

Foreword

There are very many books for students of English Literature, so why publish yet another one? – especially one that **not** an academic work. This present book has not been written by a person seeking to teach; it has been written by a person seeking to learn – written by a student himself. The student has made his own journey, going down paths which are not always academic, leading him to uncover pieces of information which would not normally appear in formal literary studies.

Just one example of this: the usual study of, say, Shakespeare’s “Macbeth” would not dwell much on the fact that the role of Lady Macbeth was written to be performed by a man (no women were allowed on stage during that era.) The new king at that time was obsessed with witchcraft, but the three “weird sisters” of the play are never referred to as “witches”. And, even today, actors in the British Theatre consider it deeply unlucky to even mention the name of the play, and will superstitiously refer to it as “The Scottish Play”. With these and similar incidental pieces of knowledge, suddenly a work which might be difficult has become interesting and intriguing: Why is it considered so unlucky? What would it be like watching Lady Macbeth performed by an adolescent boy? And when these considerations are accompanied by illustrations ranging from the elegance of 19th Century theatre to the vivid beheadings of a 1970s Roman Polanski film – studying “Macbeth” is no longer a tedious duty, but something of an adventure.

This work has been created from the collected notes and essays of a student, Daniel Moti, during his three-year English Literature Degree Course at the University of Craiova. Some of these notes veer off the paths of standard academic study - the scandalous life-styles of Lord Byron and Oscar Wilde seem to be of greater interest than their actual works - but overall these notes reveal an excitement, a passion for, and a modern-day student approach to the wide range of English Literature.

Daniel Moti was fortunate enough to have personal experience of the London theatre, working alongside English students who shared his enthusiasm and interests. This present publication includes notes and comments made by these fellow students. So, what we have here is a notebook created by students for students. It is not a dry, academic study, yet in spite of its light-hearted, wide-ranging and highly personalised approach, it is serious in its love of English Literature. As a result, it should inspire the next generation of students and enthuse them with its passion and wide range of interest.

The English poet Robert Browning in his poem “An Epistle containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician” describes Karshish as

“the picker-up of learning’s crumbs,
The not-incurious in God’s handiwork”.

The authors of this present book could well be described as “pickers-up of learning’s crumbs”, and there enough crumbs here to make a significant feast for today’s students of the mighty handiwork that makes up the sum of English Literature.

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