

Twentieth-Century Fiction I

September 26. Gertrude Stein, "Melanctha" (2).

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first paper

Paper 1 (5–7 pp.) due October 7 at 5 p.m.

Office hours: the meaning of their existence

How to use the Sakai Drop Box

<http://20fic-fl3.blogs.rutgers.edu/dropbox>

How to make a PDF

<http://andrewgoldstone.com/pdf>

introductions

~~There are many views about otherness in Conrad.
Speaking for the other is a complicated subject with many
specific problems...~~

introductions

In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow's first encounter with Africans is sinister: "A slight clinking behind me made me turn my head. Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path" (116)....

quotation formatting

“Melanctha” begins, “Rose Johnson made it very hard to bring her baby to its birth” (47). This difficult opening is itself about difficult beginnings...

Stein insists on full names in strange places: “Rose Johnson and Melanctha Herbert had been friends now for some years” (47).

quotation formatting

Weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble. Weeble weeble weeble weeble:

Weeble weeble, weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble; weeble weeble weeble. Weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble. (42)

Weeble weeble weeble “weeble weeble,” weeble weeble. “Weeble” weeble weeble weeble. Weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble; weeble “weeble weeble weeble, weeble weeble.” Weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble weeble. Weeble weeble weeble...

review

I. Stein's style

- a. lexical restriction
- b. reiteration
- c. omission / ellipsis—and escape
- d. emphasis on aspect / duration / process
- e. use of free indirect discourse to convey focalization
- f. syntactic dislocations
- g. *Violations of the standard

syntax / focalization

Indirect (reporting verb + complement clause)

Slowly he felt that surely they must both have this feeling.

Free indirect (no reporting verb, clause in past tense)

It was so important that he knew that she must have it.

(can rewrite as indirect by adding reporting verb + that)

He felt that it was so important...

(can rewrite as direct by adding reporting vb., quotes, + changing tense)

He thought, "It is so important that I know that she must have it."

review

I. Stein's style

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review

2. Stein and the experimental milieu
 - a. Training as a psychologist and doctor
 - b. Parisian avant-garde
 - c. Expatriate modernist successors

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)



Seated Harlequin, 1901



Gertrude Stein, 1905–6



Still Life with a Bottle of Rum, 1911

Metropolitan Museum, New York



Gertrude Stein had written the story of Melanctha the negress, the second story of *Three Lives* which was the first definite step away from the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century in literature.

Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933)

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973). *Gertrude Stein*. Oil on canvas, 1905–6. Metropolitan Museum, New York.

the present

I wrote a negro story called Melanctha. In that there was a constant recurring and beginning there was a marked direction in the direction of being in the present although naturally I had been accustomed to past present and future, and why, because the composition forming around me was a prolonged present.

“Composition as Explanation” (1926)

the twentieth century?

[1905's "Melanctha" was] the first definite step away from the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century in literature.

Gertrude Stein

The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)

standard violations

Jeff did not talk so much now about what **he before always** had been thinking. Sometimes Jeff would be, as if he was just **waking from himself** to be with Melanctha, and then he would find he had been **really all the long time with** her, and he had really never needed **to be doing any thinking.**
(90)

“I know what you mean now by what you are saying to me now Jeff Campbell....You **ain't got no** kind of right feeling for all **I always been** forgiving to you.” (106)

dialect

A language has many **varieties**

Dialect

language variety distinguished by pronunciation, grammar, lexicon, semantics

Every dialect has rules

Dialect differences may correspond to geography, occupation, educational level, or other social-cultural grouping

Standard language (written or spoken)

a dialect with an army

dialect

A language has many **varieties**

Dialect

language variety distinguished by pronunciation, grammar, lexicon, semantics

Every dialect has rules

Dialect differences may correspond to geography, occupation, educational level, or other social-cultural grouping

Standard language (written or spoken)

a dialect which is socially and culturally predominant, considered prestigious or “proper”

dialect writing ca. 1900

“Once 'pon a time,” he resumed, “Mr. Man had a gyarden so fine dat all de neighbors come ter see it. Some 'ud look at it over de fence, some 'ud peep thoo de cracks, an' some 'ud come an' look at it by de light er de stars.”

Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus



Stein creates a mask of dialect in “Melanctha”...What Stein does...is to create a dialect in which conventions of verbal verisimilitude are played against themselves so that the speech seems simultaneously concrete and highly artificial.

Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism* (1994)

THREE LIVES

STORIES OF THE GOOD
ANNA, MELANCTHA AND
THE GENTLE LENA

BY
GERTRUDE STEIN



THE GRAFTON PRESS
NEW YORK MCMIX

MS. rejected by five publishers
1909 Grafton Press 1st ed.
(Stein pays \$600 publishing costs;
Grafton sends someone to check
whether she needs help with her
English)

discussion

How does race shape the *form* of “Melanctha”? What view or representation of the life of black people in Baltimore is embedded in the story’s language and modes of narration? Is this the same as the aspects of that life that are overtly mentioned?

Seek evidence in the text.

the veil?

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro...

Du Bois

love story

“Another beast of a love story” (“KAP”)

They they began not to wander, and Melanctha would spend long hours with Jane in her room, sitting at her feet and listening to her stories, and feeling her strength and the power of her affection...

She loved Melanctha hard and made Melanctha feel it very deeply. (60)

love story

Melanctha Herbert's love had surely made her mad and foolish. She thrust it always deep into Jem Richards. (132)

love story

And Melanctha always loved very well to make him feel it... She would so well and freely, and with her pure, strong ways of reaching, she would give him all the love she knew now very well. (90)

What was it that now really happened to them? What was it that Melanctha did, that made everything get all ugly for them? What was it that Melanctha felt then, that made Jeff remember all the feeling he had had in him when Jane Harden told him how Melanctha had learned to be so very understanding? (91)

love story

Why did the subtle, intelligent, attractive, half white girl Melanctha Herbert love and do for and demean herself in service to this coarse, decent, sullen, ordinary, black childish Rose, and why was this unmoral, promiscuous, shiftless Rose married...while Melanctha with her white blood and attraction and her desire for a right position had not yet been really married. (48)

love story

But why did the subtle, intelligent, attractive, half white girl Melanctha Herbert, with her sweetness and her power and her wisdom, demean herself to do for and to flatter and to be scolded, by this lazy, stupid, ordinary, selfish black girl. This was a queer thing in Melanctha Herbert. (118)

sjužet (сюжет):

the story as told, the order of narration

fabula (фабула):

what is told, the “real,” chronological sequence of events

for next time

Focus on chapters 1 and 2 of Joyce's *Portrait*

But read as much of the novel as you can

Commonplace two passages by Sunday at 5 p.m.