The Discourse of Discovery in English Renaissance Writing 1500-1630

The sixteenth century was a period of dramatic technological change. New discoveries in geography, astronomy, and science radically altered the understanding of the universe, the race, and the individual. New technologies transformed the way in which people made sense of the world and of each other. Only the twentieth century has seen such a dramatic paradigm shift in knowledge. This course will look at the major territorial and technological discoveries of the sixteenth century, and will examine the ways in which the discourse of discovery shaped the literature of the English renaissance.

Each lecture in the course will focus on a specific area of discovery and innovation during the early modern period. We will look in some detail at the texts listed below, along with other short excerpts that will be distributed in lecture handouts.

All texts are available in the Library, but the electronic versions suggested can also be used.

Course Outline

1. Introduction – John Donne, ‘Satyre III’
   http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/satire3.htm
2. Michel de Montaigne, Apology for Raymond Sebond’

Geographical Discovery

3. Thomas More, Utopia
   http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2130/2130-h/2130-h.htm
   http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/E500000-001/
   http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/goodmorrow.htm
   http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=etas

Astronomical Discovery

6. Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus -
   http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/779
7. Reading Week
8. John Donne, Ignatius, his conclave (on Blackboard)

Alchemy

   http://archive.org/details/cu31924006465599
10. Francis Bacon, The New Atlantis
    http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/bacon/atlantis.html

11. Library visit
12. Conclusion

Reading List

Avery, Bruce, ‘Mapping the Irish Other: Spenser's a View of the Present State of Ireland’, ELH, 57:2, Summer 1990, 263–79


Fizdale, Tay 'Irony in Marvell’s “Bermudas”', ELH, 42:2 (1975), pp. 203–213


