Abstract

Recent studies of the relationship between literary modernism and mass culture have focused on print and periodical forms as evidence of modernism’s deep and complex engagement with both its narrow circle of initiates and a wider audience. But print was not the only mode in which its audience received and reacted to these difficult works of literature: authors often recorded readings in their own voices years or even decades later, and these recordings offered new opportunities for listeners to engage with the materials. *AudioTextual* aims to reorient the conversation around literary modernism towards this often heard but little discussed audio archive by examining how Anglo-American modernists engaged with new devices for sound recording and the threats and opportunities these media offered for community, the page, and the embodied voice. The project at once shows the still unrecognized extent of the modernist encounter with new technologies of sound and listens closely to audio recordings of modernist works as they form a network of modernist distribution and reception that transcends accounts limited by genre and nation. My work examines sound recording and Anglo-American literary modernism through re-readings of key texts and close listenings of recordings by James Joyce, Langston Hughes, Virginia Woolf, and amateur readers of the same. By re-reading classic audible moments from modernist works in light of how these recordings reached and were consumed by audiences, the project argues for literary modernism as a sounded, social phenomenon that continues to echo to this day.