

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction
e20fic23.blogs.rutgers.edu

Prof. Andrew Goldstone (andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu)

Office hours: Wednesday 12 p.m. in MU 019, or by appointment

TA: Ivana Onubogu (ivana.onubogu@rutgers.edu)

Office hours: Friday 9 a.m. by Zoom

October 12, 2023. Woolf, concluded; Faulkner (I).

argument clinic

- ▶ helpful: requests for more clarification, suggestions for sharpening ideas, gifts of evidence, thoughtful critique
- ▶ unhelpful: “that sounds good”

review

- ▶ Septimus: Woolf resists pathologization
 - ▶ his relation to the past and to others is distorted...
 - ▶ but so is pretty much everyone else's
 - ▶ he is haunted by what everyone else denies
 - ▶ his suffering is an effect of *isolation* as much as a psychological problem
- ▶ Sir William: Proportion and Conversion
 - ▶ Woolf's explicit (but allegorical) critique
 - ▶ doctors are like imperialists!?
 - ▶ Lady Bradshaw and Septimus as related "victims"
- ▶ connecting threads
 - ▶ shared objects of perception
 - ▶ shared thoughts
 - ▶ text-level sharing (motifs: "fear no more")
 - ▶ and love? no cure there

Woolf: manifesto

Is life like this? Must novels be like this?

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being “like this.” Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old. (“Modern Fiction,” 189)

freedom!

If a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose...there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the **Bond Street** tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? (189)

Mr Joyce is...concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame...and in order to preserve it he disregards with complete courage whatever seems to him adventitious. (190)

Nothing—no ‘method’, no experiment—is forbidden. (194)

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. (136)

She [Clarissa] read in the book spread open:

Fear no more the heat o' the sun

Nor the furious winter's rages. (9; cf. 29, 39, 182)

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. (179)

resolution?

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. (182)

resolution?

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. (182)

Discussion

Consider the full paragraph quoted in part above (“It held, foolish as the idea was...,” 181–82). What kind of alternative to the frozen social system—and the barren postwar mindset—does this propose? Think about form, not just what it says.

diagnosis: uncertain

As a moralist, Woolf works by indirection, subterraneously undermining the officially accepted code, mocking, suggesting, calling into question, rather than asserting, advocating, bearing witness: the satirist's art. Like other Bloomsbury writers, [E.M.] Forster and [Lytton] Strachey, the target of her satire was essentially the English social system, with its hierarchies of class and sex, its complacency, its moral obtuseness.

Alex Zwerdling, "*Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System*," *PMLA* 92, no. 1 (January 1977): 70.

building it up

She [Rezia] built it up; first one thing, then another, she built it up, sewing. (142)

She must assemble. (182)

city life in common

And Elizabeth waited in Victoria Street for an omnibus. It was so nice to be out of doors. She thought perhaps she need not go home just yet. It was so nice to be out in the air. So she would get on to an omnibus. (131; qtd. by A.P.)

Buses swooped, settled, were off—garish caravans, glistening with red and yellow varnish. But which should she get on to? She had no preferences. Of course, she would not push her way. She inclined to be passive. (132)

She liked the geniality, sisterhood, motherhood, brotherhood of this uproar. It seemed to her good. The noise was tremendous; and suddenly there were trumpets (the unemployed) blaring, rattling about in the uproar. (134–35)

To change, to go, to dismantle the solemn assemblage was immediately possible. (136)

Faulkner

Q. Mr. Faulkner, why did Vardaman say “My mother is a fish”?

(Class conference at UVA, Session 14, May 6, 1957)

consciousness?

It was the sweetest thing I ever saw....

It was Darl. He come to the door and stood there, looking at his dying mother. He just looked at her, and I felt the bounteous love of the lord again and his mercy. I saw that with Jewel she had just been pretending, but that it was between her and Darl that the understanding and the true love was. (24)

consciousness?

It was the sweetest thing I ever saw....

It was Darl. He come to the door and stood there, looking at his dying mother. He just looked at her, and I felt the bounteous love of the lord again and his mercy. I saw that with Jewel she had just been pretending, but that it was between her and Darl that the understanding and the true love was. (24)

“It means three dollars,” I say. (17)

(multi-)monologue?

[Cora:] I could have used the money real well. But it's not like they cost me anything except the baking. (9)

[Darl on water:] It has to set at least six hours, and be drunk from a gourd. Water should never be drunk from metal. (10–11)

(multi-)monologue?

[Cora:] I could have used the money real well. But it's not like they cost me anything except the baking. (9)

[Darl on water:] It has to set at least six hours, and be drunk from a gourd. Water should never be drunk from metal. (10–11)

[Vardaman:] It is dark. I can hear wood, silence: I know them....It is as though the dark were resolving him out of his integrity, into an unrelated scattering of components—snuffings and stampings; smells of cooling flesh and ammoniac hair; an illusion of a co-ordinated whole of splotched hide and strong bones within which, detached and secret and familiar, an *is* different from my *is*. (56)

(multi-)monologue?

[Cora:] I could have used the money real well. But it's not like they cost me anything except the baking. (9)

[Darl on water:] It has to set at least six hours, and be drunk from a gourd. Water should never be drunk from metal. (10–11)

[Vardaman:] It is dark. I can hear wood, silence: I know them....It is as though the dark were resolving him out of his integrity, into an unrelated scattering of components—snuffings and stampings; smells of cooling flesh and ammoniac hair; an illusion of a co-ordinated whole of splotched hide and strong bones within which, detached and secret and familiar, an *is* different from my *is*. (56)

First person/third person

[Jewel:] It's because he stays out there, right under the window, hammering and sawing on that goddamn box. (14)

First person/third person

[Jewel:] It's because he stays out there, right under the window, hammering and sawing on that goddamn box. (14)

[Darl:] "Why, Addie," pa says, "him and Darl went to make one more load. They thought there was time." (47)

ESP again

[Dewey Dell:] He said he knew without the words like he told me that ma is going to die without words, and I knew he knew because if he had said he knew with the words I would not have believed that he had been there and saw us. (27)

Dewey Dell's dialect

The first time **me** and Lafe picked on down the row. Pa **dassent** sweat because he will catch his death from the sickness so everybody that comes to help us. And Jewel **dont** care about anything he is not kin to us in caring, not care-kin. (26)

reading dialect

- ▶ languages have many **varieties**
 - ▶ they vary in lexicon, pronunciation, grammar
 - ▶ variation is often along lines of geographic and social division
 - ▶ dialects: associated with particular places/groups
- ▶ every variety has a grammar and is equally expressive
- ▶ some varieties have prestige as **standards** (school, media)
- ▶ some varieties are stigmatized as “broken,” “ignorant,” “dialect”
- ▶ **dialect writing** uses conventions to represent dialect speech, especially regional and minority speech

idiolect

The first time **me** and Lafe picked on down the row. Pa **dassent** sweat because he will catch his death from the sickness so everybody that comes to help us. And Jewel **dont** care about anything he is not kin to us in caring, not **care-kin**. (26)

whose language?

[Jewel:] “Get the goddamn stuff out of sight while you got a chance, you pussel-gutted bastard.” (13)

[Darl:] He [Peabody] has pussel-gutted himself eating cold greens. (40)

Faulkner's hand

[Tull:] And the next morning they found him [Vardaman?] in his shirt tail, laying asleep on the floor like a felled steer, and the top of the box bored clean full of holes and Cash's new auger broke off in the last one. Whey they taken the lid off they found that two of them had bored on into her face.

If it's a judgment, it aint right. Because the Lord's got more to do than that. Because the only burden Anse Bundren's ever had is himself....I think to myself he aint that less of a man or he couldn't a bore himself this long....

Cora said, "I have bore you what the Lord God sent me." (73)

Faulkner's hand

[Tull:] And the next morning they found him [Vardaman?] in his shirt tail, laying asleep on the floor like a felled steer, and the top of the box **bored** clean full of holes and Cash's new auger broke off in the last one. Whhey they taken the lid off they found that two of them had **bored** on into her face.

If it's a judgment, it aint right. Because the Lord's got more to do than that. Because the only **burden** Anse **Bundren's** ever had is himself....I think to myself he aint that less of a man or he couldn't a **bore** himself this long....

Cora said, "I have **bore** you what the Lord God sent me." (73)

next

- ▶ read more Faulkner; try to make it to 179.
- ▶ commonplacing: group A. Theme: dignity.