

Dissertation:

Bethany Tisdale's dissertation focuses on a diverse group of women writers whose work spans the years of 1915-1940, looking specifically at fictional representations of the female artist in modernist fiction. In studying the work of Anzia Yezierska, Dawn Powell, Willa Cather, and Zelda Fitzgerald through the lens of feminist theory, this project will show how the conception of the artist and the trajectory of the *künstlerroman* reflect the shifting roles of women in the period. Typically a format reserved for male protagonists, the *künstlerroman* is revised by these women writers. All of these texts feature heroines whose attachments to art, community, or love create a vision of the American dream that includes wealth and belonging, both social and material success. As a result, these texts are sentimental yet progressive, showcasing a revision of feminine virtues and of what it means to be modern. These novels and stories suggest a tension between modernity and the domestic sphere and thus a tension between the various iterations of the New Woman and nineteenth century ideals of womanhood. The women characters under examination here grapple with domestic and familial responsibilities, societal restraints, and public failure in their quests for artistic achievement. The protagonists attempt to realize the promise of modernity, but their desires for achievement are confused with desires for creative achievement and personal autonomy. These unique narratives of female creativity, written in a time of immense social and cultural change, can alter our understanding of both artistic development and feminist practice.