasive letter written to the director.