

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction

e20fic21.blogs.rutgers.edu

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Office hours: Murray 019, Mondays, 2:00, or by appointment

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Introduction.

Sign-in: forms.gle/F2nmUN1Cqyttz41t9

course goals

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- ▶ Engage critically with a range of fiction in English from the first half of the last century.
- ▶ Understand how early twentieth-century texts participate in history:
 - ▶ in terms of their literary horizons;
 - ▶ in terms of their more-than-literary horizons.

one question, many answers

- ▶ What happened to fiction in English from 1890 to 1950?

Once upon a time

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and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo....

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His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face.

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James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)



modernism

- I. self-conscious break with traditions

modernism

1. self-conscious break with traditions
2. aesthetic disruption

modernism

1. self-conscious break with traditions
2. aesthetic disruption
3. difficulty

modernism

1. self-conscious break with traditions
2. aesthetic disruption
3. difficulty
4. ...

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Discussion: which are modern?

The handout has five passages from fiction written in English at some point in history. Thinking about the features we just discussed, which passages do you want to call modern? What do you notice that makes you say so?

“answer” key

1. Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923)
2. William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1930)
3. Dorothy Sayers, *Whose Body?* (1923)
4. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)
5. Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)

literary modernity

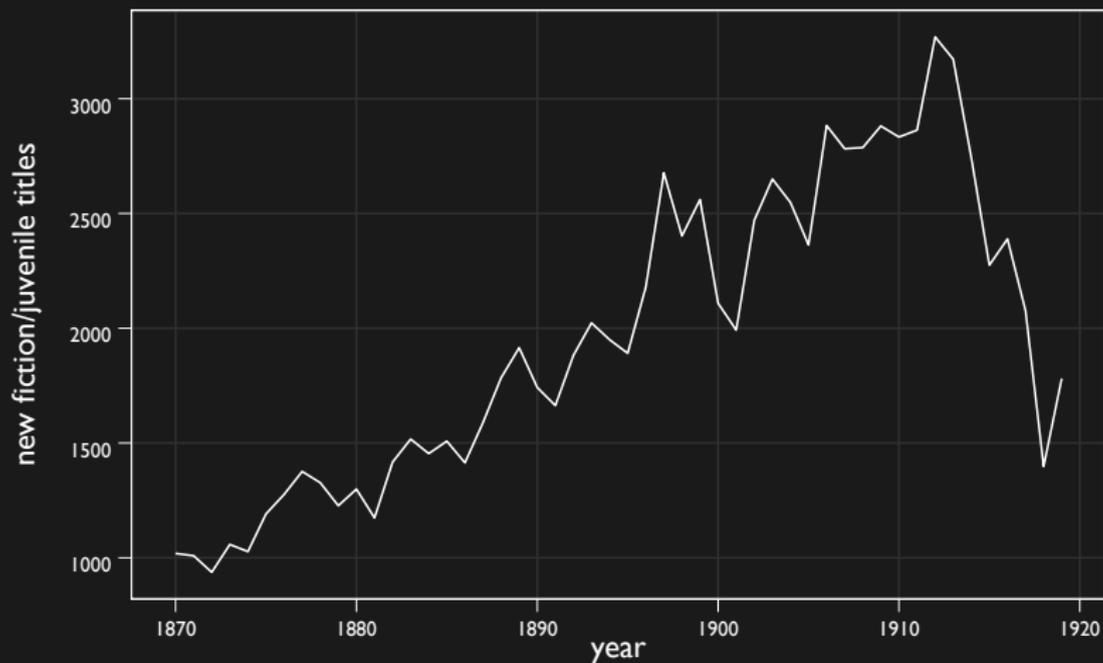
- ▶ not just a single transformation in form or content (modernism is only part of the story)
- ▶ a *structural transformation* in writing and reading:
 - ▶ sheer quantitative increase
 - ▶ breadth of circulation (many kinds)
 - ▶ diversity of production (many kinds)

quantity (UK)

Table 1: Yearly new title production (all kinds of books) in the UK. Adapted from David Finkelstein and Alastair McCleery, *An Introduction to Book History*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 62.

year	new titles (approx.)
1750	100
1800	600
1900	6000
1950	10000
2000	125000

UK Fiction, 1870–1920



New fiction and juvenile titles published in the UK. Source: Simon Eliot, *Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1994), Appendix C.

quantity (US)

Table 2: Yearly new title production in the US. Source: *A History of the Book in America* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2009), 4:60–61, 5:512; *Publisher's Weekly*, January 27, 1900: 192.

year	new titles	new fiction/juvenile
1880	2100	562
1899	4749	1183
1950	11000	2118
2000	120000	17130

quantity (US, continued)

Table 3: Books and pamphlets printed by the US publishing industry. Source: *Census of Manufactures* (US Department of Commerce), 1914: 2.644, 1921: 626, 1925: 662, 1931: 530, 1935: 579, 1939: 2.1.708.

year	total copies	fiction/juvenile
1909	161,361,844	57,108,429
1914	175,166,698	55,998,382
1919	252,068,816	48,752,555
1925	433,211,253	55,812,045
1929	435,199,433	82,765,229
1935	345,822,762	38,409,969
1939	546,529,801	49,659,597

breadth

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- ▶ more people can read and want to

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- ▶ more people can read and want to
- ▶ “reading culture” (1890–1960?)

Reading for entertainment by the general population is something very rare and very recent. Reading has always been associated with education and with urban social elites. Although contemporary commentators deplore the decline of “the reading habit” or “literary reading,” historically the era of mass reading, which lasted from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century in northwestern Europe, Japan, and North America, was the anomaly. Today reading is returning to its former, narrower social base: a self-perpetuating minority that I have called the reading class.

Wendy Griswold, *Regionalism and the Reading Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 66.

diversity of readership in English

- ▶ classes
- ▶ national, racial, ethnic groups
- ▶ books and publishing industries exported by the British Empire

four transformations in literary modernity

1. Elevating fiction ("modernism")
2. Specializing genre (case study: detective fiction)
3. Contesting racial convention (case study: Harlem Renaissance)
4. Globalizing English (case study: Anglophone Indian fiction)

James



Joyce



Woolf



Faulkner



Toomer



Hurston

Sayers

Hammett

Tagore

Anand

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Faulkner



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Sayers

Hammett

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Toomer

Hurston

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Tagore

Anand

requirements

- ▶ 25% paper 1 (5–7 pp.)
- ▶ 30% paper 2 (6–8 pp.)
- ▶ 30% take-home final
- ▶ 10% participation [*corrected 1/22*]
 - ▶ 0–2 absences, up to 4.0
 - ▶ 3 absences, up to 3.0
 - ▶ 4 absences, up to 2.0
 - ▶ 5 or more: can't pass
- ▶ 5% commonplace book entries...

commonplacing

- ▶ main course site: e20fic21.blogs.rutgers.edu
- ▶ guide to commonplacing:
e20fic21.blogs.rutgers.edu/commonplacing

First entry due Sunday at 5 p.m.

- ▶ set your pseudonym
- ▶ choose one *sentence* from “The Middle Years” relevant to the question of *observation* in the story
- ▶ (hint: almost any sentence)
- ▶ copy it into a single blog entry, citing it properly
- ▶ add descriptive tags
- ▶ write no more than two sentences of commentary

e-mail andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu if you have trouble

required reading

- ▶ books at Barnes & Noble
- ▶ check with me about alternate editions
- ▶ you have to have these in print

next

- ▶ Henry James, “The Middle Years” (1893)
(download from Sakai, print out, and read)
- ▶ try logging into e20fic21.blogs.rutgers.edu by Friday
(e-mail me with questions)
- ▶ commonplace by Sunday at 5 p.m.