

The Modernist Party as Pedagogy

Kate McLoughlin
Birkbeck, University of London

*“The Modernist Party” is a 30-minute simulation exercise devised by the author, in which undergraduate English students role-play modernist figures at an imaginary party held in London in 1922. The simulation takes place in the first seminar of a 22-week course on English literary modernism and is preceded by a general discussion about the nature of parties and a more specialized discussion about the functioning of parties in certain modernist texts: James Joyce’s “The Dead” (1914), Katherine Mansfield’s “The Garden Party” (1922), and Virginia Woolf’s *To The Lighthouse* (1927). The exercise offers the general pedagogical advantages associated with simulation (a type of role-play). It also provides topic-specific benefits: making modernist ideas more accessible to students; offering insights into specific modernist preoccupations and practices (the idea of space / place, the concept of the everyday, and the phenomenon of networking); and providing an experiential model of learning that resonates with modernist texts.*

Keywords: modernism / parties / pedagogy / role-playing / experiential learning

Notoriously and often deliberately difficult, modernist literature may baffle, alienate, and even bore students, yet it includes some enormously important and intellectually rewarding writers and works, from T.S. Eliot to Djuna Barnes, from *Ulysses* to *Pilgrimage*, to give a random sampling. How, then, might a university teacher begin to convey some of the sheer intellectual excitement that pervades modernist texts and ideas? What might constitute a tempting, even enjoyable, way in to profitable study? “The Modernist Party” is an innovative pedagogical exercise that I have designed for introducing university students to the study of modernist literature. I have engaged in three iterations of the exercise to date. It comprises a 30-minute simulation which takes place in the first seminar of a 22-week course on English literary modernism for third- and fourth-year undergraduates at Birkbeck, University of London, UK, and which I previously offered in the first seminar of a 10-week course in twentieth-century British Literature at the University of Glasgow, UK. The task of the first seminar in both courses is to introduce undergraduates to the study of modernist texts. While developing this pedagogical format, I have assembled and edited a volume of critical essays on parties in modernist literature, *The Modernist Party* (Edinburgh UP, 2013). This has both informed and benefited from my teaching.

Why Party?

Parties proliferate in modernist literature, though the emotions that transpire there are rarely simple, happy ones. In *To The Lighthouse* (1927), Mrs. Ramsay drowns in anguish at the dinner-party she gives for her house-party guests. Death comes to Mrs. Dalloway’s dinner-party (*Mrs Dalloway*, 1925), to Katherine Mansfield’s “The Garden Party” (1922), and to the evening-party in Nella Larsen’s *Passing* (1929). Irish politics and old memories sour the party in “The Dead” in Joyce’s *Dubliners* (1914). Cruelties, awkwardnesses, and embarrassments are served up at Mme Verdurin’s soirées in Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1871-1922). For Eliot’s Prufrock, preparing to go to a tea party exacerbates self-doubt and loneliness (“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” 1910-11). Extraordinary qualities are required to manage the deteriorating situation at the breakfast-party in Ford Madox Ford’s *Some Do Not...* (1924). The party thrown by Jay Gatsby underscores the brittleness and fragility of the character’s self-construction (*The Great Gatsby*, 1925). These experiences—anguish, conflict, loneliness—are recognizable modernist affects, given context and pretext by the party scenario.

In his 1932 poem “The Garden Party,” Hilaire Belloc sums up the tensions of the modern party: “the hoary social curse” now “stinks a trifle worse / Than in the days of Queen Victoria” (7). Reflecting the social hierarchy in the arrangement of the stanzas, the poem observes that “The Rich arrived in pairs / And also in Rolls Royces”, while “The Poor arrived in Fords / Whose features they resembled” and “The People in Between / Looked underdone and harassed / And out of place and mean, / And horribly embarrassed” (7). Parties, as these lines make clear, are indices of class, leisure, taste, and wealth. In formal terms, parties can bring characters together and separate them. They can be devices for dramatizing difficulties of communication, extreme feeling, issues of identity, sexual tension, and social mores. The party is therefore amenable to a wide variety of critical approaches: thematic, historicist, socio-economic, formalist, and structuralist, among others. Scholars have made some in-roads into studying some of these aspects of partying; Jane Goldman on the party-dress, Ruth Prigozy on the guest-list, and Christopher Ames on the festive vision are examples.

The prevalence of parties in modernist literature is itself justification for devoting class time to the phenomenon. Indeed, Adam Churchill and Suzanne McKible explicitly voice the need for “a ‘great party’ model [of modernism] that duly recognizes the era’s sense of urgency, mechanization, and conflict but also addresses modernism’s spirit of creativity, conviviality, and playfulness” (13). But “The Modernist Party” simulation offers far more pedagogical advantages than simply as a route through the modernist canon.

The Simulation

The first course in which I used “The Modernist Party” simulation was a period survey course; my current course is a longer, more specialized module on modernism. Both courses are taken by students who do not have extensive experience with modernist literature; indeed, some may be completely unfamiliar with the period. “The Modernist Party” circumvents unfamiliarity by drawing on an experience that no student lacks: party-going. The first hour of the 90-minute seminar prepares those participating (who number from 15 to 25) for the simulation. We begin by discussing students’ experiences of going to parties, posing the following questions, among others: What kinds of parties are there? What are these different parties for? How do we feel at the prospect of going to or giving a party? At a party, how do we feel and behave? Does the actual experience ever match our expectations? Does the experience of the host tend to be different from that of the guest and, if so, how? Do we present a different self at parties, and, if so, what kind of self? What is the role of alcohol and other stimulants? How do we feel when the party is over? The aim of the discussion is to help students think about how and why we socialize; how we structure and narrate an event like a party (the special character of before, during, and after); how parties inspire anticipation, disappointment, engagement, embarrassment, alienation, nervousness, camaraderie, abandon, and loneliness; the role of creativity in party-going and party-giving; the concept of the public sphere and the phenomenon of networking; and the significance of class, gender, leisure, and wealth in the context of a party.

After this generalized discussion of parties, we move on as a class to discuss parties in specific modernist texts: the Misses Morkans’ dinner-dance in James Joyce’s “The Dead”; the garden-party in Katherine Mansfield’s short story of the same name; and Mrs. Ramsay’s dinner-party in Virginia Woolf’s *To The Lighthouse*. Our discussion centers on how these parties function in these texts. What emotions and values are contained in them? What political and ideological significance do they have? What do they reveal about gender roles, sexuality, individuality, and conflict? The aim of this second discussion is to assess the importance of parties, stylistically and thematically, to these writers and, by extension, to other modernist writers.

Thus prepared, the students are ready for the simulation. About a week before the seminar, students have been asked to research a modernist writer, artist, dancer, sculptor, philosopher, impresario, musician, or other creative figure of their own choice whom they will impersonate. I model the simulation before we begin by answering questions as Ernest Hemingway. (One student asked me why I’d given *A Farewell to Arms* such a gloomy ending.) In character, we circulate in the classroom, introducing

ourselves and making conversation, pretending to be at a party taking place in London in 1922. The students are encouraged to ask each other about their characters' works, lives, views and opinions, and future plans. So "T.S. Eliot" might take issue with "Ezra Pound's" amendments of "The Waste Land." "Gertrude Stein" might talk about how Cubism works in paint and words with "Pablo Picasso." "Sylvia Beach" might discuss the forthcoming publication of *Ulysses* with "James Joyce." I emphasize that it is also important to make small talk, inquiring after the health of fellow-guests', remarking on the weather, asking after families. In the most recent iteration of the exercise, I added to the verisimilitude by dimming the classroom lights, playing-jazz songs from the 1920s, and providing soft drinks. Conversation was lively and sustained.

After the simulation, we debrief. I ask the students how the experience felt and received a range of responses (described and discussed in further detail below): fascinating, awkward, embarrassing, fun, challenging. Notably, all of these constitute a *felt insight* into modernist experience.

What is gained from the exercise? Harold Guetzkow has defined simulation as "an operating representation of central features of reality" (25). Originally developed for use as a technique in psychotherapy, role-playing has been utilized in education since the 1940s, particularly flourishing in the 1970s (Stroessner *et al.* 605). At its base is the notion that "action begets learning" (Alkin and Christie 209). More specifically, as Steven J. Stroessner *et al.* argue, role-based simulations "promote classroom interaction and motivation", produce "a more internal locus of control and sense of mastery" (as opposed to top-down teaching), "allow discovery of the strengths, weaknesses, and consequences of certain behaviors or attitudes," and "provide a means for exploring divergent points of view" (605). It has further been suggested that role-based simulations might "increase empathy and altruism, perspective taking, and moral reasoning" and "enhance cognitive skills such as pattern recognition, decision making, creative thinking, and problem solving" (Stroessner *et al.* 605). Role-playing also reconfigures the group dynamic, facilitates peer learning, and allows students to appropriate the classroom space. And it's fun.

There are some potential pitfalls to the use of simulation in the (university) classroom. As Henry Ellington of the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, UK, points out, these may include organizational problems, difficulty in securing the participants' cooperation, the temptation to use the exercise as a "time-filler," and the possible inappropriateness of the activity to the target cohort. In my experience, the first of these drawbacks is negligible: the teacher must clearly structure the exercise and give students sufficient time to research their modernist figures and read the set texts. Re-arrangement of the classroom can be done with the students during class time. Refreshments need only be minimal, if used at all. I have not, after three iterations, experienced any uncooperative students. "Inappropriateness" to the target group might include the charge that role-playing is too juvenile an activity for university students. But there is no evidence that students find the simulation boring or foolish. On the contrary, role-playing a party seems to resonate strongly with the undergraduate groups I have worked with. If cultural or ethnic differences or issues of disability cause certain students to view the party as an alien or unwelcome concept, those individuals can be encouraged to air their concerns during the initial discussion about party-going. This may well lead to further insights into the nature of modernist socializing.

The Benefits

"The Modernist Party" simulation produces a number of positive effects. It improves the accessibility of modernist studies; offers insights into specific modernist interests and practices, such as the idea of space/place, the concept of the everyday, and the phenomenon of networking; and provides a model of learning based on experience that is peculiarly appropriate to modernist affects. In what follows I address each of these benefits in turn.

(i) Improving the Accessibility of Modernist Studies

In the most basic pedagogical terms, "The Modernist Party" requires students to become familiar with their chosen figure to the extent that they are able to role-play them with their peers. One student-participant remarked, "I found the seminar to be very helpful as an introduction to some of the people

associated with modernism. It was interesting to consider them and their work in the light of modernist feeling” (SE 2008-9). The choice of the word “introduction” is notable because the participants had experienced a number of literal introductions during the simulation. Interacting with peers role-playing other modernist figures is a particularly vivid means of learning: students remember conversations in a way that they might not remember details from reading biographies. They are also encouraged to think through their chosen figure’s oeuvre, techniques, and ideas, in order to be able to explain and even defend them. The simulation therefore functions as a kind of problem-based learning task: as another student noted, “I had to read around the subject to choose an individual and then had to research them more” (SE 2012-13 A). Approaching modernist figures as fellow-guests at a party humanizes them, and after the preparation for and the performance of the role-play, students are likely to feel a special connection to their modernist figure for the rest of the course. The exercise can launch them into further research. Writing on the use of images in literature pedagogy, Mehdi el Mouden has noted that “[i]t is taken for granted that the medium in the study and teaching of literature is the text” (8). Though this claim might be overstated, the primacy of the text is difficult to argue with. “The Modernist Party” circumvents this primacy but does so in the interest of rendering modernist texts less forbidding.

After the “party”, the classroom, too, becomes a less forbidding place, since the role-played party functions as a social event and icebreaker in itself, creating *esprit de corps*. This is an especially welcome development at Birkbeck, where many students live at some distance from the campus and are therefore often isolated from each other outside the classroom. One Birkbeck student described “The Modernist Party” as “a very relaxing, amusing, and productive way to start this academic year after the long summer break” (SE 2012-13 B), suggesting that the exercise also constitutes a useful buffer to absorb student anxieties about start-of-year return to study and is therefore a significant factor in student retention. Above all, the students’ post-party comments reflect a feeling that modernist literature might not be so “difficult” after all. An impression of modernist playfulness has been acquired first-hand, and, as a result, the students’ interest has been sharpened in the figures they have “encountered.”

(ii) Specific Modernist Interests and Practices

The claims made for “The Modernist Party” might be countered by the charge that the exercise lacks specificity to modernist studies. How, it might be asked, does a party in a modernist text differ from a party in any other text? Is a ball in a novel by Jane Austen conceptually distinct from a dinner-party in a novel by Virginia Woolf? In response, it may be pointed out that parties resonate with three major preoccupations in modernist studies: the idea of space/place, the concept of the everyday, and the phenomenon of networking. The simulation is a means of allowing students to engage with these preoccupations and practices in a highly practical way. Let me address the three preoccupations above in turn. I found it helpful to discuss these points with students after the exercise.

Space/place: The shift in scholarly attention in modernist studies from time and history to space and geography is well established (Jaffe, 866). In a 1998 article, Sara Blair described the principal insight of the then “new cultural geography” as “the articulation of space as a social product, one that masks the conditions of its own formation” (544). Blair noted that the “historicist mode” of cultural geography focuses on spaces that have functioned as “areas for the enactment of social relations”: prisons, theaters, villages, auto plants, colonies, homelands (546-7). In a similar vein, scholars of modernism have profitably posed the question “*Where was Modernism?*” (Brooker and Thacker 3). The answers given are, notably, physical locations (albeit textually constructed): specific cities and countries, arcades, metro-systems, teashops, coastal resorts.¹ But, as Brooker and Thacker point out, the work of cultural geographers such as Kevin Lynch, Henri Lefebvre, and Edward Soja requires attention to be re-directed to the *cognitive* nature of space/place. Parties occur in actual physical locations, but they are allochthonous, having no inherent or lasting connection with their locales. As such, they foster an

¹ See Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, *Geographies of Modernism* (2005), Peter Kalliney, *Cities of Affluence and Anger* (2007), Eric Bulson, *Novels, Maps, Modernity* (2007), David L. Pike, *Metropolis on the Styx* (2007), and Lara Feigel and Alexandra Harris, *Modernism on Sea* (2009).

understanding of space/place that is peripatetic, event-driven, and impermanent. Understanding the role of parties in modernist literature, therefore, both partakes in and extends the familiar spatial turn.

What connection does this have with “The Modernist Party” simulation in the classroom? In a truncated time-period (30 minutes), students are brought to reflect on qualities of spatial experience that might seem obvious but are usually unexamined. The contingency of place, for example, is dramatized when a classroom suddenly becomes a party venue; the social adjustments required by different uses of space are revealed when behavior at the “party” gradually becomes less formal than when they are sitting at their desks; and in general students come to recognize the impermanence of the relationship between event and locale. The exercise leads naturally into discussion of chronotopes, heterotopes, and heterochronies (Bakhtin 84; Foucault 24, 26).

The Everyday: The idea of modernism as an aesthetics of intensity goes back to Walter Pater. Yet recent scholarship has emphasized modernist authors’ imaginative engagement with the everyday.² The party gave the writer a unique opportunity to exploit the tensions between these two propensities: parties are special occasions, interruptions in daily routine, but are also events at which quotidian trivialities are swapped in the form of small talk and banalities loom large. The sheer prevalence of parties in the modernist period also offers a model of the out-of-the-ordinary becoming routine. In his memoir *South Lodge* (1943), Douglas Goldring describes joining Mary Butts and Cecil Maitland one evening for a dinner at the Chicago Inn, Paris, given by Senator Cyrus Q. Wilkins of Virginia. After dinner, the group proceeds to the Cabaret de la Révolution and then to the Bal du Printemps where they meet Ford Madox Ford, Duff Twyden, Ernest Hemingway, and Robert McAlmon. They then move on to the Boeuf sur le Tôt (encountering the Princess Murat, Tommy Earp, Raymond Radiguet, Yvonne Georges, and Jean Cocteau), thence to the Crillon to drop off Wilkins, and finally end up in Pirali’s bar (154). In this account, the party assumes a longitudinal shape, both extraordinary and habitual. Problematising both the everyday and the extraordinary, and involving a range of participants in different roles, parties provide a new perspective on both work and leisure.

“The Modernist Party” simulation provides a firsthand experience of these phenomena. For most of the seminar, the students are in familiar mode, albeit with the added intensity of it being the first class of the semester. They are anticipating further weekly sessions; they are seasoned veterans of at least two years of undergraduate study. They know what is expected of them, and they have their own set expectations. “The Modernist Party” disrupts all that. As the students’ comments reveal, role-playing is a new challenge. They have read the class instructions but they are not quite sure what their teacher means by simulating a party; they might not even believe that a party will take place. The classroom, now darkened, with music playing and soft drinks being offered, has become a different place. There is a noticeable change of mood: a sense of anticipation. When the simulation begins, they are obliged to think on their feet, answering questions in the guise of their chosen figure. There is laughter and, after a self-conscious start, noisy conversation. Life has intensified.

At the same time, the simulation can also make the students aware of the role of the banal in socializing. As mentioned, they are encouraged to make small talk, as well as discussing their works and ideas. The 30 minutes allowed for the exercise gives enough time for several encounters, so opening conversational gambits can be repeated (as occurs at real-life parties). Quotidian discourses permeate the occasion, allowing students to notice the fragile relationship between the extraordinary and the everyday.

Networking: An important set of scholarly works explores the role of networking in the creation of literary movements.³ These works have discussed the creative collaborations that have arisen in ephemeral publications, urban meeting-places, teashops, cafés, and workplaces. As an incubator of creativity the party is unparalleled. Parties were key events in the public intellectual culture of the modernist period, even when they were occasions of dissonance and disagreement. Amy Lowell’s

² For example, Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (2007), Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, *The Ecstatic Quotidian* (2007), Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (2009), and Michael Sayeau, *Against the Event: The Everyday and Evolution of Modernist Narrative* (2013).

“Imagist” party, held on 17 July 1914 in London and attended by Ezra Pound, Ford Madox Ford, H.D., Richard Aldington, and others, led to a famous vituperative argument over the nature of Imagism. “The silver on the table glittered, / And the red wine in the glasses / Seemed the blood I had wasted / In a foolish cause,” wrote Lowell later in “The Dinner Party” (338). On 18 May 1922, Sidney and Violet Schiff brought together at a post-ballet party at the Hôtel Majestic in Paris Proust, Joyce, Picasso, Stravinsky, and Diaghilev: a unique meeting of leading modernists. Edith Sitwell threw a large party for Gertrude Stein on 1 June 1926, inviting Woolf, E.M. Forster, Siegfried Sassoon, Tom Driberg, Dorothy Todd (editor of *Vogue*), and Arnold Bennett. “A good deal of misery was endured,” Woolf reported to her sister, Vanessa Bell, “this resolute old lady [Stein] inflicted great damage on all the youth” (Woolf, *Change* 269). But Woolf would find the party to be a useful metaphor for the creative process, particularly the female creative process, as is evident in Mrs Dalloway’s reaction when her party is criticized: “but what had he said? [...] Her parties! That was it! Her parties! Both of them criticised her very unfairly, laughed at her very unjustly, for her parties” (*Mrs Dalloway* 91). Both social forum and literary device, the party uniquely—perhaps particularly when the occasion is one of discord and discomfort—fostered modernist creativity.

“The Modernist Party” simulation gives students the opportunity both to participate in and to reflect upon the phenomenon of networking. Discussing their character’s works, aims, and techniques with fellow-“guests” allows them to see that creation is a collaborative process, as their own understanding is enhanced by others’. They get a first-hand sense of how ideas are transferred and developed. The potential for disagreement and conflict also demonstrates that creative networking is not necessarily a harmonious process, but may thrive on opposition and argument.

(iii) Learning from Experience

Though the majority of responses from participants in “The Modernist Party” simulation have been positive, some students have complained of “performance anxiety”. One student commented that she was “not looking forward” to the role-playing exercise, but that once it started she grew “more relaxed” (SE 2012-13 C). Another remarked that the mock party was “a great way of making someone understand how they might feel at a party.” This student “loved” the exercise because it made her feel “nervous, anxious, and cowardly” but that it was nonetheless “enjoyable”. Noting that these were “common” feelings in modernist experience, she volunteered that the simulation was an effective way of learning “because you are not simply reading or hearing something but experiencing it” (SE 2012-13 D).

This student’s anticipatory feelings of nervousness, anxiety, and cowardice are noteworthy. As a teacher, I would hope in general to minimize class anxiety; but in this particular exercise, I am not sure that it should be eliminated, since to experience social and performance anxiety is to experience feelings that modernist writers were at pains to convey. A student might read the following lines in Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”:

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, “Do I dare?” and, “Do I dare?”
Time to turn back and descend the stair [...] (lines 37-9)

—but it is another thing actually to experience self-doubt and apprehension when in the persona of a modernist figure (perhaps Eliot himself) and to be able to reflect on those feelings in a classroom context. Experiential learning, of which simulation is just one variety, has been characterized as involving “‘the whole person’, through thoughts, feelings and physical activity” (Beard and Wilson 2). In consequence, it is an “effective and long-lasting form of learning” (Beard and Wilson 1), of use in “management education, corporate training, youth development work, higher education, and schools” (Beard and Wilson 1-2). But “The Modernist Party” simulation is *particularly* useful as a pedagogical tool in modernist studies because it is so topic-appropriate. It conveys feelings and ideas central to modernist

thinking. For students, the exercise provides an instant overview of concepts that will be explored further in texts read during the course.

But beyond this, the fact that “The Modernist Party” is an experiential form of learning offers an opportunity for further epistemological reflection. If experience replaced dogmatic revelation, textual authority, and deductive reason as the “foundation of knowledge” in the Enlightenment philosophies of British Empiricism and Continental Idealism (Jay 43), by the modernist period it was attenuated, fragmented into experiences, unamenable to being shared (Ferguson 36). Or, as Robert Musil puts it in *The Man without Qualities*, “There’s something the matter with people. It seems they’re unable to take in their experiences or else to wholly enter into them, so they have to pass along what’s left” (453). In the words of Rex Ferguson, modernist writers required “a new method that [was] cognizant of what is missing in experience” (45):

³ For example, Faith Binckes, *Magazines, Modernism and the British Avant-Garde* (2005), Suzanne W. Churchill and Adam McKible, *Little Magazines and Modernism* (2007), Peter Brooker, *Bohemia in London* (2007), Scott McCracken, *Masculinities, Modernist Fiction and the Urban Public Sphere* (2007), and Catherine Clay, *British Women Writers 1914-1945: Professional Work and Friendship* (2007).

Works Cited

- Alkin, Marvin C., and Christina A. Christie. “The use of role-play in teaching evaluation.” *American Journal of Evaluation* 23.2 (Summer 2002): 209–218. Print.
- Ames, Christopher. *The Life of the Party: Festive Vision in Modern Fiction*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1991. Print.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. and trans. Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981. Print.
- Beard, Colin, and John Peter Wilson. *The Power of Experiential Learning: A Handbook for Educators and Trainers*. Philadelphia: Kogan Page, 2002. Print.
- Bell, Clive. *Old Friends*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1956. Print.
- . *Proust*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1928. Print.
- Belloc, Hilaire. *Ladies and Gentlemen; For Adults Only and Mature At That; Verses*. London: Duckworth, 1932. Print.
- Binckes, Faith. *Magazines, Modernism and the British Avant-Garde: Reading Rhythm, 1910-1914*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.
- Blair, Sara. “Cultural Geography and the Place of the Literary.” *American Literary History* 10.3 (Autumn 1998): 544-567. Print.
- Brooker, Peter. *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene of Early Modernism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Print.
- , and Andrew Thacker. “Introduction: Locating the Modern.” *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*. Eds. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker. London: Routledge, 2005. 1-5. Print.
- Budgen, Frank. *Further Recollections of James Joyce*. London: Shenval Press, 1955. Print.
- Bulson, Eric. *Novels, Maps, Modernity: The Spatial Imagination, 1850-2000*. London: Routledge, 2007. Print.
- Churchill, Suzanne, and McKible, Adam. “Introduction.” *Little Magazines and Modernism: New Approaches*. Eds. Suzanne Churchill and Adam McKible. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. 1-18. Print.
- Clay, Catherine. *British Women Writers 1914-1945: Professional Work and Friendship*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. Print.
- Davenport-Hines, Richard. *A Night at the Majestic: Proust and the Great Modernist Dinner Party of 1922*. London: Faber and Faber, 2006. Print.
- Eliot, T.S. “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” *The Complete Poems and Plays*. London: Faber and Faber, 1969. 13-17. Print.
- El Mouden, Mehdi. *The Uses of Images in the Study and Teaching of Literature*. Munich: Grin Verlag, 2011. Print.
- Ellington, Henry. “Using Games, Simulations, Case Studies and Role-Play to stimulate students’ creativity.” *Higher Education Academy Imaginative Curriculum Guide*. Web. 16 Apr. 2013. <<http://78.158.56.101/archive/palatine/files/1011.pdf>>.

Modernist authors are not truth-tellers, but in recognizing an exhaustion and chaos in such truth, and in accepting the lack that is inherent in all experience, they produce a far more accurate picture of modern consciousness. (45)

Students participating in “The Modernist Party” might ponder the epistemological status of what they have experienced, the interaction between individual and communal experiences, and the communicability of such experiences. As Max Weber noted:

Reflective knowledge, even of one’s own experience, is nowhere and never a literally “repeated experience” or a simple “photograph” of what was experienced; the “experience”, when it is made

-
- Feigel, Lara and Alexandra Harris, eds. *Modernism on Sea: Art and Culture at the British Seaside*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009. Print.
- Ferguson, Rex. *Criminal Law and the Modernist Novel: Experience on Trial*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. “Of Other Spaces.” *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986): 22-7. Print.
- Goldman, Jane. ““Miss Lonelyhearts and the Party Dress’: Cross-Dressing and Collage in the Satires of Nathanael West.” *Glasgow Review* 2 (1993): 40-54. Print.
- Goldring, Douglas. *South Lodge. Reminiscences of Violet Hunt, Ford Madox Ford and the English Review Circle*. London: Constable, 1943. Print.
- Gosetti-Ferencei, Jennifer Anna. *The Ecstatic Quotidian: Phenomenological Sightings in Modern Art and Literature*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State UP, 2007. Print.
- Guetzkow, Harold. *Simulation in International Relations*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963. Print.
- Jaffe, Aaron. “Modern Literature: General.” *The Year’s Work in English Studies* 88 (2009): 867-78. Print.
- Jay, Martin. *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2006. Print.
- Kalliney, Peter. *Cities of Affluence and Anger: A Literary Geography of Modern Englishness*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2007. Print.
- Lowell, Amy. *Men, Women and Ghosts*. New York: Macmillan, 1916. Print.
- McCracken, Scott. *Masculinities, Modernist Fiction and the Urban Public Sphere*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007. Print.
- McLoughlin, Kate, ed. *The Modernist Party*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2013. Print.
- . “Introduction: A Welcome from the Host.” McLoughlin, *Modernist Party* 1-24.
- Musil, Robert. *The Man Without Qualities*. Trans Sophie Wilkins. London: Picador, 1997. Print.
- Olson, Liesl. *Modernism and the Ordinary*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.
- Pike, David L. *Metropolis on the Styx: The Underworlds of Modern Urban Culture, 1800-2001*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007. Print.
- Prigozy, Ruth. “Gatsby’s Guest List and Fitzgerald’s Technique of Naming.” *Fitzgerald / Hemingway Annual* (1972): 99-112. Print.
- Randall, Bryony. *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.
- Sayeau, Michael. *Against the Event: The Everyday and Evolution of Modernist Narrative*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013. Print.
- Southworth, Helen. “Introduction.” *Leonard and Virginia Woolf, The Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism*. Ed. Helen Southworth. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010: 1-26. Print.
- Stroessner, Steven J., Laurie Susser, and Alexis Whittaker. “All the world’s a stage? Consequences of a role-playing pedagogy on psychological factors and writing and rhetorical skill in college undergraduates.” *Journal of Educational Psychology* 101.3 (Aug. 2009): 605-620. Print.
- Student Evaluation, 2008-9. University of Glasgow. Ms. (SE 2008-9)
- Student Evaluation. 2012-13. Birkbeck, University of London. Ms. (SE 2012-13)
- Weber, Max. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Eds. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch. New York: The Free Press, 1949. Print.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Change of Perspective: The Letters of Virginia Woolf. Volume III: 1923-1928*. Ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. London: The Hogarth Press, 1977. Print.
- . *Mrs Dalloway*. Ed. Morris Beja. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996. Print.

into an “object” acquires perspectives and interrelationships which were not “known” in the experience itself. (178)

For participants, the process of reflecting upon the exercise may, accordingly, become a process of meta-reflection on the nature of “experiencing,” “knowing,” and “learning.”

Conclusion: Party On?

“The Modernist Party” has both general and topic-specific usefulness as a pedagogical format. Role-playing promotes peer learning, productively alters classroom dynamics, and confers all the advantages of problem-based learning. The specific party simulation improves access to modernist texts and modernist thinking and, in particular, provides insight into interests and practices central to modernist creativity. Most crucially, it constitutes an experiential model of learning that is peculiarly appropriate to modernist affects such as self-consciousness, alienation, loneliness, and self-doubt, and which further offers a focus for thinking about the validity and availability of experience as the basis of knowledge in the period.

I should emphasize that “The Modernist Party” is work-in-progress. One point that certainly requires further thought is the optimal scheduling of the exercise in the arc of the course. Why place the simulation at the beginning of the course when students are unfamiliar with each other and with modernist texts and contexts? Why not hold it midway through the semester or at the end? The advantages of opening the course with the simulation exercise are several: it eases re-entry to learning after a vacation break and functions as a social ice-breaker for the cohort; indeed, the awkwardness it produces in students serves as an introduction to the awkwardness so often evoked in modernist texts. Perhaps more importantly, it dispels in advance popular conceptions of modernist texts as irredeemably difficult. That said, there might be reason to repeat the exercise, either midway through the semester, at the end, or both. At these points, the students will be more immersed in modernist ways of thinking and expression and might gain more from enacting specifically modernist modes of socializing. Further, less inhibited iterations of “The Modernist Party” might elicit more flamboyant, riskier performances, which would likely stimulate greater creative thought and expression. One thinks of Ezra Pound leading Ford Madox Ford’s guests from South Lodge to “invade” the tennis courts over the road in “the oddest costumes” (Goldring 47). Where, one wonders, might students more instructed in the ways of modernism lead the class?

Notes