

MOD.LIT.

REVIEW OF MODERN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH



Gatsby's library – pinterest.com

Writer of the Month

We are delighted to introduce you the writer of the month for the June issue:

Mina Matović – Mina comes from the city of Valjevo. Since high school she demonstrated interest in foreign languages and different cultures. In 2013 she graduated in Italian language and literature from the Faculty of Philology at the university of Belgrade. Shortly after that she applied for and graduated in Masters studies at the same university. Always searching for new experiences and wanting to improve her language skills, today Mina is at the fourth year of English language and literature studies at Alfa BK University in Belgrade and has been teaching Italian and English language in a primary school.

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to those people without whom it would not have been possible to complete the issue. Graphic editing: Nina Milekić and Stefan Arsić; technical editing: Marija Ilić, Dubravka Bokonjić, Danijela Stojković, Najwa Ibrahim, Ana Mačak, Mina Matović, Miloš Stojanović, Milica Ivanović and our communication team: Nataša Anđelić, Katarina Đukić and Anđela Šiljak.

Into the American Society

Nina Milekić

The main aim of this issue is to present to you some of the works our students have done during the classes of American Literature of the 20th century. Together with our incredible professors we were able to continue our studies in spite of the COVID-19 outbreak and have an amazing online semester full of lively discussions and creative homework. What is even more interesting is the fact that these terrible times enabled more of the students to be present at the classes, give their insights, participate and be a part of our little literature community.

This issue contains only a small part of the works on which the students have worked in the past couple of months. We would like to express a deep gratitude to our professors: Maja Ćuk and Branka Kovačević that struggled and devoted their time in order that everything flows normally.

American literature attempts to represent experience of a world in crisis where urbanization, the rise of monopoly and state capitalism, political movements, mass culture, and the pressure of all these economic, political, and cultural forces on gender, class, and national identity engender an overwhelming sense of self-fragmentation and loss of agency.

I hope you enjoy reading this magazine.

Nina Milekić

IN THIS ISSUE

EZRA POUND

DRAMA

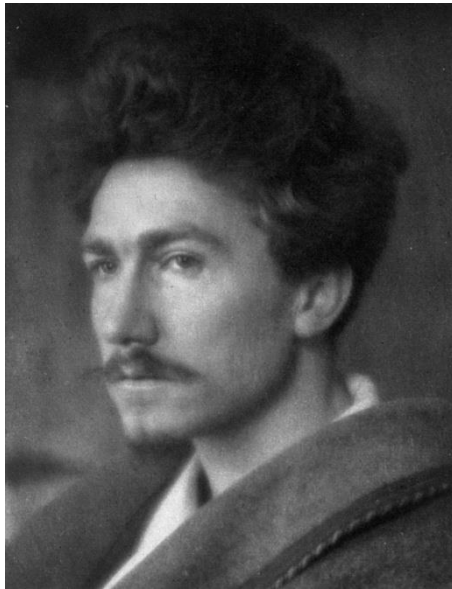
POP CULTURE

AFRICAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

Dubravka Bokonjič

The Glass Menagerie was written by Mr. Williams, set in St. Louis in 1937 and labelled as a “memory” play. The person who narrates its memories is Tom Wingfield, an aspiring poet trapped in a warehouse. He lives with his possessive mother, Amanda, and awfully shy sister, Laura. The gist of the story consists of Amanda’s attempts to find a suitable gentleman caller for her daughter. Amanda is a southern belle who cannot let go of the past. She lives in a world of her own, reminiscing about the scores of suitors from her youth, and behaving silly, almost on the point of being flirtatious at the dinner with Laura’s prospective husband Jack. On the other hand, Laura is both physically and mentally crippled. Her defect makes her withdraw from public life, even at the expense of her education. Her only companions are glass figurines, whose fragility reflect that of her spirit. During the play she is compared to a blue rose and a unicorn: a rarity, to which qualities her mother seems to be oblivious. It seems that the translucent colour of the objects seem to allow the mother and brother to fill them with any colour they wish, forcing Laura to back down and resign herself to being a spinster, which can be observed in the scene when Jack inadvertently breaks the figure of a unicorn, and Laura offers him to take it as a token of appreciation. Tom, on the other hand, is torn between his loyalty to his sister and a desire to break free, which in the end, he succeeds in. However, his breakaway is never complete, as his departure left an indelible scar on his loved ones’ lives.



Ezra Pound – wikipedia.com



Jeb Burris (left) as Jim O'Connor and Sara J. Griffin as Laura Wingfield in the Utah Shakespeare Festival's 2011 production of *The Glass Menagerie*.

Photo by Karl Hugh. / Copyright Utah Shakespeare Festival 2011

EZRA POUND'S NEW PERSPECTIVE ON LITERATURE

Marija Ilić

When it comes to poetry and poets who contributed the most to this literary direction, the reaction is more than clear: **Ezra Pound**'s name has always been mentioned. The American writer, critic and literature enthusiast born in Idaho in 1885, revolutionized not only the way people saw poetry and literature as a whole, but also the art of writing in it of itself. To put it simply, the world of literature would be drastically different had it not been for Ezra's meddling. A man with a self-proclaimed goal of 'knowing more about poetry than any other man living', Ezra embarked on his quest starting in London, where he stayed for twelve years (from 1908 until 1920). He couldn't yet make up for a lack of substance in his writing. So, he created three crucial rules as a way to help his friends and himself. Firstly, Pound insisted on direct treatment of the theme or main idea the writer was to write about, thus he is to be concise. Secondly, one is not to use even a word which can disrupt the presentation of his work. In this sense, Pound is trying to lead the writer down the right path, without pesky wrong turns. Finally, Pound was a fan of rejecting traditional and conventional metrical forms in favour of more intricate ones, as well as rejecting frilly descriptions for spoken language as such. Ezra Pound was so in love with literature, in fact, that he actively promoted all of his friends and fellow writers. To say that Ezra left an incredible imprint on history of literature would be an understatement. Even though he did not have as many admirers and fans during his lifetime, we are more than making up for it currently.

“The Innocents”

There were numerous adaptations of the famous Henry James's book 'The turn of the screw' and we will focus on the Jack Clayton's *The Innocents* film adaptation from 1961. *The Innocents* is the story about the Governess who, taking care of the two children, comes to fear that the whole property is hunted by ghosts. This movie, starring Deborah Kerr, Megs Jenkins, Pamela Franklin and Martin Stephens, undoubtedly remained one of the most successful screen interpretations and we will further discuss differences between the movie scenes and the book plot. In general, the dialogues from the book remained trustworthy. The film doesn't have a narrator, whereas in the book Douglas reads the manuscript, written by the governess time ago. One of the differences, shown in the film, is the protagonist's name Miss Giddens, whereas she remained known simply as the Governess in the novella. The children were given much more conversational space in the movie. It can be seen too that the characters of the children were made more evil on the screen. It becomes evident that, in confrontation with Mrs. Grose, the director Jack Clayton wanted to emphasize the mental problems of the Governess, her unstable mind, whereas in the book she seems to be on the side of the Governess until the final scene with Miles. Eventually, we can conclude the director wanted to attract and maintain the spectator's attention, letting one decide whether the ghosts really existed. *The Innocents* received international distribution from the studio 20th Century Fox and had its premiere during the 1961. The brilliant screenplay adapted by Truman Capote and William Achibald, directed and produced by Jack Clayton made *The Innocents* become the world wide masterpiece. This interesting psychological horror stimulated later film versions of the same novel, making the book famous even today.

Mina Matović



The Innocents (1961) – ifie.ie

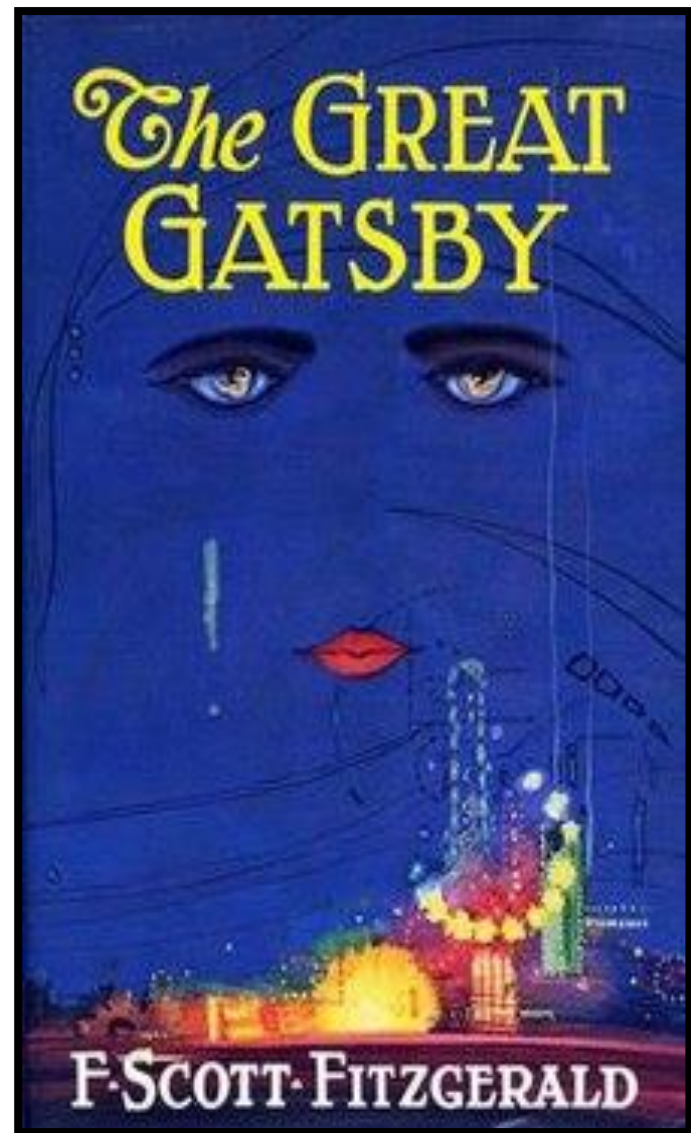
Alternative ending of “The Great Gatsby”

We turn the next page only to find this.
20 years later...

Daisy is sitting close to the bedroom window with a glass of whiskey in her hand. She takes one sip and continues starrng at the beautiful scenery in front of her home. She is wearing a white night gown and has white pearls around her neck. Her hands are trembling a bit as if she were nervous. She starts reminiscing about the past and all the things she had encountered in life, well mostly all the people, well not all, just one – Jay Gatsby, love of her life. Now she is all alone in this big house. The only company she has is the one of the servants. Tom is off somewhere with another mistress. How many he had only God knows. Daisy had stopped counting, she knew that even if she tries to stop him, he will just find a new one and so on. Her daughter, Pammy, ran away and got married, leaving the family home once and for all. She rarely comes to visit and even when she does, she shows repugnance towards the family home and her parents. Daisy gets up and takes one green book from the shelf. She opens it and finds a letter in it. A letter Gatsby wrote to her before leaving for the army. She puts the letter on her chest while tears start shedding form her face. 'We will be together soon' – she utters. We see two pills in her left hand and how she washes them with the remaining whiskey. She gets up. Her yellow gown touches her tender knees. House Buchanan was awfully quiet this Tuesday morning. Everyone was doing their usual chores. The butler climbed up to see if Mrs. Daisy wanted the cook to make her favorite specialty today. He knocks three times and finally enters the room. Daisy is on the ground, the letter is on her chest. 'She finally did it' – the butler murmured.

Nina Milekić

Cover of the novel “The Great Gatsby”
- Wikipedia.com



“The Sound and the Fury”

I feel so tired. I must have been walking for miles. Oh, I just remembered that stupid pompous jerk, Herbert. Who does he think he is to cajole Caddy like that with his mellifluous indecencies? They must all have thought me a fool. I still remember that day and her muddy drawers. To think that I wanted to slit her beautiful, slender, pale neck, makes me sick to the stomach. Sometimes I think she was just using me. I was her infallible fool, who would receive only morsels of love after all those male pigs had pumped her up. When I pleaded with her not to marry that jerk, she just replied: “Take care of Benjy.” But, who’s going to take care of me? Who’s going to help this bloody idiot now? Certainly, it won’t be my father, the most “respected” head of the family that Mississippi has ever seen. The only love he has ever professed was for his booze. That old fool once told me that women are worthless. He didn’t even wanna save his own daughter. Instead, he let her get impregnated with semen of any idiot that had set his foot in the town. For him, virginity was a negative state. You only knew it once you’d lost it. That was probably too much drinking that messed up his mind. If only I could drown this shadow of mine. Suffocate it, just like life has suffocated me and drained any trace of blood, any sign that would scream: “I am a living being, too!” But, there’s no remedy for fools like me. If only I could dive into this vast emptiness, into this rippled darkness. Maybe then I could find a light at the end of the tunnel. For Caddy and me.

Dubravka Bokonjić

“Buried” – Patricia Smith

Patricia Smith, the poet, is one of the most famous recent African-American poets. The setting of this poem is New Orleans; the time is the year of 2005. It revolves around the period of Hurricane Katrina, which was the deadliest US natural catastrophe in recent memory.

The type of the poem is narrative as it describes in detail the burying of the dead during this tragic period.

The subject of the poem is the toll of Katrina, and how there were no grave-diggers, but the family members of the victims had to bury their loved ones themselves. The poem criticizes this decision from the government while also emphasizing just how horrible the living conditions of the survivors were, and how painful it was to bury their dead during the hot summer months.

The poem is told mostly in first person; the narrator’s gender is probably male. He mourns for his loved one, and he is strongly critical of this entire situation.

The poem begins with a rather dark, depressing tone as the narrator struggles to bury his deceased loved one, but there is a change that happens toward the end of the poem. He is still struggling and sweating hard, but he is certain that he needs to finish the job by reminding himself of the deceased person in question. It’s a horrible job, but that it must be done is the message of the poem.

The mood is very depressing, invoking the feelings of dread, sadness and regret.

The poem uses onomatopoeia in two places, where the words plunge, push, lift and toss are repeated twice. They contribute strongly to the overall atmosphere of dreadful and harsh work.

David Lazović



Patricia Smith – poetryfoundation.com

African American Literature

African American literature is a wealth of literature that attracted the attention of a group of scholars, specialists, academics and others. In addition, African American literature is an honest and influential translation of the suffering of the black people and tribes amongst the white community. The first Africans who were forcibly brought to America tasted the bitterness of racism, humiliation, and slavery, they were also deprived of the most basic human rights, and their suffering continued with the arrogance and hatred of the white people until the end of the twentieth century, even if the society of the white later abolished slavery and fought human trafficking, and gave the black community some of their human rights. However, the reality of the situation in America and Europe still witnesses the inferior treatment of blacks and racism by a hidden party, even if some blacks reach important sovereign positions in the white community.

One of the most important personalities of African American literature is James Baldwin, an American novelist, playwright, essayist, writer, poet, and activist. James Baldwin was able to draw attention through his fictional works to the suffering of blacks in addition to his creative and artistic ability to transmit this suffering in every craft and pleasure. The agonizing black community conditions in the white community.

Najwa Ibrahim

African American Pop Culture

The primacy of African American music is incontestable in much of the world. Just think of the '90s and the amount of publicity surrounding the death of Tupac Shakur. It is sufficient to mention all the different genres such as hip-hop, soul, r&b, blues, jazz, ragtime, which were brought to life by the ingenuity of musicians of African descent. But, what about classical music? How many times have you seen a black conductor or violinist taking centre stage? A 2014 study by the League of American Orchestras has found that less than 2% of musicians in American orchestras are African American and 4.3% are black. The reasons for such low numbers could certainly be attributed to decades of racial disparagement accepted at an institutional level. It is enough to look at the example of George Gershwin to understand how even the white people who early understood the quality and importance of black cultural heritage could not escape ostracization and negation of their achievements in the field of music. Gershwin was frequently berated by his fellow “white” composers like Aaron Copland, who claimed that jazz was not challenging enough for any composer of classical music. When it comes to the black classical composers, they reached their peak in the 1930s. The main representatives were Nathaniel Dett, William Grant Still, Florence Price, and William Dawson. Dawson’s *Negro Folk Symphony* was particularly influential. Its vividness, the unrefined treatment of the vernacular, the explosion of sound, and a celebration of African rhythms is what mesmerized both the audience and critics alike. Unfortunately, the piece soon slipped into obscurity. Apart from that famous decade, African American classical musicians have never regained such prestige and continued to be celebrated within their respective community.

Dubravka Bokonjić



Representatives of Af.Am. pop culture - thehowler.org

Pop culture phenomenon!

Popular culture phenomenon, also known as “bandwagon,” is a term for blindly following some trend. (Un)fortunately, there is a lot of it nowadays. Just name it: big lips - checked, big butt - checked, rap music - checked, selfies - checked. So, I can say I “jumped” in a few of these bandwagons. Is it a good or a bad thing? We don’t know. You can mock a girl with big lips, but you know you will tomorrow outline that top lip. But let’s talk about selfies. You heard about them, the whole world heard about them. But how and why they had become famous? It is obvious. It is because of the evolution of phones and technology. But the true reason is way deeper than that. People got their head in phones, and with that, they are less social and lonelier. I can’t say I’m not one of them. At least with that less social part. Phones and social media make you feel accepted and like you are not the only one going through something. Social media. We can talk for ages about them; a selfie mania is some kind of their fault. Selfies have become normal and daily thing in our modern life, so normal that we can’t see anything bad about them. Selfies have become something like your book cover, and you are trying to make it prettier and funnier. It is as if you try to make a colourful and attractive cover for a tragedy maybe. I’m not saying our life is a tragedy. I’m saying that people are photoshopping their lives as well as the selfies. In other words, selfies replaced “normal” photos; just go through your Instagram and Facebook feed. All you can see are people taking pictures of themselves and pretending that everything is perfect. As someone said: “Instagram is just an AD for ourselves and we are doing everything to make it more luxurious and glamorous.”

Anđela Šiljak

MARK THEIR WORDS

“Modern American literature was born in protest, born in rebellion, born out of the sense of loss and indirection which was imposed upon the new generations out of the realization that the old formal culture—the “New England idea”—could no longer serve.”

—Alfred Kazin

“American literature has never been content to be just one among the many literatures of the Western World. It has always aspired to be the literature not only of a new continent but of a New World.”

—Christopher Dawson

“All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn. American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since.”

- Ernest Hemingway

