

Grace in literatures in English

19 June 2015

This one day conference organised by the English Department at Queen Mary University of London (<http://www.sed.qmul.ac.uk/english/index.html>) aims to address grace in literatures in English across periods and genres.

Grace has been an influential and contested term in literary studies. More loaded than elegance or charm, grace has been idealised, rejected, appropriated, and misused. Grace, as it relates to literary production and interpretation, can be both a quality and a function of the text—it can be bestowed upon the writer or reader, or it can be inherent in the text. At a time when there is increasing pressure in the discipline of literary studies to measure itself in quantitative terms, this conference asks whether grace (as a quality or effect of writing and reading) can frame a defence of the study of literature. Or is grace as a value limiting, anachronistic, or irrelevant in a postmodern, secular world?

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

Different meanings of grace (ethical, aesthetic, stylistic, theological)

Changing concepts of grace over time

Grace as an ideal in literature

Grace and artistic inspiration

(Mis)use of grace as a means for exclusion or control, for instance in a colonial or postcolonial context

Grace as inherent or learned and performed, given and received or earned and acquired

As a prelude to a series of talks and workshops at the University of Oxford, culminating in an interdisciplinary conference and publication on grace in all its cultural manifestations (Summer 2016), we are offering an exploration of grace in literatures in English.

Dr Susan Jones, the convener of these projects, will be giving a keynote address.

Abstracts of 250 words should be submitted to a.effe@qmul.ac.uk and l.e.gwynn@qmul.ac.uk by 30 January 2015.

Organising Committee: Alexandra Effe, Lotte Fikkers, Lucy Gwynn, Melissa Schuh, Andrea Thorpe, Lottie Whalen, and James Williams