

Beyond the Library Facilitator Notes – Session 2

Date/Time: 29th October 2024, 5.30-7pm, Level 3 Rehearsal room

Script: The Mulberry Bush by Angus Wilson

Current play: Giant by Mark Rosenblatt

The aim of this event is to create an engaging and collaborative space where participants can explore and discuss a study script, drawing connections to the current Royal Court production. By linking the study script to themes or ideas in the current production, the facilitator will help deepen the audience's understanding of the work and its relevance to contemporary theatre.

Introduction (c10 mins)

- Getting to know the group
- Angus Wilson background. Compare & contrast with Roald Dahl and Mark Rosenblatt. Misanthropy, macabre story-telling, lacking in empathy
- The Mulberry Bush specifically – background and history. Bristol old Vic Autumn 1955, Royal Court Spring 1956, then vanished!
- Overall themes: scapegoating, justice/injustice, manipulative ideologues, intellectual snobbery/smugness, insularity, psychological precariousness, metaphor of the knotted mulberry tree.

First Reading Passage (c20 minutes) – **Page 78 from the top to Page 84 when Simon falls full length & lies mumbling about the mulberry tree.**

- Participants read aloud from chosen excerpt **Characters required: Geraldine, Simon, Ann, Rose, Wallcott, Cora, Kurt & Peter**
- Questions:
 - How does this scene make you feel about the various characters involved? Do you sympathize? Do you despise? Do you care about them?
 - Does the writing style feel “modern” – i.e. angry young mid 1950s onwards, or harking back to first half of the 20th century drama?

Second Reading Passage (c20 minutes) - **Page 100 from the top to Page 108 when Peter says, “it’s nothing to do with us”.**

- Participants read aloud from chosen excerpt **Characters required: James, Ann, Rose, Kurt & Peter**
- Questions:
 - Is this scene bringing the interpersonal plot of the play to an elegant or disjointed close?
 - Has the play, by this point, covered its key wider themes coherently?

Open Q&A Discussion (c20 minutes)

Closing (c10 minutes)

- Summarise key takeaways from the readings and discussion
- Further reading recommendations
 - Angus Wilson Novels
 - Hemlock & After
 - Anglo Saxon Attitudes (and/or 1992 TV Series on DVD/Streaming)
 - Angus Wilson books of short stories (Kindle only I think)
 - The Wrong Set
 - Such Darling Dodos
 - A Bit Off the Map
 - Skating On Thin Ice (1991 BBC Documentary about Angus Wilson)
<https://youtu.be/WpCDZWhETnw>