

Twentieth-Century Fiction I

October 31. Woolf (3). *Mrs. Dalloween*.

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Courses in English, master list:

<http://english.rutgers.edu/undergraduate/courses/spring14.html>

Happy to discuss course choices in office hours or by e-mail

review

the postwar

inadequate narratives, stunted sentiment

imagining life in common: a problem

“Dulce et decorum est / Pro patria mori”

novel forms for living with the War

heavy pasts

interrupted Bildung

not this

They were talking about his [Mr. Dalloway's] Bill. Some case, Sir William was mentioning, lowering his voice. It had its bearing upon what he was saying about the deferred effects of shell shock. There must be some provision in the Bill. (183)

Proportion, divine proportion...

Conversion...smites out of her way roughly the dissentient, or dissatisfied; bestows her blessing on those who, looking upward, catch submissively from her eyes the light of her own. (99–100)

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disproportion

questions for today:

why this form?

an ordinary mind—or many?

form (review)

transfer of confidence to inner life

stream of consciousness

(free indirect discourse...on steroids)

multipersonal representation of consciousness

event displaced by interlude

why? (I)

At the time of the first World War and after—in a Europe unsure of itself, overflowing with unsettled ideologies and ways of life, and pregnant with disaster—certain writers... find a method which dissolves reality into multiple and multivalent reflections of consciousness. That this method should have been developed at this time is not hard to understand. (Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 551)

form (review)

intense moments of being

Pater and aestheticism as sources

(parallels to: Joycean epiphany, Joycean form)

why? (2)

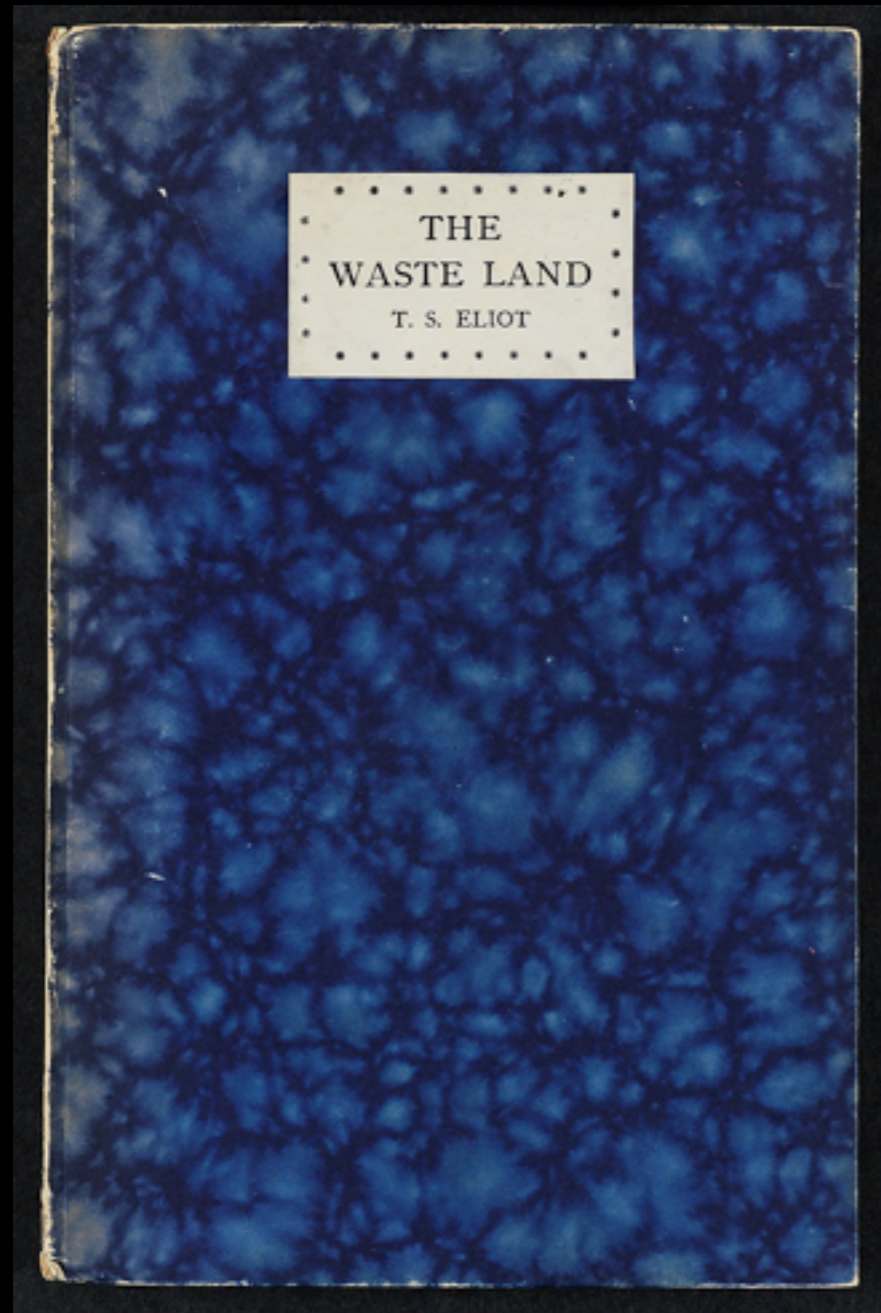
The leaden circles dissolved in the air. (4, 48, 94, 186)

Fear no more (9, 30, 39, 139 [Septimus], 186)

leitmotive again

compare also: Peter and Clarissa / Odysseus and Penelope?

restricted production



restricted production

Hogarth Press (1917–41): operated by hand by Leonard and Virginia Woolf (VW is compositor)

“for all our friends stories”: Publishes Bloomsbury authors and affiliates (Woolves, Eliot, Forster, Mansfield, Fry); subsequently psychoanalysis, political pamphlets

“The only woman in England free to write what I like”

form (review)

intense moments of being

Pater and aestheticism as sources

(parallels to: Joycean epiphany, Joycean form)

realism through intense sensation

queer desire

middle age

over

It was all over for her. The sheet was stretched and the bed narrow...

It was if the five acts of a play that had been very exciting and moving were now over and she had lived a lifetime in them and had run away, had lived with Peter, and it was now over. (47)

form (review)

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middle age

city life

why? (3)

The psychological foundation upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli...

There is perhaps no psychic phenomenon which is so unconditionally reserved to the city as the blasé outlook.

Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903)

form

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form/commonality

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public transit

form/commonality

Signs were interchanged, when, as if to fulfil some scheme arranged already, now a summit dwindled, now a whole block of pyramidal size which had kept its station inalterably advanced into the midst or gravely led the procession to fresh anchorage. Fixed though they seemed at their posts, at rest in perfect unanimity, nothing could be fresher, freer, more sensitive superficially than the snow-white or gold-kindled surface; to change, to go, to dismantle the solemn assemblage was immediately possible.

...Elizabeth Dalloway mounted the Westminster omnibus.(139)

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shopping!

why? (4)

We take these moments in Woolf's fictions to be the oblique rendering of consciousness, where modern consciousness is assumed to be chaotic, fleeting, frangible...Consider, though, how well this trope of consciousness...conjoins with the new view of "the market"...Like consciousness, the market has come to defy description.

"The market" is at least as much an aesthetic phenomenon as it is anything else.

Jennifer Wicke, "*Mrs. Dalloway Goes to Market*" (12)

form/commonality

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How does Woolf modify Pater's "thick wall of personality"?

commonality

Zwerdling on the social in Woolf: Expos moment!

What is his argument?

Find an example of how he uses textual evidence

Zwerdling

As a moralist, Woolf works by indirection, subterraneously undermining the officially accepted code, mocking, suggesting, calling into question, rather than asserting, advocating, bearing witness. (70)

The fundamental conflict in *Mrs. Dalloway* is between those who identify with Establishment “dominion” and “leadership” and those who resist or are repelled by it. (75)

Zwerdling

And so there began a soundless and exquisite passing to and fro through swing doors of aproned white-capped maids, handmaidens not of necessity, but adepts in a mystery or grand deception practised by hostesses in Mayfair from one-thirty to two, when, with a wave of the hand, the traffic ceases, and there rises instead this profound illusion in the first place about the food—how it is not paid for; and then that the table spread itself voluntarily with glass and silver.

(Woolf, 104; qtd. in Zwerdling, 73)

free your mind?

“The social system” Woolf describes in *Mrs. Dalloway* is not likely to be transformed soon enough to allow either of them [Peter or Clarissa] to build their lives on the flow as well as the containment of emotion. (81)

other minds

Clarissa...could have bitten her tongue for thus reminding Peter that he had wanted to marry her.

Of course I did, thought Peter; it almost broke my heart too, he thought. (42)

other minds

Every power poured its treasures on his [Septimus's] head, and his hand lay there on the back of the sofa... Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more. (139)

She [Clarissa] read in the book spread open:

Fear no more the heat o' the sun

Nor the furious winter's rages. (9)

other minds

Always her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident...But why had he done it?...

Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them. (184)

other minds

Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. She must assemble. (186)

discussion

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Does this constitute a real alternative to the isolated lives and barren postwar attitudes of earlier in the novel?

next

Faulkner: focus on the first half
Commonplace