

# Twentieth-Century Fiction I

December 3. Barnes, *Nightwood* (2).

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# Housekeeping

## **Next class**

The syllabus gives the reading order you should follow in *Malgudi Days*

You will be invited to pose general questions and make overall observations about the whole course at the start of both of the remaining classes

# Housekeeping

## **Evaluations**

Please complete by a week from Thursday

Our thanks!

# Review

## Barnes

as modernist: pattern, form

as late modernist: on the Paris scene, but not right in it

“I lost all connection to this man [Joyce]”

## *Nightwood*

automatisms: non-expression

blocked sympathies; outsiders

style as position

catachresis (“misuse”): the unassimilable simile

# unassimilable

Nora

“She was known instantly as a Westerner. Looking at her, foreigners remembered stories they had heard...” (56)

Robin

“Her clothes were of a period he could not quite place.” (46)

“Sometimes in these moments of insurmountable grief Robin would some movement...by which Nora was informed that Robin had come from a world to which she would return.” (63)

# unassimilable

Guido (junior)

“People say that he is not sound of mind. What do you say?” (128)

Dr. Matthew Mighty O’Connor

“the reason the doctor knows everything is because he’s been everywhere at the wrong time and has now become anonymous.” (89)

# unassimilable

Felix

“heavy with impermissible blood” (4)

“there was no function in the world for which he could be said to be properly garbed” (11)

“the Jew seems to be everywhere from nowhere” (10)

# unassimilable

“Exactly right. With Guido, you are in the presence of the ‘maladjusted.’ Wait! I am not using that word in the derogatory sense at all; in fact my great virtue is that I never use the derogatory in the usual sense.”

(124)

# community

The novel and the newspaper...provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation.

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (1991)

# community

The more amiable actresses of Prague, Vienna, Hungary, Germany, France and Italy, the acrobats and sword-swallowers, had at one time or another allowed him their dressing rooms....

There was a Princess Nadja, a Baron von Tink, a Principessa Stasera y Stasero, a King Buffo and a Duchess of Broadback: gaudy, cheap cuts from the beast life, immensely capable of that great disquiet called entertainment. (14)

**Discussion:** what kind of community is this?

# gender, desire

What if this book described the full range of erotic and romantic possibility?

# gender, desire

Unassimilable: many modes of desire here that are not  
*heteronormative*

same-sex

and not modeled on legally sanctioned form—i.e.  
marriage and reproduction

Bad romance, in other words...remind you of anything?

# gender, desire

*not an affirmation of gay identity*

“I said, Jenny is so greedy that she wouldn’t give her shit to the crows. And then I thought: Oh, the poor bitch, if she were dying, face down in a long pair of black gloves, would I forgive her?” (112–13)

# gender, desire

Doctor's version is *inversion*

(idea that homosexuality is gender-sex switch  
understood as physical pathology in early 20th century)

“And am I to blame if I've turned up this time as I shouldn't have been, when it was a high soprano I wanted, and deep corn curls to my bum, with a womb as big as the king's kettle, and a bosom as high as the bowsprit of a fhsing schooner?” (97)

**Question.** How does this relate to normative sexuality?

# gender as performance

the grandmother who, for some unknown reason, was dressed as a man, wearing a billycock and a corked mustache (69)

billycock: a kind of...hat

# gender as performance

It was to the Duchess of Broadback (Frau Mann) that Felix owed his first audience with a “gentleman of quality” (15)

Felix rode into Vienna, the child beside him, Frau Mann, opulent and gay, opposite, holding a rug for the boy’s feet. (130)

# community

“Listen,” Nora said. “You’ve got to listen!” (164)

**Discussion:** In “Go Down, Matthew,” does the doctor successfully “treat” Nora’s love for Robin? Consider the moments of dialogue exchange.

# community

Queer affirmation? No, this is a misfit novel  
Sexuality is *queered* but to be queer is not to belong to a  
community of shared purpose

# community

“““One dog will find them both””” (113)

Matthew is right for once

Then she began to bark also, crawling after him [Nora's dog]—barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching.  
(179)