

Twentieth-Century Fiction I

December 5. Barnes (2).

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the final

distributed Monday, December 16, at 9 a.m.
due Tuesday, December 17, at 3 p.m.

3 essay questions, one hour each

2 cover whole course

1 focuses on Hurston, Barnes, Narayan

honor code: 4 hours max.

Sakai submission: upload a test document by 12/12
otherwise, exam due in person to Scott 207

housekeeping

The syllabus gives the reading order you should follow in *Malgudi Days*

You will be invited to pose general questions and make overall observations about the whole course at the start of both of the remaining classes

Read your peers' very interesting historical-line blog posts

review

Barnes's positions

from Greenwich Village to Paris

the stylist: Eliot's introduction, Frank's "spatial form"

feminist recuperation, but...

ambivalent, "late modernist" relation to expatriate art

How to respond (like the characters in *Nightwood*)

ha ha

(humor, slapstick, dirty jokes, satire, mockery)

Ah!

(automatism, loss of control, loss of self)

readers / positions

The world and its history were to Nora like a ship in a bottle; she herself was outside and unidentified, endlessly embroiled in a preoccupation without a problem. (59)

unas(simile)able

The louder she cried out the farther away went the floor below, as if Robin and she, in their extremity, were a pair of opera glasses turned to the wrong end, diminishing in their painful love; a speed that ran away with the two ends of the building, stretching her apart. (68)

unas(simile)able

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style

Her flesh was the texture of plant life, and beneath it one sensed a frame, broad, porous and sleep-worn, as if sleep were a decay fishing her beneath the visible surface. About her head there was an effulgence as of phosphorus glowing about the circumference of a body of water—as if her life lay through her in ungainly luminous deteriorations—the troubling structure of the born somnambule, who lives in two worlds—meet of child and desperado. (38)

Discussion. What are the effects in this passage? What is difficult or hard to assimilate?

unassimilable

style as position

catachresis (misuse): the unassimilable simile

Only through charity, god damn, damn, shall I ever be able to have my life to myself to do my work in, but on the other hand it makes you feel so bloody, when gift money is not given (and when is it?) not only with the whole wish but the whole heart.

(Barnes to Emily Coleman, 1936)

unassimilable

Nora

“She was known instantly as a Westerner. Looking at her, foreigners remembered stories they had heard...” (56)

Robin

“Her clothes were of a period he could not quite place.” (46)

“Sometimes in these moments of insurmountable grief Robin would make some movement...by which Nora was informed that Robin had come from a world to which she would return.” (63)

unassimilable

Guido (junior)

“People say that he is not sound of mind. What do you say?” (128)

Dr. Matthew Mighty O’Connor

“the reason the doctor knows everything is because he’s been everywhere at the wrong time and has now become anonymous.” (89)

unassimilable

Felix

“heavy with impermissible blood” (4)

“there was no function in the world for which he could be said to be properly garbed” (11)

“the Jew seems to be everywhere from nowhere” (10)

unassimilable

“Exactly right. With Guido, you are in the presence of the ‘maladjusted.’ Wait! I am not using that word in the derogatory sense at all; in fact my great virtue is that I never use the derogatory in the usual sense.”

(124)

community

The novel and the newspaper...provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation.

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (1991)

publics / communities

The more amiable actresses of Prague, Vienna, Hungary, Germany, France and Italy, the acrobats and sword-swallowers, had at one time or another allowed him their dressing rooms....

There was a Princess Nadja, a Baron von Tink, a Principessa Stasera y Stasero, a King Buffo and a Duchess of Broadback: gaudy, cheap cuts from the beast life, immensely capable of that great disquiet called entertainment. (14)

gender, desire

What if this book described the full range of erotic and romantic possibility?

gender, desire

Unassimilable: many modes of desire here that are not
heteronormative

same-sex

and not modeled on legally sanctioned form—i.e.
marriage and reproduction

gender, desire

not an affirmation of gay identity

“I said, Jenny is so greedy that she wouldn’t give her shit to the crows. And then I thought: Oh, the poor bitch, if she were dying, face down in a long pair of black gloves, would I forgive her?” (112–13)

gender, desire

Doctor's version is *inversion*

(idea that homosexuality is gender-sex switch understood as physical pathology in early 20th century)

“And am I to blame if I've turned up this time as I shouldn't have been, when it was a high soprano I wanted, and deep corn curls to my bum, with a womb as big as the king's kettle, and a bosom as high as the bowsprit of a fhsing schooner?” (97)

Question. How does this relate to normative sexuality?

gender as performance

the grandmother who, for some unknown reason, was dressed as a man, wearing a billycock and a corked mustache (69)

billycock: a kind of...hat

gender as performance

It was to the Duchess of Broadback (Frau Mann) that Felix owed his first audience with a “gentleman of quality” (15)

Felix rode into Vienna, the child beside him, Frau Mann, opulent and gay, opposite, holding a rug for the boy’s feet. (130)

community

“Oh,” he cried, “A broken heart have you! I have falling arches, flying dandruff, a floating kidney, shattered nerves *and* a broken heart! But do I scream that an eagle has me by the balls or has dropped his oyster on my heart?”...

“Listen,” Nora said. “You’ve got to listen!” (164)

community

“Yes,” she said, “but—”

“Now, wait a minute! It’s all of a certain night that I’m coming to, that I take so long coming to it,” he said, “a night in the brancy pitch of fall—the particular night you want to know about—for I’m a fisher of men and my gimp is doing a *saltarello* over every body of water to fetch up what it may. I have a narrative, but you will be put to it to find it.”

(104)

community

“““One dog will find them both””” (113)

Matthew is right for once

Then she began to bark also, crawling after him [Nora's dog]—barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching.
(179)

evaluations

01:350:355:02

instructor name: ??????????

your thoughtful responses are most helpful to the people who will read this: my colleagues, future students

volunteer: close envelope, sign flap “completed,” return these to Leandra Cain in Murray Hall 104