Three of the important subtexts of Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* and Eliot’s *The Waste Land* are their engagement with the themes of mass civilisation, mass culture and the implications of mass war. It is no accident both are set in London. On the surface *Mrs Dalloway* is a peon to London as a pastoral whilst *The Waste Land* emphasises London as a soiled centre for international commerce. ‘June had drawn out every leaf on the trees’ (*Mrs Dalloway*, ed. Elaine Showalter, London, Penguin, 1992 [1925] p7) set against ‘The river sweats/Oil and tar’ (*The Waste Land and Other Poems*, T. S. Eliot, London, Faber and Faber, 1940, [1922] III 266-7). The industrial and transport revolutions of Britain had generated a pattern where all major railways and roads headed towards London and all major industries depended on the investment made possible by London’s money markets. York was not at the heart of either revolution and had long ceased to be the second largest city of England or the second most important. It was remained one of the main sweet manufacturers in Britain, through factories like Rowntree’s, now Nestles and Terry’s, now Kraft. Kraft obtained Terry’s only to shut it and transfer production of the Chocolate Orange to Poland to take advantage of cheaper labour.
Terry’s factory, 1926, Bishophorpe Road, York. Note the architectural grandeur. Unlike modern factories that tend to be composed of interchangeable and replaceable units, the Victorians built as if for eternity; that ethos remained true for the construction of Terry’s.

Terry’s Clock Tower. Note there are words not figures on the clock-face as if Terry’s have privatised time.

York’s confectionary industry of the 19th century is the subject of Fiona Shaw’s 2003 novel The Sweetest Thing.
Modernism

‘Modernism is a confusing term that must not be confused with ‘modern’. ‘Modern’ means being up to date, whatever the date is. ‘Modernism’ is an aesthetic/ideological term that has been applied to activities as diverse as architecture and writing; ‘modernity’ can mean either, depending on context, though spelt with a capital ‘M’ ‘Modernity’ it is likely to indicate ‘Modernism’.

In architecture the term applies to a simplification of architectural shapes and a resistance to the Victorian love of ornament and detail. A useful list from http://architecture.about.com/od/20thcenturytrends/ig/Modern-Architecture/Modernism.htm summarises the characteristics as follows.

- Little or no ornamentation
- Factory-made parts
- Man-made materials such as metal and concrete
- Emphasis on function
- Rebellion against traditional styles

Assessing The Waste Land and Mrs Dalloway in line with these expectations shows the divergences and convergences of the movements.

Little or no ornamentation: the language of both Mrs Dalloway and The Waste Land, not to mention Joyce’s Modernist Ulysses and Finnegans’s Wake, is ornate and complex.

Factory-made parts: The Waste Land, Ulysses and Finnegans’s Wake are full of pre-manufactured parts in the form of the quotes each text absorbs. Despite this they are not intended to be objects for mass-consumption. Mrs Dalloway does not depend on pre-existing languages in the same way but Woolf was equally ambivalent about mass marketing and readership. Many of Woolf’s works were first published as illustrated, limited edition by the Hogarth Press.

The Hogarth Press was started as a hand-printing enterprise by Virginia and her husband Leonard in 1917 but expanded to a more commercial proposition using machines after the war. In 1924 the Hogarth Press put out the first book edition of The Waste Land see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hogarth_Press

Emphasis on function: Woolf quotes Arnold Bennett to the effect that the point of a novel ‘is character-creating and noting else…. Style counts; plot counts,’ (‘Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown’ in Collected Essays volume 1, ed Leonard Woolf, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967, pps 319-337, p319). Mrs Dalloway deliberately defies such expectations. It creates character by means Bennett does not and has plenty of style but little plot. The Waste Land bewilders readers by having many characters but refusing to identify them and asserting that the poem has a plot, the fertility quest that preceded the Grail legend, but fracturing narrative beyond possible coherence. So, to anyone who believes that the point of fiction is telling stories, these texts are dysfunctional.

Rebellion against traditional styles: this is an aim that both literary and architectural Modernism could agree on. Modernist writers have different ways of going about this. Woolf and Eliot wrote essays to support their approach. Eliot’s equivalent to ‘Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown’ is ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ (1919). This essay is included in The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism, ed Vincent B. Leach, London, Norton & Company, 2010)
The problem for Modernist architects was that too often the commercial drive for cheap, functional buildings debased their style into featureless high-rises with no local affiliation. York’s Stonebow shows how predictable and anonymous ideas derived Modernism can look a few generations on:

The Stonebow. Built in 1964 it had few fans at the time (see http://www.yorkhistory.org.uk/page139.html) and is usually voted the building most people in York want demolished whenever the local press holds a poll.
Mass Civilisation

Mass Civilisation 1: The Mind
One of the attractions that *Sanditon* offers to make it the perfect visiting spot for persons of quality is a library. Austen recognises and satirises the cultural status accrued by the language of sensibility through the person of Sir Edward, particularly during his raptures about Burns: ‘If ever there was a Man who felt, it was Burns.’ (*Sanditon in Northanger Abbey*, ed John Davie, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980, p351). To achieve this level of pretension Sir Edward has had the money and leisure to 1] have an education 2] to read a significant selection of famous contemporary writers 3] to have acquired a knowledge of who the fashionable writers are and what the fashionable terms to employ about them are. Libraries, both private and public, enable him to do this.

By Woolf's day literacy is no longer the exclusive property of the privileged classes.

‘In 1870 the Elementary Education Act: ‘ (drafted by Liberal MP William Forster and therefore sometimes referred to as 'the Forster Act') made provision for the elementary education of all children aged 5-13 and established school boards to oversee and complete the network of schools and to bring them all under some form of supervision. Such a strategy, it said, would have to be affordable and acceptable to the many sectional religious interests.’ (*Education in England: a brief history* Derek Gillard, [http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/chapter03.html](http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/chapter03.html) © copyright Derek Gillard 2011).

Hardy’s Tess was one of the first fictional beneficiaries.

Woolf position on libraries and literacy is paradoxical. She was furious at the alleged exclusion of women from the committee of the London library (*Virginia Woolf*, Hermione Lee, London, Vintage, 1997, p663) but the main targets of her essay ‘Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown’, ‘Mr. Wells, Mr. Bennett, and Mr. Galsworthy’, are writers who benefited most from the rise in literacy by acquiring a wide base of readers from all classes. (‘Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown’ in *Collected Essays volume 1*, ed Leonard Woolf, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967, pps319-37, p320). The original was written in 1923 and is available at [http://ebookbrowse.com/mr-bennett-and-mrs-brown-virginia-woolf-pdf-d121750454](http://ebookbrowse.com/mr-bennett-and-mrs-brown-virginia-woolf-pdf-d121750454)

These writers, who Woolf cunningly assigns to the dustbin of the pre-war era with the dismissive label ‘Edwardians’, embrace the prospect of accessibility. *The Waste Land* and *Mrs Dalloway* do not.

Sir Edward pick out every inter-textual reference in the poem? Is he any wiser if he can? *Mrs Dalloway* is more subtle in its challenges. The text’s poetic density and playfulness and unsettling confrontation of time and memory demonstrate that it takes more than literacy to understand a Modernist text. Eliot reinforces this implicit elitism. *The Waste Land* is scornfully amused by the low-life of London, especially its language and aspirations; Mr. Eugenides with his ‘demotic French’ and Bill, Lou and May with their East End vernacular: ‘I didn’t mince my words, I said to her myself’ (*The Waste Land*, II, ln 212, I, ln 140). Eliot does not offer an analysis of what might produce such cultural and material deprivation or what could cure it. The poem’s tone is misanthropic not charitable and though its style is revolutionary, its politics are not. By contrast Wolf is sympathetic to the clerk Septimus who represents ‘many millions of young men called Smith’ (*Mrs Dalloway*, p92). This sympathy does not mean that she writes a text that will be easy for such young men to assimilate. In 1910 E. M. Forster created an equally compassionate study of the London clerk Leonard Bast and his earnest quest for culture. *Howard’s End* offers readers an accessible linear plot and conventional descriptive language to further such a goal; *Mrs Dalloway* does not.

Mass Civilisation 2: The Body
Eliot’s scorn for mass civilisation as expressed in *The Waste Land* mostly focuses on the ludicrous and repulsive sexual hungers of ‘the young man carbuncular’ or Albert (*The Waste Land* III.231/II.142 onwards). Woolf’s equivalent is more prudish than disgusted, with an undertone of snobbery: ‘The mothers of Pimlico gave suck to their young.’ (*Mrs Dalloway*, p7) but Woolf has chosen to avoid James Joyce’s explicit exploration of the movements of bowels and genitals in *Ulysses*. The strategies of *The Waste Land* and *Mrs Dalloway* are polarised. Eliot shows none of London’s political or literary elite; whereas for half of *Mrs Dalloway* all the readers perceive of London is filtered through the class prejudices of Clarissa. There is no equivalent of Septimus in *The Waste Land*. The Tiresias of *The Waste Land* is a depoliticised figure, separated from his role in the tragic history of Thebes, and recast as a sexually disillusioned hermaphrodite commenting on ‘the young man carbuncular’. ‘Mass Civilisation’ in *The Waste Land* appears to be mass copulation; in *Mrs Dalloway* ‘Mass Civilisation’ is the anonymous masses ‘swallowed up’ by London (*Mrs Dalloway*, p92).

Mass Culture
At the time when Eliot and Woolf are writing the cinema is becoming the dominant form of mass entertainment. Between 1911 and 1937 York had at least 10 cinemas.


Some were adapted buildings, such as Fairfax House:
Fairfax House Castlegate, York. The wide entrance on the left was created to allow people to enter the cinema via a turnstile. From time to time Fairfax House shows films to remember this phase of its career.

Others were purpose built like The Odeon in Blossom Street.
The Odeon, Blossom Street, York. The ‘Odeon’ chain sought cultural status by adopting a Green name for a roofed theatre. It was built in 1937 and employed one of the most striking styles of the day Art Deco for its architecture. After falling into disuse in 2006 it was restored by the Reel chain in 2009 as a functioning cinema. A history of the building is accessible at:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/northyorkshire/content/image_galleries/odeon_cinema_gallery.shtml

A brief history of the Odeon chain, including various controversies it is or has been embroiled in is on:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odeon_Cinemas

Elaine Showalter’s introduction to the 1992 Penguin edition claims ‘the narrative technique of Mrs Dalloway is very cinematic.’ (Mrs Dalloway, pxxi). The rapid cuts from past to present, the sudden use of close ups in both Mrs Dalloway and The Waste Land can be compared to pioneers of the early cinema such as D. W. Griffiths and Sergei Eisenstein. The major difference is that even the most experimental montages employed by Eisenstein are linked to a simple narrative plot and expositionary title-cards, necessary for the silent films of the day. The narrative that Eisenstein inscribed in his films was that of the rise of the workers to power in Bolshevik Russia. He takes care that a proletarian audience can follow the argument, especially distinguishing between heroes and villains. The title-cards, which were usually used for dialogue, become an important part of the films propaganda. In the 1924 film Strike he introduces a police spy by a title-card explaining the spy’s code name is Owl. A frame shows the spy wearing large round glasses. In case the audience still have not got the point the next frame shows a real owl against a sinister night background.
Similar jump-cuts in Eliot bewilder rather than enlighten readers. The notes that were part of the original poem are more a series of ludic (playful) provocations than an attempt to make the poem clear. In Woolf’s case by the end of the book readers have generally decoded the intersection of past and present but they have not been helped by authorial explanation or plot.

Despite Woolf’s generally left-wing sympathies she allows no easy reading of the book’s politics; there is no equivalent of the propaganda title-card inserted into the text.

From 1927-1930 silent films were replaced by sound films: ‘the talkies’. Aldous Huxley’s dystopian 1931 Brave New World imagined the talkies to be the first step towards a post-literary culture that attends ‘the feelies’; films that offered tactile as well as visual experiences. There is no need for reading in such a popular culture.

The debate about whether our culture can be called ‘post-literary’ continues. Pessimists point to the displacement of cinema by TV and TV by video games. York’s library is at centre of this cultural tension.

York Library, Museum Street: The library was opened in 1927 by the suitably grand Right Honourable The Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, chairman of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and President Elect of the Library Association. 
http://www.historyofyork.org.uk/themes/20th-century/york-central-library
It operated on the Victorian principle of diffusion of culture from the ‘high’ to the ‘low’ and its acquisitions and issues were governed by Victorian morality. Even in the 1970s the books it stocked by the Marquis De Sade were not on open
shelves; they would only be lent after a borrower had made a written application.
This policy was gradually eroded and the change became formalised in 2010 when York Library dropped the word ‘Library’ from its building, on the grounds the word might be deterring and called itself ‘York Explore’. It has striven to cut loose from the tradition of the library being a site of exclusivity as it was in Sanditon. To this end a café and children’s area were installed, the stock of scholarly books was reduced, the number of public access computers was increased, and the collection of graphic novels and CDs were improved. The result is a tense compromise between the building’s academic and entertainment functions.

York University is caught up in the same struggle. Founded in the 1960s to extend the experience of university education beyond that offered by Oxbridge and the few ‘redbricks’ founded at the end of the 19th century, York University offered a shelter for F. R. Leavis, away from his troubled relationship with Cambridge University. It is one of the ironies of the inter-war period that three of the critics, Leavis, Empson and Eliot, who helped get English taken seriously as an independent academic discipline, did so outside or on the margins of the British university system of the time. William Empson spent most of this time teaching in China and Japan, T. S. Eliot worked for Lloyds Bank and the publishers who became Faber and Faber and only Leavis has a university position. This was mostly at Darwin College, Cambridge, and was terminated in 1962. His 1969 book ‘English Literature’ in our Time & the University, showed the stairs of Langwith College, co-opting the principle of new universities to his cultural crusades.
Stairs, Langwith college: sit on them and try to absorb any lingering sixties optimism…

To what extent the expansion of universities and the opportunity for university education survives the fee-culture remains to be seen.

Whatever else is obscure about *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Waste Land* it is clear that they consider themselves part of a print culture if not a university culture. The notes included at the end of *The Waste Land*, originally to fill up blank pages of the published text, have invited academic attention from first publication.