



Deconstructing Gardens and their Metaphysical Allegories

A Retrieval of the Dissimulated Meanings of the Medieval and Renaissance English Gardens

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The course explores various meanings of the English garden from the perspective of the philosophy of language stemming from the phenomenology of E.Husserl, M.Heidegger and the hermeneutics of H-G.Gadamer. Questioning the metaphysically-based priority of the literal over the figurative meanings and underlining the primordial ability of the poetic word to uncover the truth as non-concealment and as a condition for the secondary logical truth, the lectures deconstruct and retrieve the ek-sistential origin of different meanings of the garden. Thus the texts studied will show that the medieval and the Renaissance English gardens are not to be understood just as a mere result of pragmatic gardening techniques oriented by rationally-based botanical treatises nor are their aims to be confined to economy or leisure. Instead gardens can be shown to illustrate a particular way of being-in-the-world of the pre-modern European man who finds himself at the crossroads between the classical and the Judaeo-Christian traditions. Anonymous medieval works such as *The Braunches of the Appuletre* (13th c.), *The Pistil of Swete Susan* (14th c.), or Renaissance works such as Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (16th c.), Shakespeare's *Richard II* (16th c.), Donne's *Twickenham Garden* (17th c.) or Fane's *Curiosities from Summerly in Lovingland* (17th c.) indicate that gardens are inextricably linked to, and constitute an image of, the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*), the domain of the immediately lived experience. In other words, the English gardens, in their various guises, display how human beings situate themselves meaningfully in the world during a certain historical epoch.

Selected Bibliography

1. Anon., *The Braunches of the Appuletre in A Treatise of Loue*. Ed.J.H.Fisher [EETS o.s. 223] (Oxford: OUP, 1970)
2. Anon., *The Pistle of Sweet Susan in Scottish Alliterative Poetry*. Ed. F. J. Amours (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1897).
3. Donne, J., *Poems of John Donne*. Ed. E. K. Chambers, vol. I (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1896)
4. Fane, M., *The Poetry of Mildmay Fane*. Ed. T. Cain (Manchester, Manchester UP, 2001)
5. Shakespeare, W., *Richard II*. Ed. Ch. R. Forker (London: Arden, 2002)
6. Spenser, Ed., *The Faerie Queene*. Ed. A.C. Hamilton *et al.* (London: Routledge, 2014)

Course Requirements

Class attendance and participation (brief presentations), personal research portfolio, and final written test are required.