

PAC Home Talk [Plymouth Arts Centre]

‘writing making | making writing: retaking the side of things’

Wednesday 13 December

Notes

Ponge - title

Bogost - Play

Bakhtin – Dialogism

A dialogical text is made up of different voices, unmerged into a single perspective, and not subordinated to the voice of the author. Each of these voices has its own perspective, its own validity, and its own narrative weight within the novel.

The dialogical word is always in an intense relationship with another’s word, being addressed to a listener and anticipating a response. It resists closure or unambiguous expression, and fails to produce a ‘whole’. It is a consciousness lived constantly on the borders of other consciousnesses. In contrast, monologism is taken to close down the world it represents, by pretending to be the ultimate word.

Dialogism is not simply different perspectives on the same world. It involves the distribution of utterly incompatible elements within different perspectives of equal value. Bakhtin criticises the view that disagreement means at least one of the people must be wrong. Because many standpoints exist, truth requires many incommensurable voices. Hence, it involves a world which is fundamentally irreducible to unity. It denies the possibility of transcendence of difference. **Separateness and simultaneity are permanently with us. There is no single meaning to be found in the world, but a vast multitude of contesting meanings. Truth is established by addressivity, engagement and commitment in a particular context.**

interpretation of an art object

Interpretation so often engenders the habit of judgment. Let’s say that, rather than judgment, our aim is to facilitate meaningful interaction with both human and ‘more-than-human’ objects, to become an object among objects.

Don’t worry about the ‘meaning’ of the work, but focus on how your senses place you at the centre of a composite, ‘display’ object, consisting of space, light, sound, smell, text, displayed objects and, of course, bodies. How can I use my ears, my eyes, my nose, my skin, my voice? How can I contact a strange stranger and how might a stranger contact me? Imagine that you are a beam of light, playing on the surface of the art object; a sound wave bouncing off it; a fly about to land...

Imagine yourself to be a Benjaminian critic. Enter into the work and activate its subjectivity rather than making it an instrument of your own subjectivity.

PhD – just a few examples

Fat Bag – Cranbrook / bag as whole – focus in on engagement

Kien turning to stone

Ekphrasis / Amanda Game collaboration

Centring video

Centring 2

McGuckian / method / Ylang-Ylang

English Craft

Porched / Nabokov

Marcus Age of Wire

Occurrence

A Game of Jug

Goldsmith - Uncreative Writing

The Thing / Not a text, but a document of a writing process in the form of an image.

Concrete

Poetry

If you're not reading with the part that's asking for a confession, but with your ability to associate, your intuition, your sense that this moves by analogy to that... then you have no problem, because you're not asking a poem to be a single individual narrative telling you about a life. (...you understand that, as in film, things can be adjacent, and the adjacency creates a glow of meaning...)

What interests me about poetry as a medium is that it tends to make reality – that we in many ways over-simplify in order to survive it – as complex as it needs to be again, as filled with contradiction as it needs to be.

Jorie Graham, *Guardian* interview with Aida Edemariam, 02 December 2017

Ursula K le Guin *Guardian*, 24 November 2017

Narrative

Fiction that abandons cause and effect makes a point about the nature of reality at its own expense. Narrative inconsequentiality offers the imagination limitless freedom, but the paradoxical result of

such freedom is predictability. When you see that in this story nothing is going to happen which, by the ancient rules and rites of storytelling, “should” happen, interest wanes. Relationships are without effect, and therefore without affect.

If surrealism is super-realism, and if reality is indeed as vacant as this, no wonder we make up lies about it. Merely realistic or merely fantastic fiction asks us not only to consent to suspend disbelief but to believe that actions have reactions, acts have consequences and moral responsibility exists. Storytelling of this kind seems to be a human survival tactic.

Surrealism is the most cerebral and most cynical of genres, declaring and exhibiting the falsity of reason, the meaninglessness of meaning; it flaunts its courage in breaking the compact, the collusion, on which fiction depends. But such brave defiance runs the fatal risk of boring the reader.

Alison Flood Guardian 08 December

In his 1970 essay *Philosophy and the Form of Fiction*, Gass coined the term “metafiction” to characterise the work of Borges, Barth and Flann O’Brien, describing it as writing “in which the forms of fiction serve as the material upon which further forms can be imposed”.

Interrogating structure was part and parcel of his own work too. In his 1997 essay collection *Finding a Form*, Gass declared: “My stories are malevolently anti-narrative, and my essays are maliciously anti-expository, but the ideology of my opposition arrived long after my antagonism had become a trait of character.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/dec/08/william-h-gass-author-dies-aged-93-tunnel-omensetters-luck>

Each novel has its own font. I see my books on a screen and always have. This is because I feel a sense of immense space and speed behind the screen and below the screen and a novel is always an infinite number of versions of itself. It’s like I keep that sense of possibility alive while the text is on screen. I hate looking at the printed version. My perfectionism loathes the idea of something being complete – being solid. A novel dies to me when it leaves the screen and I instantly lose all interest in it.

Nicola Barker ‘My working day’, *Guardian* 18 November 2017