

The following slides are by Cassandra Schiffman.



Early Twentieth-Century Fiction

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September 29th, 2025. Love stories (II).



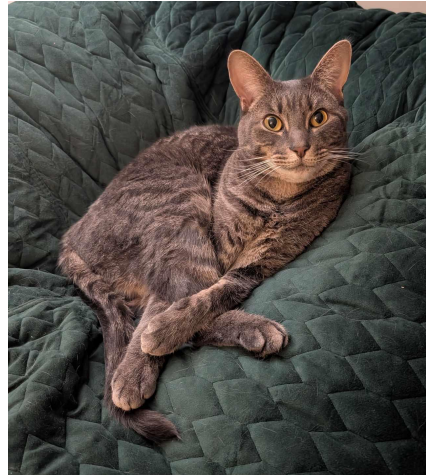
Review: Who's afraid of Amenia Rosehill?

- **Parting thoughts on Joyce/*Portrait*:** a novel with an opaque structure/form that is in some ways about the insufficiency of structure/form; a novel of exile (in multiple senses), a novel with a capital-A Author!
- **The Indian Ladies' Magazine ("Vasantica"):** Why English? Why "Padmini"?
- Popular pulp magazines (like *Love Story*) publish texts that often don't have a capital-A Author + make no attempt to reinvent the stylistic wheel, which tells us that they (probably) aren't trying to court the same audience as Joyce.
 - **What *is* the audience for a story like "Love in a Penthouse"?**

Warm-up Activity!

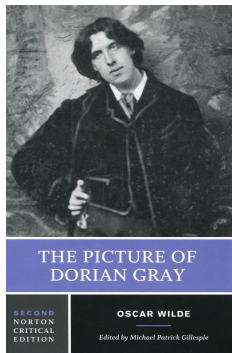
In small groups, briefly examine your assigned object and complete the worksheet to the best of your ability. Don't read any further than the table of contents, and don't google anything – this exercise is partially about first impressions!

Please nominate someone in your group who is ready to share your findings with the class.

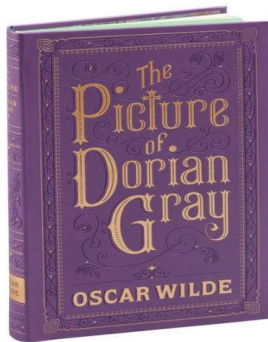


What was the point of all that?

- Form/medium matter! It's not just about what you say, it's how you present it
 - Identical "texts" can take on very different connotations depending on their visual attributes and marketing materials
- As literary critics, we can learn a lot about a text's intended audience, purpose, and prestige by looking at its **paratexts**



VS.



What is a paratext?

“A literary work consists, entirely or essentially, of a text, defined (very minimally) as a more or less long sequence of verbal statements that are more or less endowed with significance. But this text is rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as an author’s name, a title, a preface, illustrations. And although we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text, in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text’s presence in the world, its “reception” and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book. These accompanying productions, which vary in extent and appearance, constitute what I have called elsewhere the work’s *paratext*.”

-Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Janet E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1; emphasis in original. Originally published in French in 1987.

Okay...but what IS a paratext?

- For our purposes: every component of a printed volume besides the content of the literary material (the narrative) – the “everything else” we’re left with when we set the narrative itself aside, especially when we’re encountering it for the first time
- Common examples of paratexts worth paying attention to include...
 - **Front and back covers**, including graphic design choices like layout and font
 - **Summaries**, book club, award, or bestseller **status markers**, and “**blurbs**”
 - **Content added by an editor** (prefaces, introductions, appendices, tables of contents, endnotes, indexes, etc.)
 - **Content added by an author** (author photos or bios, dedications, acknowledgments, list of author’s other works, etc.)
 - *Most* **illustrations and images** on the cover or inside the book/periodical*
 - *Some* intertextual gestures like **epigraphs or postscripts**, and...
 - **...advertisements!**

Love for sale?

- *Love Story Magazine* is an American “pulp” magazine that ran from 1921-1947, produced by the prolific pulp and dime novel publisher Street & Smith
- Widely circulated for reasons we discussed in our first class meeting; costs 15 cents (about \$3 today)
- A typical issue contains a mix of standalone short stories, poetry, and serialized short novels, all within the romance genre, almost exclusively written by women*
- Produced by notable (female) magazine editor Daisy Bacon from 1928 onward

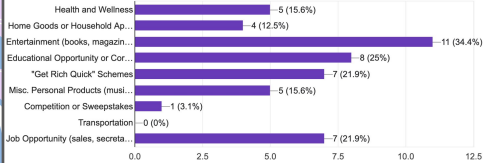


What *else* is for sale?

- Like most magazines of the period (and also most...everything today), *Love Story* supported its profit from actual sales with ad revenue
- Caveat: advertisers cast a wide net, so it is not necessarily the case that every single ad in a given issue of *Love Story* is targeting its specific readers
- Still, what can we infer from these paratexts? (working with data for 32/45 ads)
 - Most ads are **small** (~69% half page or smaller) but **use images** to have maximum rhetorical impact (~66% have some kind of illustration)
 - About half of the products advertised **cost less than \$4**
 - No matter what we assume about the gender of romance readers, these ads *seem* to **appeal to men and women roughly equally**
 - At least a third of these ads are promoting another “**entertainment**” **objects**, including more love stories and more Street & Smith periodicals
 - Something strange is going on re: **class and wealth**...what’s up with all of the job opportunities + “get rich quick” schemes?

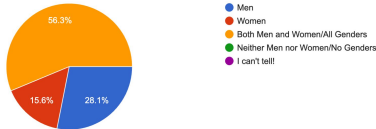
What category of product/service is being advertised? Choose all that apply!

32 responses



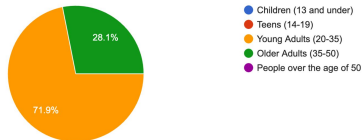
What GENDER do you think this ad is directed at?

32 responses



What AGE GROUP do you think this ad is directed at?

32 responses



"...people who are looking for excitement in their own lives, and try to find it vicariously through purchasing these magazines."

"Even if [the magazine] was geared towards women, the ad could be for their significant others that bought the magazines for them."

"...if you buy this faucet, then your home/family life will be better."

"I wouldn't be surprised if the author advertised here, Vivian Grey, has written stories that appeared in this Pulp."

"...many wives' husbands were dying and leaving them with little money."

"...a scheme in order to make the rich richer...[and] take advantage of the working class..."

So, who is this issue's imagined reader?

- Using these paratexts, we can make some inferences about the intended audience for *Love Story Magazine* in terms of...
 - Gender:** Women?
 - Age:** Young(ish) Adults
 - Socioeconomic Status:** Middle Class OR Aspirationally Middle Class
 - Sexuality/Sexual Orientation:** *Probably* Straight
 - Reading Habits:** Leisure Reader, Romance Fan!
 - Race:** *Probably* White
- Note:** the imagined or intended reader is NOT the same thing as the actual reader! People read books/magazines “off-label” all the time...

A BABY IN YOUR-HOME

I have an honored position, treasured for sterility due to functional weakness which I have read with wonderful success in thousands of cases. It is the result of 30 years experience and has been praised in the highest terms by hundreds of married women, childless for years, who became happy mothers. If you will send me your name and address I will gladly send you a treatment and a copy of my booklet, "A Baby in Your Home," which tells how to use it and every other thing married women should know. Each will be sent free in plain wrapper. Write today.

Dr. H. Will Elders, Suite 265-D,
7th & Felix, St. Joseph, Missouri



NEW & IMPROVED MODEL **EXTRA STRONG COPPER**

BOILER

Most Practical Boiler and Cooker Catalog Free

Made with large 5-inch Improved Cup and Spout. Safe, practical and simple. Nothing to get out of order, most substantial and durable on the market. Will last a life time, gives real service and satisfaction.

Easily Cleaned
Cap removed in a second; no burning of hands. An ideal low pressure boiler and pasteurizer for home and farm.

Save 20%
By ordering direct from factory. No article of such high quality and utility ever sold at such amazingly low prices. Prices quoted are cash with order or one-fourth cash, balance C.O.D. Send check or money order; prompt shipment made in plain strong box. The only boiler worth having. Large Catalog Free. **HOMER MANUFACTURING CO.** 18 E. Kinzie St. Dept. 7263, Chicago, Illinois

SOLID CAST NO SCREW TOP

HEAVY COPPER

5 Gallon	\$ 6.50
7	8.85
10	11.90
15	14.20
20	18.50
25	22.50
30	27.50



The “New Woman”

A (loosely) feminist ideal that becomes a part of popular discourse in the early 20th c. partly thanks to Henry James, the “New Woman” has **more social mobility and personal freedom beyond her home than her 19th c. counterpart**, although she is still generally expected to marry, raise children, and pursue the ever-elusive “American Dream.”



Take a look at “Love in a Penthouse”

It was true that she was a business woman, a good one, too, for she managed a small manufacturing concern somewhere in the East Forties and was making good at it (25).

“Well, so the little vamp has returned,” she laughed shrilly, throwing her arm around Martha’s neck. “The little worm has turned into a vamp!”...One never mentioned things like vamping in the gang, especially when Nanette was the third party (32).

Wearily she let herself into her tiny apartment in the Fifties (34).

They started, turned to face Nanette herself, looking like a gorgeous night moth. Her petal-smooth skin looked transparent in the moonlight, and her eyes glowed tenderly (29).



Authorship Redux: Gertrude (Toki) Schalk (Johnson)

- Born in Boston in 1906; died (probably) in Pittsburgh in 1977
- Associated very loosely with writers of the Harlem Renaissance
- Published dozens of stories in the 1930s featuring white characters during this period in magazines like *Love Story Magazine* that primarily courted white audiences; simultaneously sold romance stories featuring Black characters in the Black Press
- Later works as an editor, primarily for the *Pittsburgh Courier* (a widely circulated Black Press newspaper)



“...an astonishing figure in twentieth-century African American history: a broadly successful writer who has received almost no scholarly attention” (see Hefner, *Black Pulp: Genre Fiction in the Shadow of Jim Crow*, p. 55)

Authorship Redux: Georgette Heyer

- Born in London in 1902; died in London in 1974
- First published work – *The Black Moth* (1921)
- Wrote prolifically in the burgeoning popular genres of romance, crime/detective fiction, and historical fiction, including both novels and short stories
- (Possibly) “invents” the “Regency Romance” subgenre – at least according to Jennifer Koestler (see *The Encyclopedia of Romance Fiction*) – which is still widely written + read today
- Not *quite* as anonymous as someone like Amenia Rosehill



To guard their budding beauty
 the Dionne Quins use only
PALMOLIVE
 the soap made with
 Gentle Olive Oil!

DR. DAFOE Says:

"At the time of the birth of the Dionne Quintuplets, and for some time afterward, they were bathed in Olive Oil... When the time arrived for soap and water baths, we selected Palmolive Soap exclusively for daily use in bathing these famous babies."

HOW adorable they are! Their great dark eyes, fringed with long, curling lashes... their rosebud mouths!

No picture can do justice to these lovely Dionne Quins. For so much of their beauty is in their exquisite, baby-girl complexion... kept soft and smooth, both winter and summer, by Palmolive's gentle, protective care!

WHY THEY USE ONLY PALMOLIVE THE SOAP MADE WITH OLIVE OIL:

Because these famous little girls were born prematurely, they have always had unusually sensitive skin. That is why, for sometime after their birth, they were bathed only with Olive Oil.

Dr. Dafoe, like doctors everywhere, knew that nothing is so soothing for delicate skin as gentle Olive Oil.

Then, when the time came for soap and water baths, how important it was to choose a soap made from the gentlest, most soothing ingredients! And so, Dr. Dafoe chose Palmolive, the soap made with Olive Oil, to be used exclusively for bathing the Quins' tender skin!

WHAT A LESSON FOR EVERY WOMAN!

Mother! Why should you risk bathing your precious baby, or any of your children, with any soap less gentle than the one chosen for the little Dionnes?

And you too, Lovely Lady... you who want to keep your complexion alluring through the years! Why not give your skin the beauty care that only Palmolive's secret blend of Olive and Palm Oils can give? Why not use soft, gentle, pure Palmolive for your own face and bath!

All registrations copyrighted 1934 NEA Service, Inc.

PALMOLIVE SOAP

16-907

TO KEEP YOUR OWN COMPLEXION ALWAYS LOVELY, USE THIS BEAUTY SOAP CHOSEN FOR THE QUINS

The Australian Women's Weekly courts a similar audience as Love Story Magazine. How can we tell? Look at the paratexts!

Gender Trouble?

She was very tall: that was the first impression he had of her. She was fully as tall as Christopher, already standing at her elbow. A strapping wench, Sir Henry told himself (5).

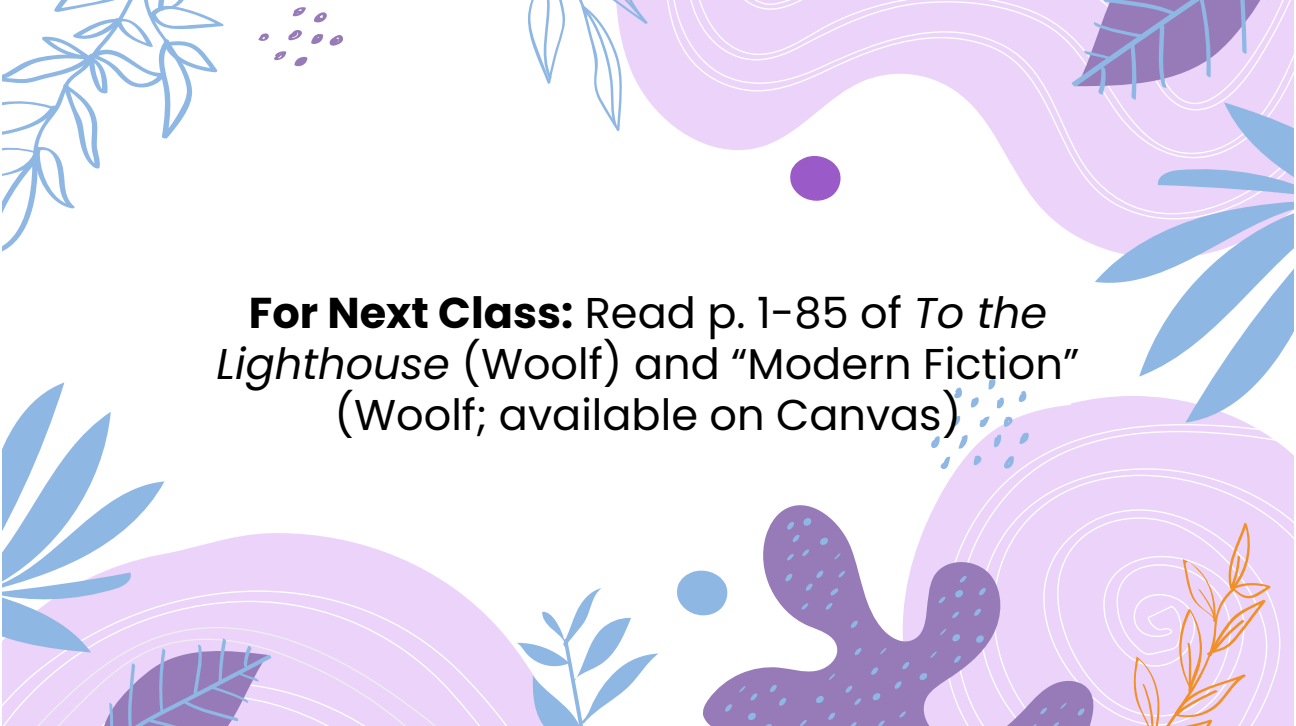
“Furthermore,” said Mr. Varley, still in that cold voice of anger, “my sister would have you know that even a gamester’s daughter may have not only reputation, but honor. She is not to be bought sir!” (35).

She pulled out her ruffles and patted them into place. “Are we not agreed on that? I’d never a notion of marrying him.” She heaved a short sigh. “Oh well, let us be honest! Perhaps I played with the thought – no more than that.” She picked up her sword and wiped it on her handkerchief. “Why? To be a viscountess, or to escape from gaming?” She did not answer for a moment, but stoof mechanically wiping her blade. Then she tossed the stained and crumpled handkerchief into the fireplace, and said with a slight laugh: “Oh, to be a viscountess, of course. Good lord, do you picture me a martyr? You’re wrong, Sir Harry!” (36).

Emergency Discussion Prompt!

Find a moment in the text of “Lady, Your Pardon” that speaks to the construction of gender + women’s sexuality in the era of the “New Woman.”

Do your best to account for the question of genre – what does it change about this passage to think about it as historical fiction and romance?



For Next Class: Read p. 1–85 of *To the Lighthouse* (Woolf) and “Modern Fiction” (Woolf; available on Canvas)

