Uncovering the Unpublished: Construction, Publication, and Exploration of Gladys Fornell's Montel

Abstract

This paper examines an unpublished manuscript for a novel, Montel, written by editor Gladys Fornell in the mid-twentieth century. In my paper, I examine Fornell’s professional work and literary connections to surmise what influenced her lack of success publishing the novel. Specifically, I highlight Montel as a transitional novel that accentuates the differences between modern and postmodern literature. Fornell wrote the body of Montel in the late 1930s; however, after numerous unsuccessful attempts to publish the text, and prompted by publishers’ requests for revision, she wrote a preface for the novel in 1949. Together, these two sections of the novel emphasize a shift in Fornell’s writing— the body of the novel and the preface each respectively reflect conventions of modern and postmodern literature. While it is likely that broader literary movements, in addition to movements like surrealism and early feminism, may have informed Fornell’s way of thought, this paper isolates her individual relation to the larger changes in literature: namely, at the same time she was writing the preface, Gladys Fornell was also editing Walter Kaufmann’s Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, published the following year in 1950, through her position as general editor at the Princeton University Press. Given the concurrent timing of these events and, additionally, Nietzsche’s more innovative philosophical concepts, this paper speculates that Fornell’s understanding of postmodernism is connected to Kaufmann’s interpretation of Nietzschean ideas. With this, readers can look at Fornell as a compelling author writing ahead of her time and, more so, at her work as confirmation that a literary work’s success may have less to do with its publication status than its interpretive and literary value. Most significantly, exploring Gladys Fornell’s work allows for a new, interesting perspective through which we can examine literature and the publishing industry during this period.