

## Abstract

Donovan, Stephen. *Literary Modernism and the Press, 1870-1922*. Göteborg University, Department of English, 2001.

This study argues that the British press revolution of the late-nineteenth century exercised a formative influence on the development of literary modernism. Drawing on a wide range of textual material, *Literary Modernism and the Press* contends that the precise terms in which newspapers, magazines, and journalists were publicly discussed during the period 1870-1922 affected fundamentally the way in which contemporary writers represented the press in fiction. A recognition of the social, political, and cultural significances of the modern press is thus indispensable to a properly historical understanding of modernist writers such as Joseph Conrad and James Joyce.

Through an examination of late-nineteenth-century commentaries on the press, this study begins by establishing that the modern newspaper was widely viewed as mediating a disconcerting albeit often pleasurable experience of sensation, rooted in both the accelerating tempo of urban life and the intense economic pressures on journalistic production. As the medium best suited to convey this experience, here termed "the shock of the news," journalism thus stood in a unique relation to modernity. Surveying around a hundred contemporary texts, *Literary Modernism and the Press* identifies the main features of this relationship as represented in a popular and purist novels, plays, and music-hall sketches.

Several features of this survey relating to epistemology and newspaper reading form the basis for a reassessment of Conrad's and Joyce's fiction and nonfiction up until 1922. A detailed analysis of Conrad's oeuvre uncovers the full extent of his preoccupation with all aspects of the press: writing, reading, layout, ownership, advertising, and political volatility. A similar treatment of Joyce's writings identifies a major shift in his attitude towards journalism around the time of the First World War as well as proposing a wholly novel explanation for the famous "headlines" which punctuate the seventh episode of *Ulysses* (1922). Both case studies establish new links between canonical literary works and specific episodes in the history of the modern press, from shipwrecks and suicide inquest reports to Irish nationalist newspapers and the *Daily Mail*. In revealing the magnitude of journalism's importance to the literary projects of both writers, *Literary Modernism and the Press* adds another dimension to current scholarship on the origins of literary modernism.

*Keywords:* modernism, newspaper, periodical, journalism, media studies, literature, literary history, shock, sensation, modernity, mass culture, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce.