

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction

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October 1, 2025. Romance, continued; Woolf (1).

warmup: Woolf's difficulty

- ▶ What happens in the opening sections?

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 1. "It won't be fine" (8)
 2. "Would it bore you to come with me, Mr. Tansley?" (13)
 3. "No going to the Lighthouse" (18)
 4. "Stormed at with shot and shell" (20)
 5. Indeed, he almost knocked her easel over (21)
- ▶ **anachrony**: (2) comes first in the fictional chronology
- ▶ what happens is mundane, everyday, repeatable (and is repeated)

review: format, medium, audience

- ▶ different material forms imply different possible audiences
 - ▶ via differences in price, durability, portability, sharability, show-off-ability
 - ▶ bibliographic code: “it’s for older women” (!?)
- ▶ paratexts “present” texts or “make them present”
 - ▶ blurbs, ads, imprints, barcodes
 - ▶ ...and author names!

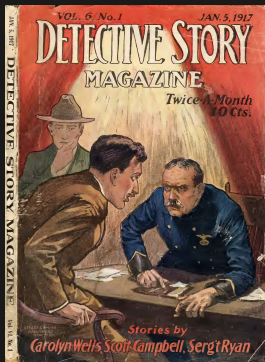
review: paratext and text

- ▶ paratext gives clues about implied reader
 - ▶ working- or aspirationally middle-class (get rich quick!)
 - ▶ young, female, white...or is she?
- ▶ what about the text?
 - ▶ imagines “new woman” lifestyle...but not necessarily feminist politics
 - ▶ stories of the sexual marketplace
 - ▶ Martha and Deborah: strong, independent women...who marry the hunk
 - ▶ “Somehow she forgot to protest” (Schalk, 35)
 - ▶ “He recaptured her hand” (Heyer, 36)

1891	<i>The Strand</i> (London, George Newnes): pioneering illustrated magazine
1896	<i>Argosy</i> (Munsey): first all-fiction pulp magazine James, "The Figure in the Carpet"
1915	Street & Smith reboots <i>Nick Carter Weekly</i> as <i>Detective Story</i>
1916	Joyce, <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>
1917	"Padmini," "Vasantica"
1919	<i>Western Story</i> (Street & Smith) <i>True Story</i> (Physical Culture, ed. Bernarr Macfadden) ("true")
1921	<i>Love Story</i> (Street & Smith)
1923	<i>Weird Tales</i> (Rural): H.P. Lovecraft and friends Hodder & Stoughton (London) introduces Yellow Jackets at 2s. and up
1926	<i>Amazing Stories</i> (Experimenter, ed. Hugo Gernsback) Rosehill, "When Is a 'Too Old'?"
1927	Woolf, <i>To the Lighthouse</i>
1930	Mills & Boon (London) concentrates on romance novels for the library market
1931	Schalk, "Love in a Penthouse"
1935ca.	peak of pulp magazine circulation
1937	Heyer, "Lady, Your Pardon"

the emergence of a field

- ▶ emergent distinction in 1890s: subfield of restricted production (Pierre Bourdieu)
 - ▶ “purist”—aimed at fellow writers
 - ▶ vision of long-term success, not immediate reward
 - ▶ the author as singular figure: James, Joyce, Woolf
- ▶ vs. large-scale: the commercial novel, the “slick” magazine
 - ▶ “populist”—aimed at the big audience
 - ▶ emphasis on immediate success, appeal, accessibility
 - ▶ authors as minor celebrities (Heyer)
- ▶ and vs.: the emergence of the niches
 - ▶ cheap periodical venues, class-bound audiences
 - ▶ emphasis on immediate success
 - ▶ authors often pseudonymous
 - ▶ tensions between specialization and aspirations to “breakout” popularity



Detective Story 6, no. 1 (January 5, 1917), [Pulp Magazines Project](#); Western Story 18, no. 5 (July 16, 1921), [Galactic Central](#); Love Story 105, no. 5 (March 10, 1934), [Pulp Magazines Project](#).

Better and Better in Everyway HODDER & STOUGHTON'S Unsurpassable List for 1923



The above is a reproduction in One Colour of the "Three-Colour Cover on Hodder & Stoughton's New "Change" List of over 200 1/3 net, 2/3 net and 2/- net Titles. You must see this wonderful List. Write for a Copy to: **HODDER & STOUGHTON, LTD.,** PUBLISHERS, WARWICK SQUARE, LONDON, E.C.4.

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Woolf's map of the field

Certain paths seem to lead to fertile land, others to the dust and the desert.

Woolf, "Modern Fiction," 185.

Discussion

- ▶ According to Woolf, what is wrong with Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy?
- ▶ According to Woolf, what is right about Joyce?

beefing, Bloomsbury-style

They write of unimportant things. (187)

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)

“life”

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. (189)

why, he's only a rhymester!

Indeed, he almost knocked her easel over, coming down upon her with his hands waving shouting out, "Boldly we rode and well," but, mercifully, he turned sharp, and rode off, to die gloriously she supposed upon the heights of Balaclava. (21)

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:
Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Alfred Lord Tennyson, "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854), in *Works*, vol. I, ed. Hallam Lord Tennyson (New York: Macmillan, 1908), 538, [HathiTrust](#). During the Crimean War, a mistaken British cavalry charge was massacred at the Battle of Balaclava (1854).

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John Bartholomew, *Railway Map Of The British Isles* (Edinburgh: John Bartholomew & Sons, 1927), [David Rumsey Map Collection](#).

TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

VIRGINIA WOOLF



PUBLISHED BY LEONARD & VIRGINIA WOOLF AT THE
HOGARTH PRESS, 51 TAVISTOCK SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.

1927

Source: <https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/000000>

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Yet I'm the only woman in England free to write what I like.

Entry for September 22, 1925, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 3, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 43.

next

- ▶ finish “The Window” (1–126)