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English 3120
Fall 2009

ULYSSES AND “MODERN FICTION”

James Joyce (1882-1941)



- **Biographical Chronology**
 - Standard biography: Richard Ellman’s, *James Joyce*
 - 1941: Surgery for perforated ulcer, died two days later.
- **Joyce and Illness**
- **Joyce Society & Scholarship**
 - Serialized in American journal, *The Little Review* 1918-1920.
 - Published as a novel by Sylvia Beach, February 1922 (Joyce’s birthday).
- **Reading *Ulysses***
 - Structural elements.

William James, “Stream of Consciousness” (1892)

- “...consciousness of some sort goes on. ‘States of Mind’ succeed each other.”
- “Every ‘state’ tends to be part of a personal consciousness.”
- “Within each personal consciousness states are always changing.”
- “Each personal consciousness is sensibly continuous.”
- Personal Consciousness is interested in some parts of its object to the exclusion of others, and welcomes or rejects—chooses from among them, in a word—all the while.”
- Stream of consciousness as interior monologue in *Ulysses*. (cf. 2201)
 - Levine: “You recognize you are tracking a mind in action and respond accordingly” (142).

Daughter of Leslie Stephen & Julia Duckworth Stephen
Bloomsbury & The Apostles
Literary critic & diarist,
Novelist

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

- “Around 1910 everything changed.”
- “VW stands as the chief figure of modernism in England [...] included with Joyce and Proust in the realization of experimental achievements [...]” (*NY Times*).
 - Major literary critic for *London Times Literary Supplement*.
 - Woolf’s diary: Joyce’s problem of “the egotistical self” (1/26/1920).
- Suicide 1941**



Portrait by Roger Fry

Woolf: “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” (1924)

“[...] one sees the person, one sees Mrs Brown, in the centre of all sorts of different scenes.[...] Here is a character imposing itself upon another person.”

Metaphor of the train:

**Material reality is always transitory.
Motion of life--setting is fleeting, moving swiftly past.
Human interactions: only snatches and glimmers. (Joyce 2205)**

Woolf: “Modern Fiction” (1925)

- “If we tried to formulate our meaning in one word we should say that these three writers [Galsworthy, Bennett, Wells] are materialists” (2088).
- “Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day” (2089).
 - “an incessant shower.... a luminous halo...” (cf. Joyce 2202)
- “Mr. Joyce is spiritual;...” (2090, cf. Joyce 2205).
- “the point of interest” (2091, cf. Joyce 2206).
- “The proper stuff of fiction... (2092).

Materialists v. Subjectivists

Materialists (Edwardians)	Subjectivists (Georgians)
Novel as craft	Novel as art
Plots, organized into tragedy, comedy, etc.	No climactic plot, vague general confusion
Language creates “the novelist’s dummy”	Language has a “beauty of the whole rather than the parts” (cf. Joyce 2200)
Limits on the proper realm of fiction	Everything is proper realm of fiction (2211, 2222)
Concern w/ external verisimilitude	Concern w/ experiential verisimilitude (2208, 2228)
Gendered	<u>Androgynous</u>

Jennifer Levine,

“Ulysses.” *Cambridge Companion to Joyce* (1990)

- Genre: Ulysses can be read as a poem.
 - “...we are never at home in language.... Joyce’s ‘poetry’ exposes that paradox to our gaze” (138).
- Poetic model reveals “a vast symbolic project” (139).
 - The “metaphorical privilege” of poetry is used: “liberties with syntax and... diction,” “intense play with language,” “metaphorical logic,” “symbolism” and “dense allusiveness” (138).
- Poetic model requires translation of “codes,” such as the Homeric predecessor. (141)
- “Ulysses makes it clear that it places itself within... a long line of literary history, and that this is one of the contexts in which it is to be read” (134).
- Poetic model relies on “synchronic and spatial mapping based on repetition” (141).
- Poetic model rewards close readers.
- Can also be read as a novel.
 - Deals with characters and the society the characters inhabit.
 - *Ulysses* “can give the internal life of character with an extraordinary sense of intimacy” (142).
- Can be read as a text, “a ‘statement on which one dilates’ (OED); never autonomous, ...always awaiting a reader/speaker who will call it out into life” (147).
 - *Ulysses* is “a signifying field, or even a process of signification, rather than a self-contained entity” (146).
 - “Without ever naming you directly *Ulysses* is constantly addressing you as its reader” (147).
 - *Ulysses*’ collision with other texts undoes those texts, their authors & their power.