

*Introduction to the literature of the
United States of America.*
A course in 28 sessions



Rocío G. Sumillera

Introduction to the literature of the United States of America.

A course in 28 sessions

The course aims to provide second-year L2 undergraduate students majoring/minoring in English with a survey of the prose fiction produced in the United States from colonial times up to the first half of the twentieth century. The course reviews the work of, among others, Mary Rowlandson, Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Louisa May Alcott, Mark Twain, Henry James, Stephen Crane, Kate Chopin, Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Stein, Zelda and Francis Scott Fitzgerald, and William Faulkner. Except for a selection of essays and three novels (*The Scarlet Letter*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *The Red Badge of Courage*), the majority of the readings are short stories. This course is intended as an introduction to more advanced and specialised courses on the literature produced in the United States and Canada. The Readings of the Day refer to the following volumes of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: The Norton Anthology of American Literature: Beginnings to 1820 (Volume A)* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017; 9th edition); *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: 1820-1865 (Volume B)* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017; 9th edition); *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: 1865-1914 (Volume C)* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012; 8th edition); *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: 1914-1945 (Volume D)* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012; 8th edition).

Week 1

Day 1

General Introduction to the course

Discussion of the class structure and syllabus, readings, methodology and class dynamics, assignments and assessment (percentages, essay writing, exam). Emphasis is placed on the importance of actively participating in class, on the relevance of essays, and on the fact that classes discuss the ‘Readings of the day’ following the ‘Questions to be discussed in class’ section.

Day 2

Early American literature

This opening session provides students with an overview of the beginnings of the literature produced in British America, including the literature of exploration, and an introduction to the dominant Puritan thought that so decisively pervaded the founding of the United States as an independent nation. To this end fragments from Jonathan Edwards’s sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (1741) are presented to students in class. The focus is however placed on captivity narratives, and more specifically on Mary Rowlandson’s *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), which “remains the most significant early American captivity narrative, the template against which subsequent texts are gauged” (Carroll, 146).

READINGS OF THE DAY

Mary Rowlandson, from *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), pp. 269-300 (*Volume A*).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. In *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, Rowlandson reflects upon her three-month captivity and her reunion with her family and neighbours after a ransom was paid for her liberation. Why does Rowlandson decide to write a narrative giving an account of her experiences as a captive?
2. What is Rowlandson's perspective on the "Praying Indians"? What do her views say about the attitudes held by many Europeans about them?
3. In which ways does Rowlandson's Puritan upbringing condition her narrative?
4. Think about the concepts of 'providence', 'predestination', and 'the elect' in Rowlandson's narrative.
5. How is nature described in her text? In which ways is it interpreted?
6. Faith is a much repeated word in Rowlandson's narrative. In which ways does the author use it?

Bibliography

- Carroll, Lorraine. *The Oxford Handbook of Early American Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Gilmore, Michael T. *Early American Literature: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Prentice-hall: Englewood Cliffs, 1980.
- Potter, Tiffany. "Writing Indigenous Femininity: Mary Rowlandson's Narrative of Captivity", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36.2 (2003): 153-167.
- Sieminski, Greg, "The Puritan Captivity Narrative and the Politics of the American Revolution", *American Quarterly*, 42.1 (1990): 35-56.
- Toulouse, Teresa A. "'My Own Credit': Strategies of (E)Valuation in Mary Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative", *American Literature*, 64.4 (1992): 655-676.
- Vaughan, Alden T. *Puritans among the Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676-1724*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981.

Week 2

Day 3

American Romanticism: Washington Irving

After a survey of the timeline of the events that led to the American Revolution and the Independence of the American colonies from Britain, the principles of American Romanticism in literature are discussed in connection with other forms of art, most significantly, painting (with examples from the Hudson River School landscape painters), and with the prevailing political ideas in the now independent American territories. The concern with individual freedom, the significance of natural landscape, and the supernatural, among others, are also key aspects to consider when approaching the work of Washington Irving (1783-1859), one of the first American writers to achieve international recognition. Irving's "The Author's Account of Himself", prefaced to his collection of essays and short stories *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1819-1820) is also analysed in terms of the perceived contrast between England and what Irving calls his "native country", a recurrent topic in the production of several other authors surveyed in this course (Ladd and Meyers). The perception of the American landscape and what it evokes in the imaginations of the first settlers, with regard to the discourse of Puritan thought, as discussed in Day 2, is moreover connected with Irving's short story.

READINGS OF THE DAY

Washington Irving, "The Author's Account of Himself", "Rip Van Winkle" (1819), pp. 27-41 (*Volume B*).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. Do you think it might be significant that the short story "Rip Van Winkle", a version of a German folktale, is included in the collection *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, that is, a 'sketch book'? Consider in this regard Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky's words on this subject ("Washington Irving and the Genesis of the Fictional Sketch", p. 226):

“With the publication of *The Sketch Book* in 1819-1820, Washington Irving transformed the popular travel sketch into a form uniquely his own, the fictional sketch. [...] The ‘travel sketch,’ a prose composition dedicated to expressing the rapture of an observer in the presence of Old World treasures, had become a fixture of both English and American magazines and therefore possessed this commercial appeal.”

2. What is then the significance of introducing the persona of Geoffrey Crayon? How does that have an impact on the way the collection as a whole is read?

3. In which ways does the short story “Rip Van Winkle” reflect about the times when “the country was yet a province of Great Britain”? How are those times depicted?

4. Which elements or features in “Rip Van Winkle” enable its ascription to the artistic movement of American Romanticism?

5. Which natural elements are mentioned in the short story? What is their role in the short story, and generally that of nature? How is it described?

6. “Rip Van Winkle” has often been considered allegorical and its characters symbolic. How does symbolism work in the short story?

Bibliography

Brodwin, Stanley. *The Old and New World Romanticism of Washington Irving*. New York; London: Greenwood, 1986.

Garcha, Amanpal. *From Sketch to Novel: The Development of Victorian Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Ladd, Andrew and Karen Meyers. “Romanticism and the New Nation”, in *Romanticism and Transcendentalism: 1800-1860*. New York: Facts on File, 2006, pp. 16-29.

Rubin-Dorsky, Jeffrey. “Washington Irving and the Genesis of the Fictional Sketch”, *Early American Literature*, 21.3 (1986/1987): 226-247.

Rubin-Dorsky, Jeffrey. “The Value of Storytelling: ‘Rip Van Winkle’ and ‘The Legend of Sleepy Hollow’ in the Context of ‘The Sketch Book’”, *Modern Philology*, 82.4 (1985): 393-406.

Wolf, Bryan Jay. *Romantic Re-Vision: Culture and Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century American Painting and Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Day 4

American Romanticism: Edgar Allan Poe

After an overview of Edgar Allan Poe's life of poverty, disease and psychological distress, an introductory lecture draws on extracts from Poe's essays "The Philosophy of Composition" and "The Poetic Principle" to present his ideas on poetry and fiction writing. Poe's contribution to the Gothic tradition in general, and to the American Gothic in particular, is then introduced, the features of Gothicism being discussed in detail, from the use of figures such as the doppelgänger or the debauched nobleman, to the use of uncanny and macabre elements and the building of psychological tension. The three short stories that make up the Readings of the Day are "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), and "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846). Students are to identify commonalities between the three short stories and the defining features of the Gothic.

READINGS OF THE DAY

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (pp. 629-642), "The Tell-Tale Heart" (pp. 666-670), and "The Cask of Amontillado" (pp. 696-701) (*Volume B*).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. Which elements in the three short stories would you identify as pertaining to the Gothic tradition? How does Poe manage to create the distinctive Gothic atmosphere of his texts?
2. How would you describe the protagonists of Poe's tales? How does characterization tend to work in Poe?
3. What is the role of nature in Poe's short stories? In which ways do natural elements appear in the narration? Which kinds of effects do they have?

4. Are there any similarities in terms of how the narration is structured in the three short stories? Which kinds of narrator does each one of them have? What effect does that have upon readers?
5. What does 'doppelgänger' mean? How does this resource appear in Poe's texts? Which other 'mirroring' strategies does Poe use in these short stories?
6. Poe is an innovator of the Gothic tradition, also regarding the psychology of his characters. His contribution is not only substantial but moreover defining in terms of how the Gothic continues to operate nowadays in popular fiction, and in what has been argued is the "American fascination with violence, excess and psychological trauma" (Fhlainn, "Screening the American Gothic: Celluloid Serial Killers in American Popular Culture", p. 188). Would you agree with such a statement? Why / why not?

Bibliography

- Fhlainn, Sorcha Ní. "Screening the American Gothic: Celluloid Serial Killers in American Popular Culture", in *American Gothic Culture: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Joel Faflak and Jason William Haslam. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018, pp. 187-202.
- Fisher, Benjamin F. "Poe and the Gothic Tradition", in *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. by Kevin J. Hayes. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press 2002, pp. 72-91.
- Moldenhauer, Joseph J. "Murder as a Fine Art: Basic Connections between Poe's Aesthetics, Psychology, and Moral Vision", *PMLA*, 83.2 (1968): 284-297.
- Polonsky, Rachel. "Poe's Aesthetic Theory", in *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. by Kevin J. Hayes. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press 2002, pp. 42-56.
- Sanford, Charles L. "Edgar Allan Poe: A Blight upon the Landscape", *American Quarterly*, 20.1 (1968): 54-66.
- Shen, Dan. "Edgar Allan Poe's Aesthetic Theory, the Insanity Debate, and the Ethically Oriented Dynamics of 'The Tell-Tale Heart'", *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 63.3 (2008): 321-345.
- Stein, William Bysshe. "The Twin Motif in 'The Fall of the House of Usher'", *Modern Language Notes*, 75.2 (1960): 109-111.

Week 3

Day 5

American Romanticism –Transcendentalism: Ralph Waldo Emerson

Through a group discussion of the Introduction to and the first four chapters of Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature* (1836), students are to identify and put together a list of principles of Transcendentalism. Selected extracts from "Self Reliance" are also read against the background of *Nature*. The figure of Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) is given special attention, and extracts from *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854), Chapter 1 (Economy), are also presented to students in class. Transcendentalism, and its impact upon the literature produced thereafter, is thus contextualized, and the figure of Emerson (1803-1882) discussed in detail. Finally, fragments from Emerson's piece published in *The Atlantic* in August 1862 upon the death of Thoreau are commented on to illustrate, on the one hand, the friendship between the two men and, on the other, their shared beliefs.

READINGS OF THE DAY

Ralph Waldo Emerson, from *Nature* (1836), "Introduction", Chapters I to IV: I. Nature; II. Commodity; III. Beauty; IV Language, pp. 181-194 (*Volume B*).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. How does Emerson understand the concept of 'nature'? What does it mean for him and which role does it have in his philosophy?
2. Which are the aspects of 'beauty' according to Emerson? Which is Emerson's view of language? In which ways do beauty and language relate to nature?
3. Which role does the spiritual have in Emerson's philosophy?
4. What does Emerson mean by his statement 'the world is emblematic' (p. 192)?
5. *Nature* influenced European philosophers such as Carlyle and Nietzsche, and would become gospel for Emerson's American disciples, among them Henry David Thoreau

(1817-1862) and Margaret Fuller (1810-1850). The poet Walt Whitman (1819-1892) was among Emerson's admirers, as his letter below shows. After reading the letter, consider the reasons why Whitman praises Emerson and his philosophy:

(Extract) Letter from Walt Whitman to Ralph Waldo Emerson (Brooklyn, August, 1856)¹

[...] To poets and literats—to every woman and man, today or any day, the conditions of the present, needs, dangers, prejudices, and the like, are the perfect conditions on which we are here, and the conditions for wording the future with undissuadable words. These States, receivers of the stamina of past ages and lands, initiate the outlines of repayment a thousand fold. They fetch the American great masters, waited for by old worlds and new, who accept evil as well as good, ignorance as well as erudition, black as soon as white, foreign-born materials as well as home-born, reject none, force discrepancies into range, surround the whole, concentrate them on present periods and places, show the application to each and any one's body and soul, and show the true use of precedents. Always America will be agitated and turbulent. This day it is taking shape, not to be less so, but to be more so, stormily, capriciously, on native principles, with such vast proportions of parts! As for me, I love screaming, wrestling, boiling-hot days.

Of course, we shall have a national character, an identity. As it ought to be, and as soon as it ought to be, it will be. That, with much else, takes care of itself, is a result, and the cause of greater results. With Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, Oregon—with the states around the Mexican sea—with cheerfully welcomed immigrants from Europe, Asia, Africa—with Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island—with all varied interests, facts, beliefs, parties, genesis—there is being fused a determined character, fit for the broadest use for the freewomen and freemen of The States, accomplished and to be accomplished, without any exception whatever—each indeed free, each idiomatic, as becomes live states and men, but each adhering to one enclosing general form of politics, manners, talk, personal style, as the plenteous varieties of the race adhere to one physical form. Such character is the brain and spine to all, including literature, including poems. Such character, strong, limber, just, open-mouthed, American-blooded, full of pride, full of ease, of passionate friendliness, is to stand compact upon that vast basis of the supremacy of Individuality—that new moral American continent without which, I see, the physical continent remained incomplete, may-be a carcass, a bloat—that newer America, answering face to face with The States, with ever-satisfying and ever-unsurveyable seas and shores.

Those shores you found. I say you have led The States there—have led Me there. I say that none has ever done, or ever can do, a greater deed for The States, than your deed. Others may line out the lines, build cities, work mines, break up farms; it is yours to have been the original true Captain who put to sea, intuitive, positive, rendering the first

¹ The Walt Whitman Archive: <https://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1856/poems/35>

report, to be told less by any report, and more by the mariners of a thousand bays, in each tack of their arriving and departing, many years after you.

Receive, dear Master, these statements and assurances through me, for all the young men, and for an earnest that we know none before you, but the best following you; and that we demand to take your name into our keeping, and that we understand what you have indicated, and find the same indicated in ourselves, and that we will stick to it and enlarge upon it through These States.

WALT WHITMAN.

6. How does Whitman's letter refer to the United States? How do his views agree with the ideas put forward in *Nature*?

Bibliography

Ellison, Julie. "The Remembering Wine': Emerson's Influence on Whitman and Dickinson", in *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by Joel Porte and Sandra Morris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 162-191.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Thoreau. The Country Knows not Yet, or in the Least Part, How Great a Son It Has Lost", *The Atlantic*, August 1862: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1862/08/thoreau/306418/>

Harvey, Samantha. *Transatlantic Transcendentalism: Coleridge, Emerson, and Nature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Metzger, Charles R. "Emerson's Religious Conception of Beauty", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 11.1 (1952): 67-74.

Porte, Joel. "Transcendentalism and its Times", in *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by Joel Porte and Sandra Morris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 13-24.

Von Frank, Albert J. "Transcendental Friendship: Emerson, Fuller, and Thoreau", in *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by Joel Porte and Sandra Morris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 121-139.

Wilson, R. Jackson. "Emerson and Nature", in *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by Joel Porte and Sandra Morris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 97-105.

Day 6

Introduction session to essay writing

Week 4

Day 7

American Romanticism: Nathaniel Hawthorne

The work and thought of Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) are first approached through the prefatory texts to *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), that is, “The Custom-House”, and the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851). By analysing these two texts, Hawthorne is contextualized as a writer brought up in New England, and his critical views on fiction writing and storytelling, introduced. Particularly in connection with *The Scarlet Letter*, further discussion on Puritanism in New England elaborates on the ideas reviewed on this matter in Days 2 and 3, and the subject of how the Puritan past of the country is fictionalized with a view to writing historical fiction is also brought up in the discussion. In this regard, the way in which the notion of ‘romance’ operates in Hawthorne’s understanding of his own work is approached.

READINGS OF THE DAY

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), from *The Scarlet Letter* (1850): from Section I (“The Prison-Door”) to Section XII (“The Minister’s Vigil”), pp. 451-512 (*Volume B*).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. How is the Puritan settlement where Hester Prynne lives? How do religious beliefs affect daily life and how do they specifically condition Hester Prynne’s life?
2. What is the “scarlet letter”? Why is Hester Prynne sentenced to wear it for life?

3. How do power relations within the community work? Who would you identify as being figures of authority and who would you say are powerless? How are those power relations narrated?

4. Some critics have noted the “tendency to interpret Hawthorne’s fiction, despite its Gothic contrivances, as the work of a writer groping toward psychological realism”. What do you think this idea of “psychological realism” (Laser, “‘Head’, ‘Heart’, and ‘Will’ in Hawthorne’s Psychology”, 1955, p. 130) may refer to? How do you think it could be illustrated by passages from Sections I-XII of *The Scarlet Letter*? Consider the narrator and the characterization strategies employed to describe not only Hester Prynne and Pearl, but other members of the community as well.

5. How do the discourses of politics, religion and medicine entangle in the narrative? Who represents each of them and what are the implications of such correlations?

6. Gillian Brown affirms in “Hawthorne’s American History” (2004, p. 122) that “Hawthorne’s portrait of Hester Prynne has so deeply affected readers that generations of Americans have taken (and continue to take) the novel’s representation of Puritan life in the colonies as an authoritative reference work on the New England Puritans”. Brown goes on to argue that Hawthorne “develops an account of American nationalism in which national identification continually operates in tandem with resistances to it. [...] By remembering some of the victims of and losers in American progress, Hawthorne demonstrates that history is a much more disparate and disquieting experience than the official chronology of significant actors and deeds suggests”. What does Brown mean by this? Do you agree with this statement? Why / why not?

Bibliography

Arac, Jonathan. “Hawthorne and the Aesthetics of American Romance”, in *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*, ed. by Leonard Cassuto, Clare Virginia Eby, and Benjamin Reiss. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 135-150.

Bell, Michael Davitt, *Hawthorne and the Historical Romance of New England*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971.

- Brown, Gillian. "Hawthorne's American History", in Richard H. Millington, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press 2004, pp. 121-142.
- Jackson, Gregory, "Religion and the Nineteenth-Century American Novel", in *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*, ed. by Leonard Cassuto, Clare Virginia Eby, and Benjamin Reiss. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 167-191.
- Laser, Marvin. "'Head', 'Heart', and 'Will' in Hawthorne's Psychology", *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 10. 2 (1955): 130-140.
- Valenti, Patricia Dunlavy. "'Then, All Was Spoken!' What 'The Custom-House' and 'The Scarlet Letter Disclose'", *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*, 40.2 (2014): 19-39.

Day 8

American Romanticism: Nathaniel Hawthorne (continued)

This session resumes the discussion of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* considering Sections XIII to XXIV. Students are presented in class with the short piece by John Updike on Hawthorne's religious beliefs (below) to encourage further discussion on these topics. They are also presented in class with extracts from the "Trial of Anne Hutchinson" (1637); her struggle with the Puritan Church, her trial for heresy and sedition, and her banishment from the Massachusetts Bay Colony are hence introduced and discussed in connection with Hester Prynne's story (Lang).

John Updike, "On Hawthorne's Mind", *The New York Review of Books*, March 19, 1981

*"John Updike (1932–2009) was born in Shillington, Pennsylvania. In 1954 he began to publish in The New Yorker, where he continued to contribute short stories, poems, and criticism until his death. His major work was the set of four novels chronicling the life of Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom, two of which, Rabbit is Rich and Rabbit at Rest, won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. His last books were the novel The Widows of Eastwick and Due Considerations, a collection of his essays and criticism."*²

What did Hawthorne believe? The author of our classic novel of religious conscience and religious suffering, and of works imbued throughout with religious concerns and religious language, boasted of not being a churchgoer. His baptism, if it occurred, left no trace on the records. His mother, who became a widowed recluse when Nathaniel was only four, did take the boy and his sisters to services at the East Meeting House in Salem, where the Hathornes (the "w" was added by our subject, after college) had had a pew for 170 years—"the old wooden meetinghouse," Hawthorne was to write, "which used, on wintry Sabbaths, to be the frozen purgatory of my childhood." At Bowdoin College, he jested of "Sunday sickness" and was frequently fined for missing chapel. From there he wrote his mother, "The being a Minister is of course out of the question. I shall not think that even you could desire me to choose so dull a way of life."

During his adoring courtship of Sophia Peabody, he rather resolutely declined to accompany her to hear her favorite preacher, the Methodist Edward Thompson Taylor, called Father Taylor and immortalized as Father Mapple in *Moby-Dick*. Not long after the idyll of their married life together had begun, Hawthorne

² The biographical note is also from the New York Review of Books: <https://www.nybooks.com/contributors/john-updike/>

confided to his notebooks: “My wife went to church in the forenoon, but not so her husband.” As the United States consul in Liverpool, he did conduct family prayer services, in deference perhaps to his official position in Victorian England. But his son Jullan, in his memoir of his father, admitted, “He never discussed religion in set terms either in his writings or in his talk.... Our mother upon occasions expressed her faith and reverence in speech; our father in caverns submarine and unsounded, yet somehow apparent.”

Melville, one of the few men ever to break through Hawthorne’s reserve, held with him, in Lenox in 1850, latenight conversations that Hawthorne in his journal described as “about time and eternity, things of this world and the next, and books, and publishers, and all possible and impossible things”; but he did not record his own position on these deep matters. Five years later, when Melville showed up in Liverpool and they went walking on the nearby links, Hawthorne’ noted: “Melville, as he always does, began to reason of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken.... It is strange how he persists—and has persisted in wandering to-and-fro over the deserts, as dismal and monotonous as the sand hills amid which we were sitting. He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief.”

In Concord, Hawthorne was skeptical about the Transcendental enthusiasms of Emerson and Channing; in Rome, he was attentive to, but in the end skeptical of, the manifold consolations of the Roman Catholic Church. Puritanically, he disdained dilutions. His short story “The Celestial Railroad” satirizes Unitarianism, and Church of England services he called “mummery, which seemed to me worse than papistry because it was a corruption of it.”...

READINGS OF THE DAY

Nathaniel Hawthorne, from *The Scarlet Letter* (1850): from Section XIII (“Another View of Hester”) to Section XXIV (“Conclusion”), pp. 512-569 (*Volume B*).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. Why is Hester perceived as a menace to the community?
2. Kathryn Harrison (2000) asserts that Hester Prynne can be seen in many ways as the first great modern heroine in American literature. Which features could make her be considered so?

3. The symbolism of *The Scarlet Letter* is not only highly charged but also changing. How does the scarlet letter itself, the central symbol of the story, change its meaning over time?
4. How does Hester also change over time? In which way does Pearl influence Hester's transformation? How do the townspeople change the way they see her?
5. How does witchcraft feature in *The Scarlet Letter*? Who is accused of being a witch and for which reasons?
6. Alison Easton ("Hawthorne and the Question of Women", 2004, p. 88) goes as far as to argue that "The red A's original religious and judicial 'office' (that is, function) has startlingly metamorphosed into a feminist conversation" by the end of the story. Would you agree with this statement? Why / why not?

Bibliography

- Branch, Watson. "From Allegory to Romance: Hawthorne's Transformation of 'The Scarlet Letter'", *Modern Philology*, 80.2 (1982): 145-160.
- Easton, Alison. "Hawthorne and the Question of Women", in *The Cambridge Companion to Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. by Richard H. Millington. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 79-98.
- Harrison, Kathryn. "Introduction", in Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*. New York: The Modern Library, 2000.
- Lang, Amy Schrager (1987). "An American Jezebel: Hawthorne and *The Scarlet Letter*", in *Prophetic Woman: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent in the Literature of New England*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 161-192.
- Levine, Robert S. ed. "Nathaniel Hawthorne", in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: 1820-1865 (Volume B)*. Ninth edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017. pp. 328-332; 'The Scarlet Letter', pp. 425-569.
- Miller Budick, Emily. "Hester's Skepticism, Hawthorne's Faith; Or, What Does a Woman Doubt? Instituting the American Romance Tradition", *New Literary History*, 22.1 (1991): 199-211.
- Updike, John. "On Hawthorne's Mind". *The New York Review of Books*, March 19, 1981. <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1981/03/19/on-hawthornes-mind/>

Week 5

Day 9

Training session for Essay 1

ESSAY TOPICS FOR ESSAY 1

Choose one of the following six essay topics for your first essay:

1. In which ways are the Puritan foundations of the United States a shaping force of the country's fiction in the nineteenth century?
2. What role does the supernatural have in Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle"? How is the supernatural connected with other features of American Romanticism?
3. How do Emerson and Thoreau, and Transcendentalism in general, understand nature and its connection with the individual?
4. Which are the similarities and differences between the narrators of Poe's short stories "The Fall of the House of Usher", "The Tell-Tale Heart", and "The Cask of Amontillado"?
5. How does society behave as a repressive body in *The Scarlet Letter*? How is the conflict between society and the individual played out in Hawthorne's romance?
6. Could Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" be read as a gothic/ghost story? Why / why not?

Day 10

American Romanticism: Herman Melville

After an introduction to Herman Melville (1819-1891) and *Moby-Dick* (1851), selected extracts from “Hawthorne and his Mosses” are presented to students in class not only to consider Melville’s praise of Hawthorne (compared to Shakespeare in the review), but more generally to approach Melville’s own ideas on writing and on the notion of ‘American genius’, which suggests the independence of American literature from English literature. The core of the session is devoted to a group discussion of Melville’s short story “Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street” (1853). Questions of authority and power are particularly brought to the fore in the discussion of the short story. In this regard, selected extracts from “Benito Cereno” are also presented to students in class to continue the discussion on the representation of power and subversion to power in the works of Melville. For further information on *Moby Dick*, students are encouraged to listen to the following radio interview to Harold Bloom at The Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFt59_E_g5s (Running time: 35 mins.). In it Bloom argues that *Moby Dick* should be read as ‘a prose epic’.

READINGS OF THE DAY

Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street”, pp. 1469-1495 (*Volume B*).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. How are the activities of writing and copying portrayed in the short story? Why is it relevant that Bartleby is called ‘a scrivener’?
2. The narrator’s views about Bartleby change as the story progresses, and Bartleby eventually seems to manage to have a kind of power over him. What is Bartleby’s influence over the office? Why and how does it happen?
3. What difference do you think would have made using a third person omniscient narrator instead of the first-person narrative that we find in the story?

4. It has been stated that the short story deals with ‘a figure of authority coping with a “revolt from below”’ (Ange Mlinko, “Reading Melville’s Sentences: Teaching *Billy Budd*, *Benito Cereno*, and ‘Bartleby, the Scrivener’”, 2001)? Who represents authority in the short story and how is their authority exercised? What does that ‘revolt from below’ mean exactly?
5. Sheila Post-Lauria (“Canonical Texts and Context: The Example of Herman Melville’s ‘Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street’”, 1993, p. 200) affirms that in Melville’s short story, “The narrator’s role as employer limits his social awareness. He involves himself in the work lives of his staff in order to demonstrate his own superior abilities in surviving within the world of Wall Street by wielding authority over others. Yet the narrator’s ‘method’ turns back upon himself. While the other employees acquiesce ‘with submission,’ Bartleby ‘prefer[s] not to.’” In this context, what is the meaning and the significance of that ‘I would prefer not to’ (p. 1475)?
6. Why is it significant that the story is set in Wall Street, the financial district of New York City? How does the narrator accommodate to this environment? How well does Bartleby fit in?

Bibliography

- Delbanco, Andrew. *Melville: His World and Work*. London: Picador, 2005.
- Kuebrich, David, “Melville’s Doctrine of Assumptions: The Hidden Ideology of Capitalist Production in ‘Bartleby’”, *The New England Quarterly*, 69.3 (1996): 381-405.
- Mlinko, Ange. “Reading Melville’s Sentences: Teaching *Billy Budd*, *Benito Cereno*, and ‘Bartleby, the Scrivener’”, in *The Teachers & Writers Guide to Classic American Literature*, ed. by Christopher Edgar and Gary Lenhart. New York: Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 2001.
- Post-Lauria, Sheila. “Canonical Texts and Context: The Example of Herman Melville’s ‘Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street’”. *College Literature*, 20.2 (1993): 196-205.
- Spanos, William V. *Herman Melville and the American Calling: The Fiction after Moby-Dick, 1851-1857*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.
- Weinstein, Cindy. “Melville, Labor and the Discourses of Reception”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*, ed. by Robert S. Levine. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press 1998, pp. 202-223.

Week 6

Day 11

American Romanticism –Transcendentalism: Louisa May Alcott

After an introduction to Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888) and her intellectual milieu at Concord (Massachusetts), much influenced by the thought of Emerson and Thoreau, both of whom she knew, this session focuses on the analysis through a group discussion of her short story “Transcendental Wild Oats” (1873), a satirical account of a practical attempt to implement the tenets of Transcendentalism as the ruling principles of a community. In this sense, the session continues a debate that begun on Day 4 around Emerson and Thoreau, and students are now encouraged to establish connections between *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854) and Alcott’s short story. This session presents further instances from *Walden* and remarks on Emerson and Thoreau’s sceptic response to the creation of a community such as that of Alcott’s Fruitlands. Another American utopian scheme of the mid-nineteenth century, also inspired by the principles of Transcendentalism, is in addition presented, namely, the agrarian Brook Farm (founded in 1841), about which both Emerson and Hawthorne wrote letters (Delano).

READINGS OF THE DAY

Louisa May Alcott, “Transcendental Wild Oats” (1873)

Questions to be discussed in class

1. The community described by Alcott in “Transcendental Wild Oats” was based on a real community that her father, Amos Bronson Alcott (1799-1888), created in Massachusetts when Alcott was still a little girl. The real community was called Fruitlands and it turned out to be an experiment in the practical application of the principles of Transcendentalism to communal living. As Sandra Harbert Petrulionis explains: “By the time she wrote ‘Transcendental Wild Oats,’ Louisa May Alcott was forty-one years old. [...The story is a] rendering of the six months from June through December 1843 that she lived with her family at Fruitlands” (“By the Light of Her

Mother's Lamp: Woman's Work versus Man's Philosophy in Louisa May Alcott's *Transcendental Wild Oats*", 1995, p. 69). How do the principles of Transcendentalism determine the workings of the community in the short story?

2. How can Alcott's short story be connected with Thoreau's *Walden*?

3. Can Alcott's short story be read as a satire? If so, of what exactly?

4. Which are the roles of men and women in the community? Why is this division of work relevant and revealing?

5. In which ways is the short story utopian / dystopian?

6. In a letter to a prospective member of the community, Alcott's father outlined the following purposes of Fruitlands:

"Our purposes, as far as we know them at present, are briefly these: First, to obtain the free use of a spot of land adequate by our own labor to our support; including, of course, a convenient plain house, and offices, wood-lot, garden and orchard. Secondly, to live independently of foreign aids by being sufficiently elevated to procure all articles for subsistence in the productions of the spot, under a regimen of healthful labor and recreation; with benignity toward all creatures, human and inferior; with beauty and refinement in all economics; and the purest charity throughout our demeanor. Should this kind of life attract parties toward us—individuals of like aims and issues—that state of being itself determines the law of association; and the particular mode may be spoken of more definitely as individual cases may arise; but in no case, could interior ends compromise the principles laid down. Doubtless such a household, with our library, our services and manner of life, may attract young men and women, possibly also families with children, desirous of access to the channels and fountains of wisdom and purity; and we are not without hope that Providence will use us progressively for beneficial effects in the great work of human regeneration, and the restoration of the highest life on earth."

(Blanding, Thomas. "Paradise Misplaced: Bronson Alcott's Fruitlands", *The Concord Saunterer*, 6.4 (1971): 2-7, pp. 4-5)

What does this letter reveal about the goals of the community and the way its founders envisioned it?

Bibliography

- Alcott, Louisa May. "Transcendental Wild Oats", in *Writing New England: An Anthology from the Puritans to the Present*, ed. by Andrew Delbanco Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 308-320.
- Blanding, Thomas. "Paradise Misplaced: Bronson Alcott's Fruitlands", *The Concord Saunterer*, 6.4 (1971): 2-7 (pp. 4-5)
- Delano, Sterling F. *Brook Farm: The Dark Side of Utopia*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Petrulionis, Sandra Harbert, "By the Light of Her Mother's Lamp: Woman's Work versus Man's Philosophy in Louisa May Alcott's *Transcendental Wild Oats*", *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1995): 69-81.
- Ripley, George, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. "Letters Concerning Brook Farm", in *Writing New England: An Anthology from the Puritans to the Present*, ed. by Andrew Delbanco Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 273-280.
- Widdicombe, Toby. "A 'Declaration of Independence': Alcott's Work as Transcendental Manifesto". *Emerson Society Quarterly*, 38 (1992): 207-229.

Day 12

American Civil War literature: Louisa May Alcott

This session is fundamentally devoted to the American Civil War (1861-1865) and its profound impact on the fiction produced in the United States in the nineteenth century. It provides an overview of the most salient works of fiction written about it and the various perspectives from which authors approached it: from war episodes and life in battlefields, to its impact on everyday life, to its consequences upon the black slaves and the black population in general (Sundquist, Kaufman, Hutchison). Slavery and abolitionism feature prominently in the session's discussions. Alcott's involvement in the war and her views on it are furthermore examined through her short story "My Contraband", first published in 1863 in *Atlantic Monthly*, and in 1869 (a year after Alcott's highly successful *Little Women*) published in *Hospital Sketches; and, Camp and Fireside Stories* (1869). "My Contraband" feeds on Alcott's experiences as a nurse during the American Civil War, the impact that war had on black slaves at the time, and the at the time scandalous possibility of interracial romance. Alcott's views on slavery were clear, as she was a staunch abolitionist.

READINGS OF THE DAY

Louisa May Alcott, "My Contraband" (1863), pp. 1727-1741 (*Volume B*).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. Daneen Wardrop ("Louisa May Alcott's *Hospital Sketches*: A Readership", 2015, p. 56) explains in the following paragraph the meaning of the term 'contraband' as used in Alcott's short story:

"The word 'contraband' encrypted brutal assumptions held by many white Americans who acceded to the concept, inherent in the renaming, that fugitives were rendered objects of commercial exchange. The word ostensibly allowed Union leaders to help escapees to freedom at the same time that it benefitted the leaders by securing inexpensive labor for the war effort. [...] The immediate popularity of the term [...] articulate[s] the difficult social positioning of fugitives in Northern culture: Most fundamentally, the new usage of 'contraband' signalled that the nation was at a crossroads. In the absence of other appropriate designations for fleeing slaves, the term

was a placeholder whose appeal would fade once it became clear that the war would secure permanent emancipation. Northern nurses working with fugitives in the hospitals used the vocabulary of slaveholding ownership, speaking of ‘their’ contrabands.”

Taking all this into account, why is the use of this term significant in Alcott’s story?

2. How is the heroine, Faith Dane, a Union nurse, and her assistant Robert portrayed? Which kind of relationship do they have and in which terms is it described?

3. How does the political background of the story condition their interaction? Would you say the story is abolitionist? Why / why not?

4. According to Sara Elbert (“Louisa May Alcott: An Introductory Essay: Reading the Unwritten War: Renaissance Tales”, 1993, p. 46) the short story “has a disquieting subtext that whispers vengeance beneath Faith”. Do you agree with this statement? Why / why not?

5. When the short story was first published in 1863 it did so as “The Brothers”, after the insistence of the editor James T. Fields. However, Alcott had always wanted her short story to be published as “My Contraband”. What is significant about both titles? What do they reveal about different readings or understandings of the story? Why do you think Alcott favoured one over the other?

6. The following is an extract from the 1869 Preface to *Hospital Sketches*. In it Alcott explains the circumstances in which she wrote the book:

“These sketches taken from letters hastily written in the leisure moments of a very busy life make no pretension to literary merit, but are simply a brief record of one person’s hospital experience. As such they are republished, with their many faults but partially amended lest in retouching they should lose whatever force or freshness the inspiration of the time may have given them.

To those who have objected to a tone of levity in some portions of the sketches, I desire to say that the wish to make the best of every thing, and send home cheerful reports even from that saddest of scenes, an army hospital, probably produced the impression of levity upon those who have never known the sharp contrasts of the tragic and comic in such a life.”

Why do you think Alcott decided to publish this sort of preface to her book?

Bibliography

- Elbert, Sarah. "Louisa May Alcott: An Introductory Essay: Reading the Unwritten War: Renaissance Tales", *Irish Journal of American Studies*, 2 (1993): 33-127.
- Ernest, John. "Stowe, Race, and the Antebellum American Novel", in *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*, ed. by Leonard Cassuto, Clare Virginia Eby, and Benjamin Reiss. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 252-266.
- Hutchison, Coleman. *A History of American Civil War Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Kaufman, Will. "The American Civil War", in *The Cambridge Companion to War Writing*, ed. by Kate McLoughlin. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp.148-159.
- Sundquist, Eric J. *Empire and Slavery in American Literature, 1820-1865*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006.
- Wardrop, Daneen. "Louisa May Alcott's *Hospital Sketches*: A Readership", in *Civil War Nurse Narratives, 1863-1870*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015, 31-61.

Week 7

Day 13

American Realism: Mark Twain

Screening of documentary: *Mark Twain: A Film* (2002), directed by Ken Burns (Running time: 112 mins). The official description of the contents of the documentary is available at:

<http://kenburns.com/films/mark-twain/>

“Samuel Clemens (1835-1910) rose from a hardscrabble boyhood in the backwoods of Missouri to become, as Mark Twain, America’s best-known and best-loved author. Considered in his time the funniest man on earth, Twain was also an unflinching critic of human nature who used his humor to attack hypocrisy, greed and racism. He created some of the world’s most memorable characters as well as its most quoted sayings. And, in his often-misunderstood novel *Huckleberry Finn*, he shared with the world the masterpiece that Ernest Hemingway would call the true beginning of American literature.

Mark Twain tells the story of the writer’s extraordinary life – full of rollicking adventure, stupendous success and crushing defeat, hilarious comedy and almost unbearable tragedy. By the end, the film helps us to see how Twain could claim with some justification, ‘I am not an American, I am the American.’”

Before the screening, the set of questions about the documentary to be discussed on Day 14 are explained, as well as the extracts from Twain’s autobiography, also to be discussed in the following session.

Screening of the documentary...

Mark Twain: A Film (2002); released in two parts. Directed by Ken Burns.
Only Part I is screened in class (Running time: 112 mins)

Written by: Dayton Duncan and Geoffrey C. Ward

Narrated by: Keith David

Voice of Mark Twain: Kevin Conway

Awards: Leon Award for Best Documentary, St. Louis Film Festival, November 2001

Extracts from *Autobiography to be discussed on Day 14*

Twain set to write his autobiography for the first time in 1870, and he would try doing so over the next 35 years. The bulk of it was dictated rather than written. In the end, his autobiography was only posthumously published; The Mark Twain Project of The Bancroft Library at University of California, Berkeley, published in 2010, the year of the 100th anniversary of Twain's death, the first volume of a comprehensive collection.

Contrast the information provided in the documentary with the information given by Twain about himself in his *Autobiography*. Read the following extracts and consider the questions below:

1) "I intend that this autobiography shall become a model for all future autobiographies when it is published, after my death, and I also intend that it shall be read and admired a good many centuries because of its form and method--a form and method whereby the past and the present are constantly brought face to face, resulting in contrasts which newly fire up the interest all along, like contact of flint with steel. Moreover, this autobiography of mine does not select from my life its showy episodes, but deals mainly in the common experiences which go to make up the life of the average human being, because these episodes are of a sort which he is familiar with in his own life, and in which he sees his own life reflected and set down in print. The usual, conventional autobiographer seems to particularly hunt out those occasions in his career when he came into contact with celebrated persons, whereas his contacts with the uncelebrated were just as interesting to him, and would be to his reader, and were vastly more numerous than his collisions with the famous."

2) "This autobiography of mine differs from other autobiographies—differs from all other autobiographies [...]. The conventional biography of all the ages is an open window. The autobiographer sits there and examines and discusses the people that go by—not all of them, but the notorious ones, the famous ones; those that wear fine uniforms, and crowns when it is not raining; and very great poets and great statesmen—illustrious people with whom he has had the high privilege of coming in contact. He likes to toss a wave of recognition to these with his hand as they go by, and he likes to notice that the others are seeing him do this, and admiring. He likes to let on that in discussing these occasional people that wear the good clothes he is only interested in interesting his reader, and is in a measure unconscious of himself.

But this autobiography of mine is not that kind of an autobiography. This autobiography of mine is a mirror, and I am looking at myself in it all the time. Incidentally I notice the people that pass along at my back—I get glimpses of them in the mirror—and whenever they say or do anything that can help advertise me and flatter me and raise me in my own estimation, I set these things down in my autobiography. I rejoice when a king or duke comes my way and makes himself useful to this autobiography, but they are rare customers, with wide intervals between. I can use them with good effect as lighthouses and monuments along my way, but for real business I depend upon the common herd." (Vol. II, p. 30)

3) “My parents removed to Missouri in the early thirties; I do not remember just when, for I was not born then, and cared nothing for such things. It was a long journey in those days, and must have been a rough and tiresome one. The home was made in the wee village of Florida, in Monroe County, and I was born there in 1835. The village contained a hundred people and I increased the population by 1 per cent. It is more than the best man in history ever did for any other town. It may not be modest in me to refer to this, but it is true. There is no record of a person doing as much—not even Shakspeare. But I did it for Florida, and it shows that I could have done it for any place—even London, I suppose. Recently some one in Missouri has sent me a picture of the house I was born in. Heretofore I have always stated that it was a palace, but I shall be more guarded, now.” (Vol. I, p. 8)

Questions to be discussed in class

1. Which was Twain’s geographical, social and family background?
2. When and why did Twain decide to become a writer?
3. Which were some of his main political convictions? What was his stance on slavery?
4. In which ways does the Mississippi River become an element of fundamental importance in Twain’s life and literary production?
5. How did Twain envision his autobiography? How was he concerned about form?
6. Where is Twain’s characteristic humour perceptible in the extracts from his autobiography? How would you describe his humour?

Bibliography

- DeEulis, Marilyn Davis. “Mark Twain’s Experiments in Autobiography”, *American Literature*, 53.2 (1981): 202-213.
- Howe, Lawrence. “Transcending the Limits of Experience: Mark Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi*”, *American Literature*, 63.3 (1991): 420-439.
- Renza, Louis A. “Killing Time with Mark Twain’s Autobiographies”, *ELH*, 54.1 (1987): 157-182.

Schmidt, Paul. "River vs. Town: Mark Twain's *Old Times on The Mississippi*", *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 15.2 (1960): 95-111.

Twain, Mark. *Autobiography of Mark Twain, Vols. 1 & 2: The Complete and Authoritative Edition*, ed. by Harriet Elinor Smith and Benjamin Griffin. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010, 2013.

Day 14

American Realism: Mark Twain

After a group discussion on the questions regarding the documentary *Mark Twain: A Film* and the selected extracts from Twain's autobiography, a group analysis of Twain's phenomenally successful short story "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (1865) follows. Through it the characteristic features of Twain's work are identified—among them, his mastery of the dialects of the United States and skills to reproduce them in written form. Students are then presented with the sections "The Humorous Story an American Development—Its Difference from Comic and Witty Stories", and fragments from "The Wounded Soldier", both from Twain's *How to Tell a Story* (1897). Through them students are to connect Twain's thoughts on the writing of fiction (and, particularly, of humour) with his actual writing practice, and to discuss how Twain's beliefs in what made American literature distinctive coincide or differ from the views expressed by other authors previously discussed in the course (in particular, Irving and Melville).

READINGS OF THE DAY

Mark Twain (1835-1910), "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (1865), pp. 121-129 (*Volume C*).

To fully appreciate Twain's short story, listen to Walter Brennan's dramatized reading of it. The recording is part of the album *The Very Best of Mark Twain*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwHZ4DPgb2o>

Questions to be discussed in class

1. Who is the narrator of the story? Would you say that there is more than one narrator?
2. What is the effect that writing in dialect has upon readers? Would it make a difference if the same text were written not using dialect?
3. How would you describe the characters of the unnamed narrator, Simon Wheeler and Jim Smiley?

4. What is the purpose of the story? Would you say it has a moral? Why would the unnamed narrator share it with the readers?

5. How would you say the humour of this story is constructed? How does it work?

6. Twain is indeed indebted to the Southwestern humour tradition, as Gibert Maceda (*American Literature to 1900*, 2009, p. 401) points out:

“He [Twain] started by specifically indulging in the so-called ‘frontier humour’ or the ‘humour of the Southwest,’ which was one of the most popular modes of writing in America during the two decades preceding the Civil War. The tradition of ‘Southwestern humour’ that swept the country in the 1840s and 1850s arose from the harsh conditions of frontier life, political controversy and oral story telling. In contrast to the sophisticated and stylized ‘urban humour,’ the subversive ‘frontier humour’ relied heavily on roughness, violence, exaggeration, distorted perceptions, the grotesque and the absurd. Mark Twain’s ulterior fusion of features derived from Southwestern frontier humour with others from Northeastern urban humour would contribute substantially to the development of a genuine American humour.”

In which moments of the short story can you find some of the features identified in the previous extract? Can you also identify a “fusion of features” coming from these two humour traditions?

Bibliography

Buell, Lawrence. “Theories of the American Novel in the Age of Realism”, in *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*, ed. by Leonard Cassuto, Clare Virginia Eby, and Benjamin Reiss. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 322-336.

Gibert Maceda, M^a Teresa, *American Literature to 1900*. Madrid: Editorial Universitaria Ramón Areces, 2009.

Krauth, Leland. “Mark Twain: The Victorian of Southwestern Humor”, *American Literature*, 54.3 (1982): 368-384.

LeMaster, Jimmi R., ed. *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Mark Twain*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Sloane, David E., “Twain’s Early Short Stories and Sketches”, in *Student Companion to Mark Twain*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001, pp. 33-44.

Twain, Mark. *How to Tell a Story and Other Essays*. Auckland: The Floating Press, 1899.

Week 8

Day 15

American Realism: Mark Twain (continued)

This session first contextualizes *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) within Twain's production, particularly with regard to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), and Twain's memoir *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), fragments of which are presented to students in class. These allow for a discussion, on the one hand, of the role of the Mississippi river in the process of the construction of the narrative, and, on the other, of slavery in the United States at the time when the story is set. The map collection of the Smithsonian on the expansion of slavery (Mullen) is here used to locate students geographically (and historically). This is followed by a group discussion of the selected chapters from *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (the Explanatory and Chapters I, II, V, VII, VIII, XV and XXIII). Chapters I and II introduce the central characters of the story and initiate the plot; Chapter V provides an account of the return of Huck's father and illustrates his behaviour through his interaction with the young judge; Chapter VII narrates Huck's escape from his father's cabin and the faking of his own death; Chapter VIII narrates his meeting with Jim, who explains why he is fleeing, and their decision to do so together in the raft; in Chapter XV Huck plays a mean trick on Jim while on the raft (the heavy fog episode), and Chapter XXIII is Jim's account of his family memories and his regret of having hit his daughter once.

READINGS OF THE DAY

Mark Twain, from *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (pp. 119-302), Explanatory, Chapters I, II, V, VII, VIII, XV and XXIII (only p. 226) (*Volume C*).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. The *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, published in the United Kingdom in 1884 and in the United States in 1885, has proven, since its publication, a controversial novel even if one that soon gained the status of an undisputed American classic. Consider the account that Myra Jehlen offers on the reception of Twain's novel among the circle of

Concord writers and thinkers: “a month after the publication of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the committee in charge of Concord’s public library voted to remove the book from its shelves, fearing that Huck Finn’s irreverence would undermine the morals of young readers. In full agreement, Louisa May Alcott proposed a more radical ban: ‘If Mr. Clemens cannot think of something better to tell our pure-minded lads and lasses,’ she advised, ‘he had best stop writing for them.’” (“Banned in Concord: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Classic American Literature”, 1995, p. 94). Now consider the meaning of the “Notice” prefaced to the book: “Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot” (p. 130). What does it mean? What is its significance?

2. Tom Quirk affirms in “The Realism of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*” (1995, p. 139) that “*Huckleberry Finn*, like *Moby-Dick*, is a storyteller’s story. In both books the teller and the tale vie for our attention”. Would you agree with such a statement? How does Huck present himself as the author of his book and the narrator of his story? In which way does that work as a statement or a disclaimer for what happens throughout the novel?

3. How is characterization constructed for Huck, Pap and Jim? How does the story about Pap and the young judge work for characterization purposes (Chapter V)? What does it say about the judge and about the judicial system in general?

4. At which levels does violence operate in the story?

5. In Chapter XV Huck plays a mean trick on Jim, for which he finally apologizes. What is the significance of this episode?

6. At one point Huck says the following about Jim: “He was thinking about his wife and his children, away up yonder, and he was low and homesick [...]. I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their’n” (p. 226). Examine the novel’s portrayal of racism and consider the relevance of the quote.

Bibliography

- Jehlen, Myra. "Banned in Concord: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Classic American Literature", in *The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain*, ed. by Forrest G. Robinson. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 93-115.
- Johnson, Claudia Durst. *Understanding Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents*. Westport.; London: Greenwood Press, 1996.
- Mullen, Lincoln. "These Maps Reveal How Slavery Expanded Across the United States", *Smithsonian.com*, May 15, 2014: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/maps-reveal-slavery-expanded-across-united-states-180951452/>
- Quirk, Tom. "The Realism of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*", in *The Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism*, ed. by Donald Pizer. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 138-153.
- Robinson, Forrest G. "The Characterization of Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*", *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 43.3 (1988): 361-391.
- Twain, Mark. *Life on the Mississippi*, ed. by John Seelye. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Berkeley: Published for the Iowa Center for Textual Studies by the University of California Press, 1980.

Day 16

Feedback and discussion: Essay 1

Week 9

Day 17

Training session for Essay 2

ESSAY TOPICS FOR ESSAY 2

Choose one of the following six essay topics for your second essay:

1. How does Louisa May Alcott's work reflect on and react to the principles of Transcendentalism?
2. In which ways is violence present in Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*? Would you argue that the novel is excessively violent, realistic and accurate in its portrayal of violence, or none of the previous?
3. What was the impact of the American Civil War on the work of nineteenth-century US authors?
4. How do US authors envision the literature they produce distinct from English fiction? Which arguments do they use to support their claims?
5. How is nature portrayed in the works of Stephen Crane? How does such representation comply with the tenets of a specific literary movement?
6. How can Kate Chopin's work be read against Margaret Fuller's *The Great Lawsuit* (1843)?

Day 18

American Naturalism and Impressionism: Stephen Crane

Before discussing Stephen Crane's short story "The Open Boat" (1897), this session examines a selection of essays ("The Art of Fiction", "Zola as a Romantic Writer", "A Plea for Romantic Fiction", and "True Art Speaks Plainly") by, respectively, Henry James, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser, on their views on fiction writing and the principles that should guide it. Together these essays summarize the theoretical framework which resonates with much of the North American fiction produced in the nineteenth century in accordance with the principles of Realism and Naturalism. In the analysis of Crane's short story "The Open Boat", emphasis is placed on the style of the piece and its compliance with the principles of Naturalism (Colvert); autobiographical elements in the short story are also pointed out (Spofford).

READINGS OF THE DAY

Henry James, "The Art of Fiction", pp. 908-910; Frank Norris, "Zola as a Romantic Writer", pp. 911-913, and "A Plea for Romantic Fiction", pp. 913-916; Theodore Dreiser, "True Art Speaks Plainly", pp. 916-917; Stephen Crane, "The Open Boat", pp. 990-1006 (*Volume C*).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. The artistic movements of Realism and Naturalism originated in Europe and found their way to the United States only to initiate a tradition of their own the other side of the Atlantic. Consider, in this regard, the words of Louis J. Budd ("The American Background", 1995, pp. 21-24) on both movements and on the social background of some of the authors who shaped them in the United States:

"Although Henry James grew up more remote from the sweaty masses than any other writer of his time, teeming Manhattan did surround Washington Square. [...] Stephen Crane, who prided himself on avoiding pride of status, learned quickly from exploring the lower depths, concluding that the Truth proclaimed from denominational and secular pulpits had to be unmasked, especially for the masses who tried to live up to pious dogma while fuzzily suspecting they were being misled. Dreiser, who started out at the bottom of the white social ladder, believed utterly—or so he later claimed—in

transcendent values that blessed his immediate world; but when he trudged into disbelief, he thought he was expressing the vague but deep doubts of his ordinary class. [...] *In ways that cannot be 'proven,' Crane, Dreiser, and Wilkins (later Freeman) drew much of their strength as realists/naturalists from their interaction with the anxieties permeating the millions rather than from sequenced discourse with intellectuals.*"

What does this extract imply about the concerns of both movements? What does the last sentence mean?

2. What do James, Norris and Dreiser emphasize in their texts? In what do they agree? How do the topics that they choose to focus on in their texts might reveal differences in their thought?

3. Compare and contrast James, Norris, Dreiser and Crane's understandings of fiction writing with the principles put forward by other authors previously examined in the course (Irving, Melville, Twain, etc.).

4. How is nature presented in Crane's "The Open Boat"? What is the overall relationship between the individual and nature suggested by the short story?

5. What is the relevance of cigars in the short story? Would you say they function as a symbol? If so, of what exactly?

6. In which ways does the "The Open Boat" exemplify the principles of Naturalism?

Bibliography

Bramen, Carrie. "James, Pragmatism, and the Realist Ideal", in *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*, ed. by Leonard Cassuto, Clare Virginia Eby, and Benjamin Reiss. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp 304-321.

Budd, Louis J. "The American Background", in *Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism*, ed. by Donald Pizer. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp.21-46.

Colvert, James B. "Style and Meaning in Stephen Crane: 'The Open Boat'", *Texas Studies in English*, 37 (1958): 34-45.

Davies, Jude. "Dreiser and the City", in *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*, ed. by Leonard Cassuto, Clare Virginia Eby, and Benjamin Reiss. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp 380-392.

Link, Eric Carl. *Defining American Literary Naturalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Newlin, Keith, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Spofford, William K. "Stephen Crane's 'The Open Boat': Fact or Fiction?", *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910*, 12.2 (1979): 316-321.

Week 10

Day 19

American Naturalism and Impressionism: Stephen Crane (continued)

This session opens with a group discussion around John Northern Hilliard's "Stephen Crane: Letters to a Friend about his Ambition, his Art and his Views of Life" (1900), then followed by a group discussion of Chapters 7 to 9 of *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) by Stephen Crane (1871-1900). Special emphasis is placed on matters of style and narration techniques, which lead to an overview of the principles of Impressionism and the passage to Modernism (Rogers, Levenson). The success of Crane's novel and the criticism it faced, both positive (as the essay by H.G. Wells on Crane illustrates) and negative (mostly because Crane was no war veteran) are also the object of discussion. More on the impact of the American Civil War upon the literature produced by authors from the United States follows (Gramm), thus expanding on a topic initiated on Day 11 regarding Louisa May Alcott.

READINGS OF THE DAY

John Northern Hilliard, "Stephen Crane: Letters to a Friend about his Ambition, his Art and his Views of Life" (1900)

Stephen Crane, from *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), Chapters 7 to 9.

Questions to be discussed in class

1. In which terms does John Northern Hilliard talk about Stephen Crane's life and work? Which aspects of his production and his attitude towards life does he stress?
2. Which kind of narrator is that of *The Red Badge of Courage*? What is the effect of such a decision?
3. In which terms is war described? In which terms is nature described?
4. What is the 'red badge of courage'? How does symbolism work in Crane's novel?

5. Why does the narrator never refer to the characters by their names? What is the effect of omitting their names?

6. When Stephen Crane published *The Red Badge of Courage* in 1895 he was only twenty-three and did not have first-hand war experience. And yet, the novel has become one of the most iconic works of fiction about the American Civil War. Walt Whitman, whose war experience was that of a journalist and of a hospital volunteer, extensively writes about the American Civil War. After it ended Whitman wrote the following text:

“And so good-bye to the war. I know not how it may have been, or may be, to others—to me the main interest I found, (and still, on recollection, find,) in the rank and file of the armies, both sides, and in those specimens amid the hospitals, and even the dead on the field. To me the points illustrating the latent personal character and eligibilities of these States, in the two or three millions of American young and middle-aged men, North and South, embodied in those armies—and especially the one-third or one-fourth of their number, stricken by wounds or disease at some time in the course of the contest—were of more significance even than the political interests involved. (As so much of a race depends on how it faces death, and how it stands personal anguish and sickness. [...])

Future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background of countless minor scenes and interiors, (not the official surface-courteousness of the Generals, not the few great battles) of the Secession war; and it is best they should not—the real war will never get in the books. In the mushy influences of current times, too, the fervid atmosphere and typical events of those years are in danger of being totally forgotten. I have at night watch'd by the side of a sick man in the hospital, one who could not live many hours. I have seen his eyes flash and burn as he raised himself and recurr'd to the cruelties on his surrender'd brother, and mutilations of the corpse afterward. [...] Such was the war. It was not a quadrille in a ball-room. Its interior history will not only never be written—its practicality, minutia; of deeds and passions, will never be even suggested. The actual soldier of 1862-'65, North and South, with all his ways, his incredible dauntlessness, habits, practices, tastes, language, his fierce friendship, his appetite, rankness, his superb strength and animality, lawless gait, and a hundred unnamed lights and shades of camp, I say, will never be written—perhaps must not and should not be.

The preceding notes may furnish a few stray glimpses into that life, and into those lurid interiors, never to be fully convey'd to the future. The hospital part of the drama from '61 to '65, deserves indeed to be recorded. Of that many-threaded drama, with its sudden and strange surprises, its confounding of prophecies, its moments of despair, the dread of foreign interference, the interminable campaigns, the bloody battles, the mighty and cumbrous and green armies, the drafts and bounties—the immense money expenditure, like a heavy-pouring constant rain—with, over the whole land, the last

three years of the struggle, an unending, universal mourning-wail of women, parents, orphans—the marrow of the tragedy concentrated in those Army Hospitals—(it seem'd sometimes as if the whole interest of the land, North and South, was one vast central hospital, and all the rest of the affair but flanges)—those forming the untold and unwritten history of the war—ininitely greater (like life's) than the few scraps and distortions that are ever told or written. Think how much, and of importance, will be—how much, civic and military, has already been—buried in the grave, in eternal darkness.” (Louis P. Masur, “Walt Whitman”, in “... *The Real War Will Never Get in the Books*”: *Selections from Writers During the Civil War*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 253-282.)

Why does Whitman argue that “the real war will never get in the books”? In which terms does he talk about the war? Which are some of his most salient memories of it? What can be expected of war fiction, then?

Bibliography

- Crane, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Gramm, Kent. *Somebody's Darling: Essays on the Civil War*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- Hilliard, John Northern. “Stephen Crane: Letters to a Friend about his Ambition, his Art and his Views of Life”, in *Stephen Crane*, ed. by Harold Bloom and Joyce Caldwell Smith. New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, Infobase Publishing, 2009, pp. 70-74.
- Levenson, J. C. “*The Red Badge of Courage* and *McTeague*: Passage to Modernity”, in *Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism*, ed. by Donald Pizer. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 154-177.
- Masur, Louis P. “Walt Whitman”, in “... *The Real War Will Never Get in the Books*”: *Selections from Writers During the Civil War*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 253-282.
- Rogers, Rodney O. “Stephen Crane and Impressionism”, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 24.3 (1969): 292-304.
- Wells, H. G. “Stephen Crane. From an English Standpoint”, *The North American Review*, 171.525 (1900): 233-242.

Day 20

American Realism - Pre-Modernism: Kate Chopin

Kate Chopin's short stories "The Story of an Hour" (1894) and "A Pair of Silk Stockings" (1897) are discussed with a focus on her use of symbolism, her portrayal of women, marriage and motherhood, and her narration of consciousness, which illustrates the passage to Modernism. Further connections are established with present-day scholarship on Chopin's work that approaches it from a feminist and psychoanalytical point of view (Madsen). In this regard, Chopin's work is connected with the principles underlying Margaret Fuller's *The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men. Woman versus Women* (1843). Finally, the fierce criticism that Chopin's novel *The Awakening* (1899) received, mostly for being considered immoral, is discussed through a selection of nineteenth-century reviews with which students are presented in class. These are selected from: "Awakening: Some 19th Century Responses" <http://www.people.virginia.edu/~sfr/enlt255/awcrit.html>

READINGS OF THE DAY

Kate Chopin (1850-1904), "The Story of an Hour" (1894), pp. 555-557 (*Volume C*); "A Pair of Silk Stockings" (1897).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. Read the following summarized account by Emily Toth of Kate Chopin's biography. In which ways might have Chopin's fiction drawn from her own life experiences?

"The facts of Kate O'Flaherty Chopin's life are well known. Although her tombstone lists her birthdate as 1851, her baptismal record shows that she was born on 8 February 1850, in St Louis, Missouri. She was the second child and first daughter of Eliza Faris O'Flaherty, twenty-two, whose husband was Thomas O'Flaherty, forty-five, an Irish immigrant and wealthy businessman who owned four household slaves. Kate had an older brother, an older half-brother and two little sisters who died young, which may be why, at five, she was sent to boarding school at the Sacred Heart Academy.

Two months later, her father was killed in a train accident, Kate was brought home, and her grandmother and great-grandmother moved in—making three generations of women who were widowed young and never remarried. Kate O'Flaherty grew up in a

matriarchy, where women handled their own money and made their own decisions, as did the nuns at the Sacred Heart Academy, where she returned two years later. She was sixteen before she ever lived with a married couple again (an aunt and uncle), and so she had little opportunity to form traditional notions about marriage and submissive wives. When she married Oscar Chopin on 9 June 1870, she started off on their European honeymoon with a clean slate and an open mind.

The Chopins settled in New Orleans, where Oscar was a cotton factor (the middle man between growers and buyers). Within nine years, Kate had given birth to six children, the last in Cloutierville ('Cloochoy-ville') in north Louisiana, where the family moved when Oscar's business failed. In that small village, Kate Chopin entertained and annoyed local people with her flamboyant fashions and brusque urban manners. Oscar was a local favourite, but when he died of malaria on 10 December 1882, \$12,000 in debt, Kate was left without his social protection. She paid off the debts, had a scandalous romance with a local married planter, Albert Sampite ('Sam-pi-TAY'), and quickly moved back to her mother's home in St Louis in 1884 - just a year before her mother died of cancer.

Her doctor, seeing her deep grief, suggested that she try writing, and, by 1890, Chopin had become St Louis' first woman professional writer. Eventually she published two novels (*At Fault* and *The Awakening*) and two collections of short stories (*Bayou Folk* and *A Night in Acadie*), while producing several dozen other pieces, including short stories, essays, poems, translations, one play and one polka.

The Awakening, though, received mixed to hostile reviews, at a time when Chopin's health was deteriorating. Within a few years, she also became the caregiver for her eldest son. His wife had died in childbirth, sending him into a nervous breakdown from which he never fully recovered. Chopin rallied to enjoy the St Louis World's Fair, but on one very hot day she had a cerebral haemorrhage and died on 22 August 1904."

Emily Toth, "What We Do and Don't Know About Kate Chopin's Life", in *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*, ed. by Janet Beer. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. pp. 13-26 (pp. 13-14).

2. What do the protagonists of the "The Story of an Hour" and "A Pair of Silk Stockings" seem to have in common? In which ways do they differ?

3. What is the significance of the titles of the two short stories? Would you say there is symbolism in them? If so, how does it work?

4. In "The Story of an Hour" the idea of freedom is articulated by the protagonist ("Free! Body and soul free!", p. 557). In which ways is freedom understood in this short story? Although there is no such line in "A Pair of Silk Stockings", would you argue

that freedom also plays a central role in the story? If so, would you consider such an absence of some significance?

5. Are there any similarities and differences in terms of the ways the two stories are narrated? How is the consciousness of the two protagonists narrated?

6. Would you say that “The Story of an Hour” and “A Pair of Silk Stockings” are critical of the society of Chopin’s time? What would their implicit/explicit criticism be?

Bibliography

Bauer, Dale M. *The Cambridge History of American Women’s Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening and Short Stories*. Newburyport: Open Road Media, 2014, pp. 330-340.

Fleischmann, Fritz. *Margaret Fuller’s Cultural Critique: Her Age and Legacy*. New York: Peter Lang, 2000.

Levine, Robert S. ed. “Margaret Fuller”, in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: 1820-1865 (Volume B)*. Ninth edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017. pp. 722-725; “The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men. Woman versus Women”, pp. 725-759.

Madsen, Deborah L. “Gender and Consciousness: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Kate Chopin”, in *Feminist Theory and Literary Practice*, London; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2000, pp. 94-121.

Shapiro, Ann R. *Unlikely Heroines: Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers and the Woman Question*. New York; London: Greenwood, 1987.

Toth, Emily. “What We Do and Don’t Know About Kate Chopin’s Life”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*, ed. by Janet Beer. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. pp.13-26.

Week 11

Day 21

American Modernism: Sherwood Anderson

Through a group discussion, two short stories by Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941) are examined in this session; first, “The Untold Lie”, from *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), which explores the dynamics of small town life in the Midwest at the beginning of the twentieth century, and then “Death in the Woods”, from *Death in the Woods and Other Stories* (1933). Students are particularly encouraged to reflect on the similarities and differences between both in terms of what these might reveal about, on the one hand, Anderson’s personal concerns and recurrent topics in his fiction, and, on the other, his style and idiosyncratic narrative techniques.

READINGS OF THE DAY

Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941), “The Untold Lie”, from *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), and “Death in the Woods” (1933).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. The original title of Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* was *A Book of Grotesques*. What is grotesque about these short stories, judging from “The Untold Lie”? What do you think changes by changing the title of the short story collection? Why?

2. Anderson had an eventful life, marked by a life-changing nervous breakdown in 1912 that led him to become the author that he was. The renowned literary critic Irving Howe aptly summarizes that episode of Anderson’s biography thus:

“Sherwood Anderson was born in Ohio in 1876. His childhood and youth in Clyde, a town with perhaps three thousand souls, were scarred by bouts of poverty, but he also knew some of the pleasures of pre-industrial American society. The country was then experiencing what he would later call ‘a sudden and almost universal turning of men from the old handicrafts towards our modern life of machines.’ There were still people in Clyde who remembered the frontier, and like America itself, the town lived by a mixture of diluted Calvinism and a strong belief in ‘progress,’ Young Sherwood, known

as ‘Jobby’—the boy always ready to work—showed the kind of entrepreneurial spirit that Clyde respected: folks expected him to become a ‘go-getter,’ and for a time he did. Moving to Chicago in his early twenties, he worked in an advertising agency where he proved adept at turning out copy. ‘I create nothing, I boost, I boost,’ he said about himself, even as, on the side, he was trying to write short stories. In 1904 Anderson married and three years later moved to Elyria, a town forty miles west of Cleveland, where he established a firm that sold paint. ‘I was going to be a rich man.... Next year a bigger house; and after that, presumably, a country estate.’ [...] Something drove him to write, perhaps one of those shapeless hungers—a need for self-expression? a wish to find a more authentic kind of experience?—that would become a recurrent motif in his fiction. And then, in 1912, occurred the great turning point in Anderson’s life. Plainly put, he suffered a nervous breakdown, though in his memoirs he would elevate this into a moment of liberation in which he abandoned the sterility of commerce and turned to the rewards of literature. [...] At the age of 36, he left behind his business and moved to Chicago, becoming one of the rebellious writers and cultural bohemians in the group that has since come to be called the ‘Chicago Renaissance.’ [...] It was in the freedom of the city, in its readiness to put up with deviant styles of life, that Anderson found the strength to settle accounts with—but also to release his affection for—the world of small-town America. The dream of an unconditional personal freedom, that hazy American version of utopia, would remain central throughout Anderson’s life and work. *It was an inspiration; it was a delusion.*”

Irving Howe, “Introduction”, *Winesburg, Ohio*. New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2014, pp. 5-15 (pp. 7-8).

What does Howe mean by his last sentence: ‘It was an inspiration; it was a delusion’? What is he referring to?

3. According to James M. Mellard, “*Winesburg* has four rather distinct narrative forms: a form (1) that focuses on a central symbol, (2) that portrays a character type, (3) that delineates a quality, state, or ‘truth,’ and (4) that depicts a simple plot development. [...] These four narrative types may be conveniently and descriptively labeled symbolic, emblematic, and thematic stories and stories of incident” (“Narrative Forms in *Winesburg, Ohio*”, 1968, p. 1304). To which would you argue “The Untold Lie” pertains? Why?

4. Do you find any thematic similarities between Anderson’s “The Untold Lie” and Chopin’s work? Which ones? Why? Are these shared topics approached in the same manner, including in terms of style and narrative form?

5. “Death in the Woods”, considered by many critics the best short story by Anderson, is sometimes described as a plotless short story. Would you agree? Why? Which kind of role does the narrator play in it? Why is he so relevant?

6. Howe explains the profound impact that Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* had on him when he read it as a young man:

“I must have been no more than fifteen or sixteen years old when I first chanced upon *Winesburg, Ohio*. Gripped by these stories and sketches of Sherwood Anderson’s small-town ‘grotesques,’ I felt that he was opening for me new depths of experience, touching upon half-buried truths which nothing in my young life had prepared me for. A New York City boy who never saw the crops grow or spent time in the small towns that lay sprinkled across America, I found myself overwhelmed by the scenes of wasted life, wasted love—*was this the “real” America?*—that Anderson sketched in *Winesburg*.” (*Ibid.* p. 5).

What does Howe’s question ‘was this the “real” America?’ suggest about the reception of Anderson’s work and about ideas of nationhood?

Bibliography

Anderson, Sherwood. “Death in the Woods”, in *Collected Stories*. New York, N.Y.: Literary Classics of the United States, 2012.

Anderson, Sherwood. *Winesburg, Ohio*. New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2014. “The Untold Lie”, pp. 203-210.

Baym, Nina and Robert S. Levine, eds. “Sherwood Anderson”, in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: 1914-1945 (Volume D)*. Eighth edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012, pp. 263-264.

Colquitt, Clare “The Reader as Voyeur: Complicitous Transformations in *Death in the Woods*”, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 32.2 (1986): 175-190.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. “Sherwood Anderson on the Marriage Question”, in *F. Scott Fitzgerald on Authorship*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Judith S. Baughman. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996, pp. 83-85.

Howe, Irving. "Introduction", *Winesburg, Ohio*. New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2014, pp. 5-15.

Mellard, James M. "Narrative Forms in *Winesburg, Ohio*", *PMLA*, 83. 5 (1968): 1304-1312.

Phillips, William L. "How Sherwood Anderson Wrote *Winesburg, Ohio*", *American Literature*, 23.1 (1951): 7-30.

Robinson, Eleanor M. "How Is A Story Mode?: A Study of *Death in the Woods*", *CEA Critic*, 30.4 (1968): 6.

Day 22

American Modernism: Gertrude Stein

Screening of the documentary *Paris was a Woman. A History of Female Artists in Paris* (1996), directed by Greta Schiller (Running time: 75 mins.). The official description of the contents of the documentary is available at:

<https://zeitgeistfilms.com/film/pariswasawoman>

“A film portrait of the creative community of women writers, artists, photographers and editors (including Colette, Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas) who flocked to the Left Bank of Paris in the early decades of the 20th century. Utilizing groundbreaking research and newly discovered home movies, *Paris Was a Woman* re-creates the mood and flavor of this female artistic community in Paris during its most magical era.”

The screening of the documentary is followed by a group discussion about it and about the extract from Gertrude Stein’s *The Making of Americans* (1925). Stein’s ideas about writing and form, and her Modernist techniques of narration, are brought to the fore in the discussion of extracts from *How to Write* (1931) to examine further the tenets of Modernism.

READINGS OF THE DAY

Gertrude Stein, from *The Making of Americans*, pp. 200-203 (*Volume D*).

Screening of the documentary...

Paris was a Woman. A History of Female Artists in Paris (1996)

Director: Greta Schiller

Writer: Andrea Weiss

Running time: 75 mins.

Awards: Winner of the Siegfried Award at the Berlin International Film Festival.

Questions to be discussed in class

1. Who are the women artists that the documentary focuses on? Why did they go to Paris and what did they do there? What was the case of Gertrude Stein?

2. According to the documentary, some of them developed an ex-pat culture. What does that mean?
3. What did the Paris between the wars mean for the generation of young artists who lived there? And specifically for female artists? Why?
4. What does the introductory chapter of *The Making of Americans* explore? How would you describe its language and style? Which are some of its most remarkable narrative strategies?

Bibliography

- Benstock, Shari. *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.
- Chadwick, Whitney and Tirza True Latimer. *The Modern Woman Revisited: Paris between the Wars*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003.
- Mettinger, Elke. *Rive Gauche Paris as a Site of Avant-Garde Art and Cultural Exchange in the 1920s*. Amsterdam; New York, N.Y.: Rodopi, 2010.
- Stein, Gertrude. *How to Write*. New York: Dover, 1975.
- Walker, Jayne L. *The Making of a Modernist: Gertrude Stein from Three Lives to Tender Buttons*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984.
- Will, Barbara. *Gertrude Stein, Modernism and the Problem of 'Genius'*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.

Week 12

Day 23

American Modernism: Zelda Fitzgerald

Through a group discussion of Zelda Fitzgerald's short story "A Millionaire's Girl" (1930), first published in the *Saturday Evening Post* under Scott Fitzgerald's name apparently by decision of his literary agent, the so-called 'Roaring Twenties' or 'Jazz Age' is introduced through the Fitzgeralds and their tumultuous relationship. Extracts from essays by Francis Scott Fitzgerald ("Echoes of the Jazz Age", 1931) and Zelda Fitzgerald ("Eulogy on the Flapper", 1922, and "What Became of the Flappers?", 1925) are discussed in class. Zelda Fitzgerald's novel *Save Me the Waltz* (1932), and the autobiographical material included in it, are also commented on.

READINGS OF THE DAY

Zelda Fitzgerald, "What Became of the Flappers?" (1925), "A Millionaire's Girl" (1930).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. Judging from "What Became of the Flappers?", how would you describe the so-called 'Roaring Twenties' or 'Jazz Age'? What was a 'flapper'?
2. Which would you say are Zelda Fitzgerald's views of the lifestyle of the 'Roaring Twenties'? Why?
3. How is the title of the short story "A Millionaire's Girl" revealing of some of the themes discussed in it?
4. How would you describe the main characters of "A Millionaire's Girl"? How are the female characters portrayed in the short story?
5. Who is the narrator of "A Millionaire's Girl"? How does that kind of narrator affect the way the story is read?

6. Would you say “A Millionaire’s Girl” displays features proper to Modernism? If so, which ones?

Bibliography

Felber, Lynette. “Zelda Fitzgerald’s *Save Me the Waltz*- Household Plagiarism and Other Crimes of the Heart”, in *Literary Liaisons: Auto/Biographical Appropriations in Modernist Women’s Fiction*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002, pp. 88-119.

Fitzgerald, Zelda. “Eulogy on the Flapper”, “What Became of the Flappers?”, and “A Millionaire’s Girl”, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. by Matthew Joseph Bruccoli. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997, pp. 391-394, 397-400, and 327-336.

Grogan, Christine. “Authorship and Artistry: Zelda Fitzgerald’s ‘A Millionaire’s Girl’ and ‘Miss Ella’”, *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 13.1 (2015): 110-129.

Oja, Carol J. *Modernism and the “Jazz Age”*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Prigozy, Ruth. “Introduction: Scott, Zelda, and the Culture of Celebrity”, in *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Ruth Prigozy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 1-27.

Wood, Mary E. “A Wizard Cultivator: Zelda Fitzgerald’s *Save Me the Waltz* as Asylum Autobiography”, *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 11.2 (1992): 247-264.

Wood, Mary Elene. *The Writing on the Wall: Women’s Autobiography and the Asylum*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Day 24

American Modernism: Francis Scott Fitzgerald

This session focuses on Francis Scott Fitzgerald's short story "Winter Dreams" (1922), here discussed in connection with the idea of the American dream as well as with Fitzgerald's understanding of its flawed principles and the disillusionment it entailed, a constant in many of his writings (Bewley, Burhams, Kimberly). Students are in addition presented in class with the section "Twice-Told Tales" from Fitzgerald's *One Hundred False Starts* (1933), where he not only provides an account of his views on writing, but also affirms that authors are condemned to repetitions of the same story over and over again with somewhat relevant variations at best.

READINGS OF THE DAY

Francis Scott Fitzgerald, "Winter Dreams" (1922), pp. 659-675 (*Volume D*).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. Francis Scott Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams" (1922) has often been described as a first draft of his novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925). In 1924 Fitzgerald would write his short story "The Rich Boy", where he talked about the "very rich", a social class that intrigued him:

"Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me. They possess and enjoy early, and it does something to them, makes them soft where we are hard, and cynical where we are trustful, in a way that, unless you were born rich, it is very difficult to understand. They think, deep in their hearts, that they are better than we are because we had to discover the compensations and refuges of life for ourselves. Even when they enter deep into our world or sink below us, they still think that they are better than we are. They are different. The only way I can describe young Anson Hunter is to approach him as if he were a foreigner and cling stubbornly to my point of view. If I accept his for a moment I am lost—I have nothing to show but a preposterous movie.

[...]

Anson's first sense of his superiority came to him when he realized the half-grudging American deference that was paid to him in the Connecticut village. The parents of the boys he played with always inquired after his father and mother, and were vaguely

excited when their own children were asked to the Hunters' house. He accepted this as the natural state of things, and a sort of impatience with all groups of which he was not the center—in money, in position, in authority—remained with him for the rest of his life. He disdained to struggle with other boys for precedence—he expected it to be given him freely, and when it wasn't he withdrew into his family. His family was sufficient, for in the East money is still a somewhat feudal thing, a clan-forming thing. In the snobbish West, money separates families to form 'sets'."

In which ways is "Winter Dreams" concerned with the "very rich"? How does the short story portray them?

2. What is the effect of "glittering things" upon the character of Dexter Green? What are these "glittering things" exactly?

3. Why is the description of Judy Jones at age eleven relevant? How does it work in terms of characterization and how does it advance what occurs later on in the story?

4. At the end of the story Dexter is highly affected not only by Devlin's account of Judy's life, but also by the way her appearance is described. What does his reaction suggest? Why is he so shocked by Devlin's words?

5. What do the characters of Dexter and Judy Jones say about the so-called American Dream?

6. What do you think the title of the short story suggests? Why would Fitzgerald name this short story precisely "Winter Dreams"?

Bibliography

Berman, Ronald. "American Dreams and 'Winter Dreams': Fitzgerald and Freudian Psychology in the 1920s", *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 4 (2005): 49-64.

Bewley, Marius. "Scott Fitzgerald's Criticism of America", *The Sewanee Review*, 62.2 (1954): 223-246.

Burhams, Clinton S. "'Magnificently Attune to Life': the Value of 'Winter Dreams'", *Studies in Short Fiction*, 6.4 (1969): 401-412.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. "The Rich Boy", in *All the Sad Young Men*, ed. by James L. W. West. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. "One Hundred False Starts", in *The Complete Short Stories and Essays*, Vol. II. New York: Scribner, 2004, pp. 825-836.

Kimberly, Hearne. "Fitzgerald's Rendering of a Dream", *The Explicator*, 68.3 (2010): 189-194.

Mangum, Bryant. "The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald", in *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Ruth Prigozy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 57-78.

Week 13

Day 25

American Modernism: William Faulkner

This session opens with the screening of the short film “William Faulkner on his native soil in Oxford, Mississippi” (1952) (Running time: 14 minutes), funded by the Ford Foundation and broadcast December 28, 1952 on the CBS television program Omnibus.

The short film is now available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1tQ-wt-eas>

Synopsis:

“In November of 1952, the normally reclusive Faulkner allowed a film crew into his secluded world at Oxford (Mississippi) to make a short documentary about his life. [...] The scripted film re-enacts events from November 1950, when Faulkner received the Nobel Prize in Literature, through the spring of 1951, when he spoke at his daughter Jill’s high school graduation. There are scenes of Faulkner at Rowan Oak, his antebellum house on the edge of Oxford, and at Greenfield Farm, 17 miles away, where he is shown driving a tractor and talking with workers. Faulkner is also shown briefly with his wife, Estelle, and with several prominent Oxford residents, including druggist Mac Reed, Oxford Eagle editor Phil Mullen, who collaborated with the filmmakers on the script, and lawyer Phil Stone, who was an early literary mentor and champion of Faulkner.”

The screening of the short film is followed by a group discussion on it and on the representation of Faulkner (who plays himself) and the town where he lived. Questions on how to represent the community are brought to the fore particularly with regard to Faulkner’s saga on Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, and of the South overall (Aiken). These questions also receive special attention in the ensuing group discussion of Faulkner’s short story “A Rose for Emily” (1930).

READINGS OF THE DAY

William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily” (1930), pp. 794-800 (*Volume D*).

Questions to be discussed in class

1. Who is the narrator of the story? Who do the “we” and the “us” refer to? What do “they” think about Emily? How would you describe the ties between the town and Emily and her family?
2. How is the narration structured time-wise? Are there any flashbacks? Any flash-forwards? What is the effect of such management of time?
3. In *Notes on Mississippi Writers*, Frank A. Littler affirms that “A Rose for Emily” can be read as “a tragedy with Emily as a sort of tragic heroine”. Would you agree with his view? Why / Why not?
4. Other critics have argued that Emily is both a victim of “restrictive gender and social roles” and the villain of the story. Would you agree with such a statement? Why / Why not?
5. Many critics have focused on Faulkner’s representation of the American South in his fiction and on elements of the so-called Southern Gothic, “a genre that arises from the area’s often violent and traumatic history”, as Susan Castillo Street and Charles L. Crow have put it (“Introduction: Down at the Crossroads”, 2016, p. 1). The Gothic elements and the pervading sense of mystery are indeed found in short stories such as “A Rose for Emily”. Which would you say are the Gothic elements of the story? Do you find any similarities between it and, for example, Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher”?
6. Ann J. Abadie (*Faulkner and Mystery: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha*, 2014, p. 17) explains that “Faulkner famously claimed that he was not much interested in sociological or historical truths but in the process of telling about them. Asked in 1962 what his objective is in writing and whether he is ‘trying to portray the South ... as essentially an area of depravity and poverty,’ he answered: ‘I am a story-teller. I am telling a story, introducing comic and tragic elements as I like. I’m telling a story to be repeated and retold. I don’t claim to be truthful.’ Faulkner insists that what his work reveals about the South (and what knowledge or truth is conveyed) is never mimetic—never simply reflective of an environment—but always narratively crafted and reordered in the telling”. In this regard, Abadie concludes that “mystery in Faulkner’s fiction emerges in the act of storytelling; it arises from narrative contingencies and reversals”. Would you agree with this statement? Why / why not?

Bibliography

- Abadie, Ann J. "Introduction", in *Faulkner and Mystery: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2014, pp. 8-17.
- Aiken, Charles S. "Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County: A Place in the American South", *Geographical Review*, 69.3 (1979): 331-348.
- Aiken, Charles S. "Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County: Geographical Fact into Fiction", *Geographical Review*, 67.1 (1977): 1-21.
- Castillo Street, Susan and Charles L. Crow. "Introduction: Down at the Crossroads", in *The Palgrave Handbook of the Southern Gothic*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 1-6.
- Nebeker, Helen E. "Emily's Rose of Love: Thematic Implications of Point of View in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'", *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association*, 24. 1 (1970): 3-13.
- Perry, Menakhem. "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates Its Meanings [With an Analysis of Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily']", *Poetics Today*, 1.1/2, (1979): 35-64, 311-361.
- Watkins, Floyd C. "The Structure of 'A Rose for Emily'", *Modern Language Notes*, 69.7 (1954): 508-510.

Day 26

American Modernism: William Faulkner (continued)

This session opens with a group discussion of the selected questions from the Q&A at the *Faulkner at Virginia* audio: on 13 April 1957, as part of a course on American Fiction, William Faulkner gave a lecture at the University of Virginia, where he was Writer-in-Residence for two terms (1957-1958). The full lecture was recorded and is now available at the *Faulkner at Virginia Audio Archive*: https://faulkner.lib.virginia.edu/display/wfaudio06_1 (Running time: 33 mins).

From the Q&A session, students are to consider seven questions on Faulkner's thoughts about writing, characterization, and his own oeuvre in general. This precedes an analysis of Faulkner's explanation of his thoughts on fiction writing as he expressed them in a 1956 interview by Jean Stein published under the title "William Faulkner, The Art of Fiction" (*The Paris Review*, Issue 12, Spring 1956), of which students are presented with extracts in class. A group discussion on Faulkner's short story "Barn Burning" (1939) ensues (Moreland, O'Donnell). Finally, the short film adaptation of "Barn Burning", directed by Peter Werner and starring Tommy Lee Jones as Ab Snopes and Diane Kagan as the Mother, is screened: *Barn Burning* (1980) (Running time: 38 mins.). Its similarities and differences with the short story, mostly in terms of the portrayal of characters and their psychologies, and concerning the management of the chronology of events and the effects of all these on the reception of the short film and the short story, are discussed. The idea is to underline Faulkner's narration techniques and their impact on readers, and the difference that changes at this level make in the reception of the same story on the part of audiences/readerships.

READINGS OF THE DAY

William Faulkner, "Barn Burning" (1939), pp.800-812 (*Volume D*).

AND

Faulkner at Virginia Audio Archive:

On 13 April 1957, as part of a course on American Fiction, William Faulkner gave a lecture at the University of Virginia, where he was Writer-in-Residence during two terms (1957-1958). The whole lecture was recorded and is available at the *Faulkner at Virginia Audio Archive*: http://faulkner.lib.virginia.edu/display/wfaudio06_1 (Running time: 33 mins). From the Q&A session, specifically consider the following questions on his thoughts about writing, characterization, and his own oeuvre as a whole:

1) “Unidentified participant: Sir, I have often wondered through what process the author actually goes when he writes a book. Could you briefly outline what process you go through? [*audience laughter*]

William Faulkner: Now, I know I can't. I'm—I'm lazy. I hate to—the mechanics of putting the words down on paper, and I do as much of it as possible in my head. I will—that is, putting it down on paper is the last resort. I've got to get it out of my system, and so I don't know what system I might use mentally to get the—the facts in order, to—to bring the—the mass of material into the—the—the form according to the rules of—of unity and emphasis. I—I just don't know. Some people work from notes. They—they make notes and then correlate the notes and then edit and then write and then do a—a draft. I don't do that. I try my best not to have to change anything because I'm lazy, I think, that I don't like to work.”

2) “Unidentified participant: How many times do you rewrite the [...] [hundreds of] drafts?

William Faulkner: Sometimes the first one is all right. Sometimes I will do three or four or five until it comes right, but I will try my best not to do it but once because I hate to work. [*audience laughter*]

3) “William Faulkner: Yes, ma'am.

Unidentified participant: In another class, you stated that you seldom have the plot of your novels worked about before you begin to write, but that they simply develop from a—from a character or an incident. I was wondering if you remember what character or what incident caused you to write *Absalom, Absalom!*?

William Faulkner: Sutpen.

Unidentified participant: You thought about the character —

William Faulkner: Yes, the—the idea of a man who—who wanted sons and got sons who destroyed him. The—the other characters I had to get out of the attic to tell the story of Sutpen.”

4) “William Faulkner: Yes, sir.

Unidentified participant: Mr. Faulkner, do you ever consciously base your—any of your characters, either major characters or minor characters, on people you find in every-day life. For example, during your time spent in Charlottesville, could you possibly incorporate someone who lived here into one of your major books, as a conscious exercise?

William Faulkner: I will very likely do it, but not as a conscious exercise. The writer is completely amoral. He—he will use experience. He will rob from other writers. He will take from life, but he is—is trying to create a character of his own, and so very likely in time, I will—will need someone I have seen in Charlottesville, Virginia, and will without any compunction use him. [*audience laughter*]”

[...]

5) “William Faulkner: Yes, ma’am.

Unidentified participant: How do you pronounce the name of your mythical county?

William Faulkner: If you break it down into syllables, it’s simple. Y-o-k, n-a, p-a, t-a-w, p-h-a, YOK-na-pa-TAW-pha. It’s a Chickasaw Indian word, meaning water runs slow through flat land. [*audience laughter*]”

6) “William Faulkner: Yes, ma’am.

Unidentified participant: Did you expect to write a [any more] poetry? And if so, are there any particular subjects you’d [like to see in your poetry]?

William Faulkner: I’m a failed poet. I consider myself a failed poet. I’ve tried to be a poet, and I couldn’t be a good one, and so I did the next best thing which I could do, but I’m still a—a failed poet, but what I write is—is, in my opinion, poetry.”

7) “William Faulkner: Yes, sir.

Unidentified participant: Mr. Faulkner, what do you consider your best book?

William Faulkner: The one that—that failed the most tragically and the most splendidly. That was *The Sound and the Fury*—the one I worked at the longest, the hardest, that was to me the—the most passionate and moving idea, and made the most splendid failure. That’s the one that’s my—I consider the best, not—well, best is the wrong

word—that's the one that I love the most.”

Questions to be discussed in class

1. Who are the Snopes family? How are they described?
2. From which point of view is the short story told? Who is the narrator? How does that affect the telling of the story?
3. In which ways is the American Civil War present in the short story?
4. Which is the symbolic significance of fire in the short story? How does fire work as an element towards the characterization of Ab Snopes?
5. Do you find any similarities between “A Rose for Emily” and “Barn Burning” from the point of view of both content and form? If so, which ones?
6. Which kind of information does Faulkner provide about his own views on writing and about his own creative and writing process in this interview conducted at the University of Virginia?

Bibliography

- Hamblin, Robert W. and Charles A. Peek. *A William Faulkner Encyclopedia*. Westport, Conn.; London: Greenwood Press, 1999.
- Moreland, Richard C. “Faulkner and Modernism”, in *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner*, ed. by Philip M. Weinstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 17-30.
- Moreland, Richard C. *Faulkner and Modernism: Rereading and Rewriting*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- O'Donnell, Patrick. “Faulkner and Postmodernism”, in *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner*, ed. by Philip M. Weinstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 31-50.
- Skei, Hans H. *Reading Faulkner's Best Short Stories*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.
- Stein, Jean. “William Faulkner, The Art of Fiction”. *The Paris Review*, Issue 12, Spring 1956: <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4954/william-faulkner-the-art-of-fiction-no-12-william-faulkner>

Week 14

Day 27

Feedback and discussion: Essay 2

Day 28

Final revision and mock exam

MOCK EXAM QUESTIONS

1. Faulkner referred to “A Rose for Emily” as a ‘ghost story’, but other critics have described it in different ways. Frank A. Littler, in *Notes on Mississippi Writers* (1981), states that “A Rose for Emily” has been ‘read variously as a Gothic horror tale, a study in abnormal psychology, an allegory of the relations between North and South, a meditation on the nature of time, and a tragedy with Emily as a sort of tragic heroine’. Explain why all these different readings are, in fact, possible.

2. In which ways is the character of Judy Jones in “Winter Dreams” a constituent part of the narrative on dreams that runs throughout the short story?

3. Identify (title of work, name of author) the following extract and discuss it in connection with the major themes that the piece explores. Is this a recurrent theme in its author’s production? Can it be read in connection with other works examined in class? If so, with which one/s? Why?

“Ray ran clumsily and once he stumbled and fell down. ‘I must catch Hal and tell him,’ he kept thinking, and although his breath came in gasps he kept running harder and harder. As he ran he thought of things that hadn’t come into his mind for years—how at the time he married he had planned to go west to his uncle in Portland, Oregon—how he hadn’t wanted to be a farm hand, but had thought when he got out West he would go to

sea and be a sailor or get a job on a ranch and ride a horse into Western towns, shouting and laughing and waking the people in the houses with his wild cries. Then as he ran he remembered his children and in fancy felt their hands clutching at him. All of his thoughts of himself were involved with the thoughts of Hal and he thought the children were clutching at the younger man also. 'They are the accidents of life, Hal,' he cried. 'They are not mine or yours. I had nothing to do with them'."

Day-by-day syllabus

Introduction to the literature of the United States of America. A course in 28 sessions

65

WEEK 1	Day 1	<p>General introduction to the course: Class structure, readings, assignments, assessment</p>
	Day 2	<p>Early American literature Readings of the day: Mary Rowlandson, from <i>A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson</i> (1682)</p>
WEEK 2	Day 3	<p>American Romanticism: Washington Irving Readings of the day: Washington Irving, “The Author’s Account of Himself” (1819), “Rip Van Winkle” (1819)</p>
	Day 4	<p>American Romanticism: Edgar Allan Poe Readings of the day: Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839), “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843), and “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846)</p>
WEEK 3	Day 5	<p>American Romanticism –Transcendentalism: Ralph Waldo Emerson Readings of the day: Ralph Waldo Emerson, from <i>Nature</i> (1836), Introduction and Chapters I to IV; extracts from “Self-Reliance” (1841)</p>

	Day 6	Introduction session to essay writing
WEEK 4	Day 7	American Romanticism: Nathaniel Hawthorne Readings of the day: Nathaniel Hawthorne, <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> (1850); sections I (“The Prison-Door”) to XII (“The Minister’s Vigil”)
	Day 8	American Romanticism: Nathaniel Hawthorne (continued) Readings of the day: Nathaniel Hawthorne, <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> ; sections XIII (“Another View of Hester”) to XXIV (“Conclusion”)
WEEK 5	Day 9	Training session for Essay 1
	Day 10	American Romanticism: Herman Melville Reading of the day: Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street” (1853)
WEEK 6	Day 11	American Romanticism –Transcendentalism: Louisa May Alcott Reading of the day: Louisa May Alcott, “Transcendental Wild Oats: A Chapter from an Unwritten Romance” (1873)
	Day 12	American Civil War literature: Louisa May Alcott Reading of the day: Louisa May Alcott, “My Contraband” (1863)
WEEK 7	Day 13	American Realism: Mark Twain <i>[Deadline: Essay 1]</i> Screening of documentary: <i>Mark Twain: A Film</i> (2002), directed by Ken Burns Readings of the day: Mark Twain, selected extracts from <i>Autobiography</i> (complete and authoritative ed., 2010)
	Day 14	American Realism: Mark Twain

		Readings of the day: Mark Twain, “The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” (1865)
WEEK 8	Day 15	American Realism: Mark Twain (continued) Readings of the day: Mark Twain, from <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> (1884): Explanatory, Chapters I, II, V, VII, VIII, XV, and XXIII (only p. 226).
	Day 16	Feedback and discussion: Essay 1
WEEK 9	Day 17	Training session for Essay 2
	Day 18	American Naturalism and Impressionism: Stephen Crane Readings of the day: Henry James, “The Art of Fiction” (1884) (extract); Frank Norris, “Zola as a Romantic Writer” (1896) and “A Plea for Romantic Fiction” (1901); Theodore Dreiser, “True Art Speaks Plainly” (1903). Stephen Crane, “The Open Boat” (1897)
WEEK 10	Day 19	American Naturalism and Impressionism: Stephen Crane (continued) Readings of the day: John Northern Hilliard, “Stephen Crane: Letters to a Friend about his Ambition, his Art and his Views of Life” (1900). Stephen Crane, <i>The Red Badge of Courage</i> (1895), Chapters 7 to 9.
	Day 20	American Realism - Pre-modernism: Kate Chopin Readings of the day: Kate Chopin, “The Story of an Hour” (1894), “A Pair of Silk Stockings” (1897)
WEEK 11	Day 21	American Modernism: Sherwood Anderson Readings of the day: Sherwood Anderson, “The Untold Lie”, from <i>Winesburg, Ohio</i> (1919), and “Death in the Woods”

		(1933)
	Day 22	American Modernism: Gertrude Stein <i>[Deadline: Essay 2]</i> Screening of documentary: <i>Paris was a Woman. A History of Female Artists in Paris</i> (1996), directed by Greta Schiller Reading of the day: from Gertrude Stein, “The Making of Americans” (completed in 1908, published in 1925)
WEEK 12	Day 23	American Modernism: Zelda Fitzgerald Reading of the day: Zelda Fitzgerald, “A Millionaire’s Girl” (1930)
	Day 24	American Modernism: Francis Scott Fitzgerald Reading of the day: Francis Scott Fitzgerald, “Winter Dreams” (1922)
WEEK 13	Day 25	American Modernism: William Faulkner Reading of the day: William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily” (1930)
	Day 26	American Modernism: William Faulkner (continued) Reading of the day: William Faulkner, “Barn Burning” (1939)
WEEK 14	Day 27	Feedback and discussion: Essay 2
	Day 28	Final revision for exam