Interdisciplinary / Multidisciplinary Woolf

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Selected Papers from the Twenty-Second Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf
First Nations Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge that the 22nd Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf was held on lands traditionally lived on by the First Nations who signed Treaty 6: the Cree, the Salt-eaux, and the Assiniboine, and later the Dakota. We would also like to acknowledge that the site of Saskatoon was part of the Métis “South Branch” Settlement, which they called Bois de Flèche, or Arrow Woods.
Interdisciplinary/
Multidisciplinary Woolf

Selected Papers from the
Twenty-Second Annual International
Conference on Virginia Woolf

University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Canada
7–10 June, 2012

Edited by Ann Martin and Kathryn Holland
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Introduction

by Ann Martin and Kathryn Holland

We have come together...to make one thing, not enduring—for what endures?—but seen by many eyes simultaneously. (TW 104)

Where James Ramsay comes to recognize that “nothing was simply one thing” (TTL 152), Bernard suggests that “one thing” can be made collectively while still seen differently. His valuation of “communion” (TW 103) as the basis for creation echoes the “collaboration” or consummation of difference that Woolf’s speaker champions in A Room of One’s Own (94). Multiple views—multiple Woolfs—exist simultaneously, but...where there is difference, there need not be division. Such was the motivation behind Interdisciplinary / Multidisciplinary Woolf—if not all Woolf conferences. As suggested by the wave image in Robin Adair’s conference art, these collective moments draw together and tease apart varied perspectives on Woolf. Rather than interlocking pieces of a puzzle, our approaches overlap in combination—here, now, in Saskatoon, Vancouver, Glasgow, Chicago. Waves of place and time, Woolf conferences whiz us through art and scholarship from readers established and emerging, (un)common and academic, as we come together to create something new.

The theme of the 22nd Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf was intended to signal the importance of discursive and methodological differences, as well as the points at which disciplines could be integrated and distinctions could be questioned. While the terms themselves overlap, interdisciplinarity has become associated with the “interaction” or combination of different fields and methods (Lattuca 1-2), where multidisciplinarity implies a “juxtaposition” of disciplinary approaches regarding a common issue (Klein). Both invoke the “discriminating apparatus that distinguishes one research agenda from another,” or the codes and practices that differentiate one profession from its fellows (Caughie 6). Both terms also suggest collaboration and thus crossing (out) of bounds, responding to disparate traditions and influences, turning unfamiliar corners, and voyaging into recharted territory. Less a transformation of Woolf or modernist studies—a formidable task, as Andrew Thacker points out, “given the institutional structures that govern the production of disciplinary knowledge” (609)—our Woolf Conference takes part in a continuing and active engagement with the real, the edited, the miscellaneous, the urban, the international, and the natural world, as we move through varied and variable disciplines. While the metaphor of waves suggests the successive themes each conference rises to meet, it also signals that we are waving, and not just to Virginia. We are moving and being moved by different disciplines, generations, and meeting places into other combinations of the past, and what is passing, and what is to come.1

As the first Woolf conference to be held in Canada, Interdisciplinary / Multidisciplinary Woolf recognized the significance of place—our place on Treaty Six territory—and became a destination for scholars from North and South America, Europe, Asia, and
the Pacific. The conference itself consisted of forty panels, as well as five plenary talks, two keynote roundtables, and an address at the conference banquet by Professor Len Findlay. His approach to “Not Knowing Greek” and *Three Guineas*, among other texts, was dedicated to Conor Tomás Reed, and through Woolf’s own engagement “with the pros and cons of her intellectual and cultural formation,” Findlay emphasized the complexities and contradictions and limits of knowledge. His critique of instrumentalism, where monologue replaces dialogue and dialectic, highlighted the fact that there is never domination without resistance, though resistance to “market ‘logic’” seems woefully muted at the top levels of governance, both political and academic. Hence our conference theme. Research suggests that interdisciplinary creativity and multidisciplinary collaborations arise often in local moments and in relation to individuals’ specific interests. In a series of interviews with scholars from two major research institutions, Paul Blackmore and Camille B. Kandiko found informants “stressed that interdisciplinarity was not of itself interesting; instead one became interdisciplinary by having an interest that crossed boundaries, so that one was necessarily drawn into being interdisciplinary” (128). Lisa Lattuca has arrived at similar findings. In what she calls “a grounded definition of interdisciplinary work” (2), she found “that interdisciplinarity exists on a continuum” (3) and involves varying degrees of communication and collaboration emerging from individuals’ needs. Interdisciplinary research and teaching may thus represent points at which the established strategies and practices of academic institutions are met by unscripted and unexpected uses of disciplinary expertise. The result can be not just a textbase but also a disciplinary approach of one’s own—and indeed a conference of one’s own. The administrative and financial support of the University of Saskatchewan, as well as Grant MacEwan University and the University of Regina, was crucial for Interdisciplinary / Multidisciplinary Woolf. At the same time, the conference’s scholarly, artistic, and pedagogical elements—along with its community based events—developed out of an ever-widening circle of opportunities that were interpersonal as much as interdisciplinary.

Those connections and possibilities could be organized through three interrelated conference objectives: to engage in inter- and multidisciplinary research on Woolf or research on Woolf and Bloomsbury’s interdisciplinarity; to explore the pedagogical possibilities of an international academic conference; and to connect with communities that engage in other and related forms of knowledge and practice. Essays in this volume speak directly to those goals. For example, Marie Lovrod and Karen Wood’s paper reflects the philosophy behind the conference’s Community Forums, in which community leaders and activists shared practices developed to address issues common to Woolf: access to education and the legacy of sexual abuse. Charlie Peters, director of the conference play—an Equity production of *Angel in the House*—participated in an equally reciprocal dynamic. A fourth-year Drama student at the University of Saskatchewan, Charlie both led and learned from prominent Canadian actors. His subsequent interview with the play’s New York-based author, Eureka, informs his insightful analysis of the text’s history, interpretation, and production. Graduate students’ voices are also heard in this volume, as are the echoes of “Professions for Women,” adapted and performed by local high school students at the conference banquet. However, like the public events—Louise Halfe’s poetry reading at the Mendel Art Gallery; talks on Woolf organized in conjunction with the Public Library and with Grace-Westminster United Church; an evening of film and music at the
Broadway theatre in partnership with Saskatoon's Sexual Diversity Network—the pedagogical and community based work of the conference was not about boundary crossings. Rather, it demonstrates the already overlapping nature of the university and the larger society, of research and art, of teaching and learning.

Responding to this multidirectional flow as co-editors involved working with but also between disciplinary lines. The papers that follow are influenced by a range of different fields: the arts (drawing, painting, dance, statuary, photography, drama, music), the sciences (ecology, botany, glaciology, medicine), the humanities (classics, literature, history, languages, linguistics, philosophy, religion, women's and gender studies, the digital humanities), and the social sciences (economics, political studies, psychology, sociology). Our arrangement of the papers, however, emerges from our reading of the individualistic nature of inter- and multidisciplinary work. Such research, art, and praxis speak to the malleability of disciplinary divisions, as much as to the generative force of both the discourses and the divides in play. The arrangement of the papers is intended to suggest the points of contact between and among the pieces, and the variable breeze that moves such waves of thought. The four plenary papers might thus be seen as the crests of those waves.

The first section of the volume, History, Materiality, Multiplicity, begins with Maggie Humm's plenary "Multidisciplinary Woolf/Multiple Woolfs?" and its consideration of how visual archival materials can move literary scholarship into multidisciplinary terrain. In addressing photographs, photography, and signature, Humm follows Woolf's fascination with the relationship between subject and object, which collages and albums do not stabilize, enabling multiple and multiply mediated selves. Melba Cuddy-Keane's essay engages with a similar issue: multiple ways of reading Woolf. The three methods she presents—ventriloquize, surround, and bounce—stand in contrast to reductive interpretations and assumptions of history and of historiography. Alice Keane puts such approaches into practice through an historical examination of £500, as she considers the economic theories of John Maynard Keynes and their intersection with Woolf's emphasis on indeterminacy and Bloomsbury's larger questioning of value. A lack of resolution is also at the heart of Vara Neverow's "Desiring Statues and Ambiguous Sexualities in Jacob's Room," where Woolf's allusions to sculpture and Greco-Roman figures link death and desire—and Jacob's desirability—through monuments of absence created and viewed in diverse historical moments. Intertextuality in Jacob's Room, as well as Orlando and Three Guineas, is approached by Jane de Gay through the lineage of Woolf's religious references, where texts written by members of the Stephen family in the Victorian period inform Woolf's modern critique of patriarchal oppression. In an even more public vein, Eleanor McNees reads Woolf's integration of newspaper headlines in The Years as they become shorthand for generational, political, and gender divides, though the war and the medium itself bring readers together. Marlene Briggs also considers collective and individual responses to war, presenting a paratactic consideration of military conflict through the image of the shoe and its connection to "untimely death," whether in Jacob's Room, Nazi Germany, or contemporary Iraq. Two other transhistorical gestures speak to the materialization of Woolf's political critique. Where J. Ashley Foster uses Three Guineas to contextualize her response to the policing she encountered at the Canadian border, Conor Tomás Reed explores the politics of the photograph in Three Guineas in relation to contemporary representational strategies for political protest. And in her focus on the complexities of a single event,
Lolly Ockerstrom compares *Three Guineas* to two other treatments of the Spanish Civil War: Gerald Brenan’s *The Spanish Labyrinth* and Gamel Woolsey’s *Death’s Other Kingdom*. Multiple moments in time, multiple views, and multiple accounts of the material effects of war.

In Patterns, Practices, and Principles, it is the representation of Woolf in art that Brenda R. Silver’s plenary essay addresses, as she traces patterns of reference in the work of Reinaldo Arenas and Patti Smith. Underlying Silver’s analysis is the place of artistic practice in the context of politicized knowledge. Moral, social, and scientific principles underwrite ideology and thus patterns of behaviour and of control. These practices of exclusion are met, however, by artistic interventions. Where Arenas’s creative practice crosses political, sexual, and national boundaries, so Silver’s essay moves from text to intertext in an interwoven reflection upon AIDS, suicide, and the connections forged between artists through assertions of agency. Jane Goldman engages in a similarly layered approach, reading Defoe and Derrida through Woolf and the signifying dog, and asserting Woolf’s critical treatment of the divide between man and beast. The symbolic violence of such exclusionary divisions is also the focus for Madelyn Detloff, who uses connections between crip and queer theory to explore principles of deviance and normality as depicted in *Mrs. Dalloway* and in *The Years*. Such hierarchies are what the younger generation of Pargiters would seem to critique, and Peggy and North’s disruption of the habitual gaze finds a contemporary echo in “A Healing Center of One’s Own: Woolf’s Legacy and Public Responses to Child Abuse.” In this self-reflexive piece, Karen Wood and Marie Lovrod locate common patterns in their ongoing experiences of working with feminist community organizations, and address the challenges involved in meeting silence with sustained social support for healing. Eleanor Pargiter’s feminist practice is what Elisa Kay Sparks explores, using patterns of floral imagery to trace connections and disconnections between the women of *The Years*. But the flowers that Woolf mentions in *Mrs. Dalloway* can also suggest generational divides. Sarah Dunlap places Helena Parry’s imperialistic approach to botany in contrast to Septimus’s sense of connection with the natural world. Catherine Hollis goes further into that realm through her work with Leslie Stephen’s mountaineering, not just following his footsteps up mountains but also examining his daughter’s knowledge of glaciology. Woolf’s characterization of Clarissa Dalloway, and her responses to grief, time, and trauma, suggests the tension between a desire for order in the context of emotional disorder. Michael Horacki explores a similar dynamic, using Nietzsche to examine the Apollonian and Dionysian principles in the underlying pattern of the Dalloways’ social practices.

The society of St. Ives is the basis for Leslie K. Hankins’s imaginative flight in the third section of the volume, Art, Influence, and Embodiment, where she considers the historical possibilities of Emily Carr’s presence in Cornwall during the Stephens’ summer residences there, and turns chronological coincidence into art. The overlap between Carr’s artistic work and Lily Briscoe’s visionary solitude, and between Carr’s work as landlady and Mrs. McNab’s work as char to the Ramsays, results in postcard exchanges and cinematic visions of St. Ives: embodiments of artistic influence and the influence of art on academic research. Kathleen Wall focuses on the directorial activities of Miss La Trobe, whose pageant’s engagement with parabasis—the unmasked actor’s direct address to the audience—champions the autonomy of art and the independence of the artist. Of course,
autonomy is the issue for Vanessa Bell in Eureka’s dramatic visioning of Charleston and the demands of both house and art. Charlie Peters’s piece on directing Angel in the House addresses three contexts: Bell’s work as a woman and artist in a post-Victorian world; Eureka’s work with the Ridiculous Theatre Company at the height of the AIDS crisis; and Charlie’s own approach to complexities of creation in 2012. Dialogues through art and across time are also embodied by the texts of Sarah Blake, whose essay links the acts of drawing and of reading through their shared invitation to exploration and conversation. Kimberly Engdahl Coates considers the dance of Isadora Duncan and the movement and rhythms of Woolf’s writing in The Waves, again through conversation and the artists’ connections with audiences on a more than linguistic level. The affective resonances of the female body, especially as they disrupt conventional thinking, also inform Maria Aparecida de Oliveira’s exploration of the affinities between the Brazilian writer, Clarice Lispector, and Virginia Woolf through the work of Hélène Cixous. Where subjectivity ruptures a paternal order in Oliveira’s piece on narrative strategies, Christopher Brown posits that Orlando refigures adult subjectivity by restoring “the fluid dynamics of the semiotic chora” to relationships and thus moving away from the patriarchal ordering of language that seems to haunt Julia Kristeva’s approach to culture. Kyle Robertson also addresses Woolf’s narrative strategies, arguing that characters in To the Lighthouse and The Waves understand themselves intersubjectively through a personal, continuing narration of their world.

Relationships between the individual and the larger public realm, forged digitally and in print, are addressed overtly in the final section of the volume: Publishing, Politics, Publics. As Susan Brown, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy demonstrate in “The most unaccountable of machinery: The Orlando Project produces a textbase of one’s own,” digital technologies have opened up new methods for the creation, dissemination, and critical reception of literary and cultural histories. The collaboratively created digital textbase Orlando: Women’s Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present enables investigations by a wide range of users, where unscripted links between subjects (authors, texts, movements) can emerge from the collaborative and interactive nature of the textbase itself. The notion of networks, however, also takes us back to Leonard Woolf, both as the co-editor of the Hogarth Press and as a writer searching for an audience. Steve Putzel traces the history of Woolf’s play The Hotel and its non-production, despite—or perhaps because of—the timeliness of its treatment of war when it was published in 1939 and reissued in 1963. Jeanne Dubino focuses upon Leonard Woolf’s politics through his work as a publisher, examining his “anti-imperial alliance” with authors and activists Norman Leys and Parmenas Githendu Mockerie, as the three mounted a sustained campaign against British injustices in Kenya. Adam Barrows explores Hogarth’s catalog in relation to British conceptualizations of the “East.” While contextualizing the limitations of the Press’s anti-colonial publications, Barrows uses Clarissa Dalloway’s confusion between “Turks” and “Armenians” to suggest Woolf’s skepticism of political models that, while benign, would rest implicitly upon othering. That resistance to clearcut boundaries is what Claire Battershill identifies as the challenge for Leonard Woolif in terms of marketing Orlando, as well as a moment at which the Press’s imaginative engagement with the generic business of bookselling becomes evident. Diane Gillespie traces the ways in which the ritual of marriage is represented through the intersection of the Woolfs’ personal circle and three Hogarth publications: Woolf’s Orlando, Julia Strachey’s Cheerful Weather for the Wedding
(1932), and Viola Tree’s *Can I Help You?* (1937). Elizabeth Willson Gordon shifts us to 1988 and to the nostalgic invocation of Woolf’s biography and image in the re-launching of Hogarth through the “Definitive Collected Edition” of her novels. Aurelea Mahood takes up the question of marketing and the writer-run press through a comparison of Hogarth and the contemporary publisher, McSweeney’s, in relation to their constructions of cultural value, readership, and authorial signature. Like Mahood and the editors of the *Orlando* textbase, Wayne Chapman addresses the field of digital publishing and the varied publics it may involve. In his description of the history of the Clemson University Digital Press and of the ways in which its publications can be accessed through the CUDP website, Chapman points towards the future and to both the possibilities and challenges that face scholarly publishing in a time of austerity and changing copyright laws.

Attendees’ interpretations of the conference theme yielded productive discussions about practical and theoretical elements of inter- and multidisciplinary research, teaching, and administration. The conference began and ended with roundtables at which presenters and audience members considered first interdisciplinarity and institutional practices, and then interdisciplinary practices in undergraduate and graduate pedagogy. These aptly framed the formal and informal conversations in panel, plenary, and related events that extended through the gathering. We have endeavoured to represent the vitality of such exchanges in the following pages.

Notes

1. A similar motif, which transforms Stevie Smith’s “Not Waving but Drowning” (1957), is invoked in the essay collection *Not Drowning but Waving: Women, Feminism, and the Liberal Arts* (2011).

2. Saskatoon was, however, a destination at which Conor Tomás Reed did not arrive. On 7 June 2012, Conor Reed and J. Ashley Foster were prevented from crossing into Canada at Portal, North Dakota. Reed’s previous arrest on misdemeanour charges, following his peaceful protest against tuition increases in New York, resulted in the application of laws that, while following the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, seemed to us out of proportion to the situation. While Reed was denied entry, Foster was permitted into Canada the next day, but with significant restrictions, as she describes in her essay included in this volume. In the month following the conference, letters were sent by the conference’s lead organizer to Prime Minister Stephen Harper and to the Citizenship and Immigration Minister, the Honorable Jason Kenney. We were joined in our expressions of concern by others, including Lisa Vargo, Head of the Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan, and Ruth Webb of the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain. The Minister of Public Safety, the Honorable Vic Toews, responded by letter in September and outlined general policies and procedures relating to the Acts in question. Mr. Toews requested an Access to Information application in order to discuss the specific case; J. Ashley Foster has since responded. We await the opportunity to move forward with our concerns, both regarding the incident and the policies and procedures that inform border officials’ actions. In this matter, we are grateful for the support of a great many participants at the conference, and especially Isobel Grundy, Patricia Clements, Len Findlay, and Maggie Humm.

Works Cited


Acknowledgments

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Interdisciplinary / Multidisciplinary Woolf was made possible by the considerable efforts of our colleagues on the organizing committee: Hilary Clark, Marie Lovrod, and Ella Ophir at the University of Saskatchewan. We were more than ably assisted by University of Saskatchewan students, including the many volunteers who enabled the events to run so smoothly. Our graduate student assistants deserve special thanks: Jasmine Liska’s research on inter- and multidisciplinarity informs the introduction to this volume and she played a crucial, ongoing role in the planning of the conference. Terriann Walling was also integral to the organization and delivery of Interdisciplinary / Multidisciplinary Woolf, not only in relation to her liaison work with Saskatoon’s school systems, but also through her leadership before, during, and after the conference.

Deep appreciation goes to the International Virginia Woolf Society, and in particular to Mark Hussey, Jeanne Dubino, Vara Neverow, and Leslie Hankins. We also offer our thanks to Wayne Chapman, Jessica Heim, and Eva Stamm at Clemson University Digital Press for their guidance, patience, and professionalism in the production of the volume.

Finally, we thank our families, friends, and colleagues for their enthusiasm toward this project.
Virginia Woolf

Standard Abbreviations
(as established by Woolf Studies Annual)

AHH  |  A Haunted House
AROO |  A Room of One's Own
BP   |  Books and Portraits
BTA  |  Between the Acts
CDB  |  The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays
CE   |  Collected Essays (ed. Leonard Woolf, 4 vols.: CE1, CE2, CE3, CE4)
CR1  |  The Common Reader
CR2  |  The Common Reader, Second Series
CSF  |  The Complete Shorter Fiction (ed. Susan Dick)
D    |  The Diary of Virginia Woolf (5 vols.: D1, D2, D3, D4, D5)
DM   |  The Death of the Moth and Other Essays
E    |  The Essays of Virginia Woolf (ed. Stuart Clarke and Andrew McNeillie, 6 vols.: E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6)
F    |  Flush
FR   |  Freshwater
GR   |  Granite and Rainbow: Essays
HPGN |  Hyde Park Gate News (ed. Gill Lowe)
JR   |  Jacob's Room
JRHD |  Jacob's Room: The Holograph Draft (ed. Edward L. Bishop)
L    |  The Letters of Virginia Woolf (ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols.: L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, L6)
M    |  The Moment and Other Essays
MEL  |  Melymbrosia
MOB  |  Moments of Being
MT   |  Monday or Tuesday
MD   |  Mrs. Dalloway
ND   |  Night and Day
O    |  Orlando
PA   |  A Passionate Apprentice
RF   |  Roger Fry
TG   |  Three Guineas
TTL  |  To the Lighthouse
TW   |  The Waves
TY   |  The Years
VO   |  The Voyage Out
WF   |  Women and Fiction: The Manuscript Versions of A Room of One's Own (ed. S. P. Rosenbaum)
Interdisciplinary
Multidisciplinary
Woolf
History, Materiality, Multiplicity
MULTIDISCIPLINARY WOOLF / MULTIPLE WOOLFS?

by Maggie Humm

The title of the conference is the theme of my paper. I will sketch out some of the problematics of multidisciplinarity, focusing on visual studies, in relation to Woolf; touch on critics including Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Rancière, who offer helpful prisms; and reflect on the relevance of multidisciplinarity to notions of authorship and signature in Woolf.

I start with, and return later to, this collage.1 When researching Snapshots of Bloomsbury I discovered the page in one of the boxes of loose photographs in Woolf’s archive in the Harvard Theatre Collection, the Houghton Library. The image had no accompanying details of author, date or location. I was intrigued by Woolf’s possible expertise in collage, as I follow Max Ernst’s view in his Cahiers d’art that collage can produce “a sudden intensification of the visionary faculties.”2 So I researched in other archives seeking further examples of Woolf’s collage techniques but without success. My response to this single collage, when reproducing the page in Snapshots of Bloomsbury, was to link the material directly to Woolf’s publications. In a fairly obvious annotation, I noted the names of the figures in the image (Mussolini, Christ, Prof. J. M. Murray, Abraham Lincoln, Emperor Wilhelm, Count Berchtold, Frederick Delius); that the page might be a preparation for Three Guineas using, as it does, similar images as those in Woolf’s scrapbooks; and that the image reflected Woolf’s original title for Three Guineas, ‘Men Are Like That’, a phrase from Stella Duckworth. What I did, of course, consciously or unconsciously, was to exclude multidisciplinarity. I will return to the image in a moment, but first I wish to think through the ways in which visual materials challenge such an obvious determination.

What makes studies of Woolf’s encounters with the visual so interesting and productive is that such encounters call for multidisciplinarity. For example, photography escapes narrative. Photography sees without hierarchy. The smallest details become insistent signs. Photography has a capacity for unpredictable significance. The value of the documentation cannot be known in advance.3 Visual studies can go beyond notions of idealised authorship. In dealing with the mediations of differing visual practices we can see Woolf’s differing subjectivities at play. As Jacques Rancière says, “an aesthetic politics always defines itself by a certain…reconfiguration of the given perceptual forms” (63).

The summative guides to multidisciplinary work in Woolf studies in the last decade include Anna Snaith’s Palgrave Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies of 2007, the Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf edited by Susan Sellars in 2010, and, above all, the annual collections of Woolf conference papers, which are all conceptually focused, involving many disciplines. Thinking through issues of multidisciplinarity as all these collections do so purposefully, moves us beyond the limited categories of genres.

However the notion of the autonomous writer ‘Woolf’ is very powerful and shapes our approaches to Woolf. Although we acknowledge Woolf’s contradictions, as the wonderful Woolf conference of 2011 did so well, and we also reformulate Woolf for each critical generation, we tend to search for narrative motifs, such as Woolf’s maternal imagery,
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and then characterize several works of Woolf as displaying such motifs, creating overall patterns across Woolf’s work as if Woolf had one aesthetic project.

Yet what is undoubtedly true about visual technologies is that these inevitably create un-authored, un-located images. What I mean by this, is that any digital reproductions of Woolf’s photographs, for example, are inherently free-floating, travelling through digital space, becoming a musée imaginaire, in André Malraux’s terminology. Authorial identity is displaced. Woolf herself often displaced her authorial identity. In “A Sketch of the Past,” Woolf’s memory of her half-brother’s forced exploration of “my body” forces her into a multiple personality. “It proves,” she says, “that Virginia Stephen was not born on the 25th January 1882, but was born many thousands of years ago; and this throws light on”, she goes on to argue, “why it is so difficult to give any account of the person to whom things happen” (MB 69). And Orlando has “a great variety of selves…a person may well have as many thousand” (O 294-5).

But the interesting possibility of seeing differing subjectivities, offered by visual media, was overlooked in a survey of developments in, and the future of, modernist research. In “The New Modernist Studies,” Douglas Mao and Judith Walkowitz plot out what they understand to be new directions in modernist studies. Given that the essay appeared in the PMLA and hence carries the imprimatur of the Modern Languages Association, the essay is surprisingly out-of-touch. Mao and Walkowitz do acknowledge that the “quite sharp boundaries between high art and popular forms of culture have been reconsidered” (738). However they go on to argue that “the attention to” mass media pertains to a smaller body of publications, has been little remarked so far, and may be “only a momentary convergence” (738). The authors’ idea of mass media is limited, focusing on print media and networks of publications. Mao and Walkowitz ignore the momentous historically and conceptually informed multimedia revolution in modernism in the last decades; for example, the research on music cultures, radio, cinema, and photography, all of which are now also a large part of Woolf studies. This is an odd occlusion since, as long ago as the 1970s, Raymond Williams, the founder of British cultural studies, was arguing that modern art and literary movements “are the products, at the first historical level, of changes in public media” (33), as Pamela Caughie’s excellent Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction reveals in relation to Woolf. Mao and Walkowitz overlook the MLA’s own celebration of media scholarship with its award of the MLA James Russell Lowell Prize to Laura Marcus’s The Tenth Muse published the year before their article, and surely central to modernism is the notion of history as aesthetics, evident in Eliot’s The Waste Land with its discontinuous fragments.

In opposition to this approach to modernist research, I would argue that we stand at a significant point in relation to visual cultures. What is at stake now is the definitive position that visual studies have in modernist studies and Woolf studies. David Trotter has even coined the term e-modernism. Woolf herself was continually involved with visual cultures, with her hand-printing of Hope Mirrlees’s “Paris” poem, her use of Vanessa’s paintings as fictional inspiration as with Mrs. Dalloway, her making of photo albums throughout her life, and her attention to the ambiguities of perception throughout her work. Woolf’s photo albums are now available digitally on Harvard University Library web site and are a major resource for all Woolf scholars. Sadly Woolf’s handwritten inscriptions are omitted, since only photographs are digitalised rather than each album page as a whole.
I would argue that the whole pages of albums allowed Woolf to create frames for individuals and places. Her albums were a practical tool of memory and function as a virtual portable collection of her multiple selves. The albums gave Woolf the opportunity to create significant relationships between figures in her life and between her differing selves by grouping photographs on an album page avoiding, as she preferred, any linear, teleological story.

To return to the collage image. My annotation attempts to place the image within a frame of articulation of Woolf’s work and influences, what Marsha MesKimmon calls “affirmative criticality” (91). So here we could also cite the influence of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant’s use of collage, and their interaction with Picasso’s work, on Woolf’s attention to the visual. Although Roger Fry often made a rather formalist interpretation of Picasso’s abstract language of form, Fry did own a painted fragment of a Picasso collage and created a collage *Essay in Abstraction* in 1914. Christopher Reed draws attention to the impact of Picasso’s assemblages on Duncan Grant’s *Abstract Kinetic Collage Painting* (1914), and on Grant’s *In Memoriam Rupert Brooke* of 1915, which interact with the story of Grant’s gift to Picasso of wallpaper for Picasso’s work. In 1914, Bell admired Picasso’s “amazing arrangement of coloured papers and bits of wood which somehow,” she said, “do give me great satisfaction” (160). The second Grafton Show of 1914 displayed Bloomsbury’s multidisciplinarity including paintings, sculpture, and domestic furnishings, and generic mixtures were common at the Omega Workshop. Bell’s collage *Triple Alliance* is, for me, the best example of Bloomsbury’s mixed media with its newspaper clippings dated September 1914, and maps referring to the tripartite political grouping, which interact spatially with the triple images of bottle, lamp and siphon.

But tracing Fry, Bell and Grant’s possible stylistic influences on Woolf also, inevitably, centres on Woolf and continues to limit the collage image to Woolf’s signature. What Woolf’s scrapbooks, photo albums, and her ephemera allow us to do is to make conjunctions and create meanings not necessarily spelled out by the supposed author Woolf in any one image. There are interesting questions, for example, to ask of this collage, such as why did Woolf draw on existing and circulated images from newspapers *three times*—once for the scrapbooks, here again, and in *Three Guineas*? Are these emblematic of other pre-existing images? One key feature of the collage’s photographs is that although they were taken from newspapers like those in Woolf’s scrapbooks, here the photographs are meticulously and carefully cut out. The collage is neither naturalistic in the sense of a *precisely* organized pictorial space but equally neither is there any use of space between the photographs to suggest their differences.

Thanks to Merry Pawlowski and Vara Neverow’s expert research, we have access to a digital archive of Woolf’s scrapbooks. In the scrapbooks the number of newspaper photographs is *low* in proportion to the number of purely textual newspaper columns and typed and handwritten pieces. Volume one has two photographs in sixty-seven pages. Volume two has nine photographs in fifty-nine pages with additional variants. Volume three has six photographs in sixty-five pages with additional variants. In the scrapbooks, in the main, the photographs are embedded within newspaper articles. In some cases photographs are cut through very roughly as if Woolf wished to retain, and hence privilege, the printed word; for example, bifurcating an image of Baldwin, the Prime Minister, in favour of the text. The scrapbooks’ combination of images and articles is a lumpy mixture.
Other modernist women writers also made scrapbooks, including Marianne Moore who produced two major scrapbooks between 1909 and 1914 (Brinkman). But Moore’s differs greatly from Woolf’s. Moore used commercially produced books, unlike Woolf, and Moore inserted very personal items such as letters of invitation.

In this collage the photographs are not selected in the same manner as photographs in the scrapbooks, but detached from their newspaper narratives. But the detachment does not depoliticize each image. What emerges from the very neat, clean grouping and close kinship of format is a more intense focus – especially with the insertion of the kitsch, Spanish postcard-like image of Jesus Christ. The photographs tell a visual, not a textual, story. I think the page is interesting as one example of the ways in which visual ephemera can sometimes articulate messages more profoundly than narrative. Here the cut photographs display an aggressive approach to each image in a sustained aesthetic. Like the photo-montages of the artist John Heartfield, the page deflates and exposes politics – in this case patriarchy. In other words, such ephemera offer the register of imagination, and hence affect, with multiple meanings from multiple viewers and receptions. The page is heterochronic combining, as Barthes said, the two temporal spaces of photographs: the “there-then,” the newspapers, and the “here-now,” the viewer’s reception. In addition, as Giorgio Agamben argues in Infancy and History, every work “can be regarded as the prologue (or rather the broken cast) of a work never penned” (3). Fragments of visual materials, drawn from archives, force us to adopt multidisciplinary approaches, since formalism is not possible, and allow us to think about Woolf’s “broken casts.”

Putting to one side Agamben’s crucial work on the Holocaust and his more political writings if I may, his The Signature of All Things is a thoroughgoing account of the semiotic significance of signature in cultural valuations. Agamben indeed defines modernism as the “absolutizing of the signature, that is a doctrine of the constitutive primacy of signatures over signification” (77); for example, as in the Glenn Horowitz New York gallery sale of Woolf items initially priced at $4,500,000. Woolf herself had differing views about signatures. She was very interested in famous signatures. In Orlando Lord Palmerston’s signature is on the document that pronounces “indisputably” that Orlando is a woman (255). Woolf’s fascination with the political significance of signatures begins in Passionate Apprenticeship where she describes the parish account books of 1634 in the Church of All Saints, St. Ives as bearing the signature of Oliver Cromwell (150). And, later in life, visiting Stratford-on-Avon, she notes that the caretaker at the New Place shared her belief that there is “only one genuine signature of Shakespeare” (D4 220). Woolf was often asked for her signature; for example, by Dame Adelaide Livingstone for the manifesto of the International Peace Campaign (RN 284), and by Hugh Walpole (in an appeal to the Home Secretary on behalf of Arnold Bennett’s wife disputing his will) (L5 114). Proof copies of her publications were sent to Woolf for signature, for example “Street Haunting” (L4 100). Woolf also loved the affectively charged aesthetics of signatures. Violet Dickinson, Woolf noted, “scrawled with a certain round and deceptive signature” (L1 233). A copy of the Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia betrayed other signatures (CR2 40). And Woolf was immensely proud of visiting a solicitor “with cheque and signature” to acquire the lease of 52 Tavistock Square (D2 288), so much so that she records she “spent a shilling on a plate of beef” (ibid).
But Woolf also argues in *Jacob’s Room* that “it is no use trying to sum people up” (135) and was suspicious about biographies of herself. “No biographer could possibly know this imp. fact about my life [Woolf’s vision of “a fin rising on a wide blank sea”] in the late summer of 1926” (D3 153). Woolf then meditates on the material and historical conditions of signatures as gestures, rather than on signatures as summations. As Agamben argues “the matter” of writing is always “a question of gesture” (*Idea* 37). In his work on the artist Cy Twombly, Agamben notes that Twombly’s gestures are contingent on spaces of reflection (“Bellezza” 5). Similarly Woolf’s urgent need to sign her initials below almost every photograph of herself in her albums is a means of increasing her spatial duration.

Although Woolf’s gestures are clearly evident this still begs the question of how exactly should we address Woolf’s differing uses of media? Can visual artefacts be approached in the same way as literary artefacts? What methodologies are appropriate? And for what purpose? At first glance writing and photography, for example, inhabit completely different critical worlds. Marjorie Garber indeed cautions against the easy slippage into visual media critiques by humanities scholars. In what Garber refers to as “discipline envy,” writing about the visual arts has allowed scholars to reach a greater number of audiences and can appear, Garber claims, merely trendy and an attempt to be sexy (53). Although, thinking about my research for *Snapshots of Bloomsbury*, I should say that my excitement at discovering Woolf’s use of different camera models and investigating the technical formats of her cameras is not an excitement shared by many, and should be classified as, what in Britain is termed, anorak research rather than “sexy.”

But certainly Garber’s premise is important. Critics do have to learn the fundamental grammars of any one visual media before embarking on a critique. So in the case of Woolf’s photographs, certainly camera and photographic features, such as the fixed lens of the Frena camera or the more flexible vest-pocket Kodak camera, partly determine choices of object and frame—just as they did for the painter Munch when he bought a vest-pocket Kodak with an automatic release in 1902. Before judgments can be made about Woolf’s ideas, the obvious grammars of black and white, of print sizes, and choices of photographic reproductions such as postcard reproduction, need consideration. For example, the Woolfs chose different sizes for different kinds of images. A photograph of their Singer automobile is printed 13 x 18 centimetres and dominates a whole album page (L5 61). Martin Ferguson Smith, a classics scholar, in a detailed scholarly account has very helpfully corrected Virginia’s misattribution of the Acropolis in the image (and following Woolf, misattributions by critics including Hermione Lee, Elizabeth Richardson, and myself). The building in the photograph is the temple of Olympian Zeus not the Acropolis (although the temple is only five hundred metres away from the Acropolis). But, although mentioning Woolf’s memory of her earlier 1906 visit, Smith downplays the more significant issue of multi-disciplines: of psychobiography, visual grammar
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and syntax, and the cultural moment (Smith 62). For example, as important as what is behind the four figures, is what, or rather who is in front? Who took the photograph? Why did the Woolfs choose a postcard format for this image and then increasingly for images of their friends, for Monk's House, for the garden, and even for Monk's House pond (there are over thirty images reproduced on postcards in the albums)? And, the most significant question, why the misattribution by Woolf?

As Virginia had said in a letter to Vita, she had been reminded of “my own ghost coming down from the Acropolis” and of her 1906 visit (L5 62). For Virginia, the photographic representation had to be the Acropolis in order for the memory to have affect. Psycho-biographic indices then are crucial and not only for Virginia. The visit was Leonard's first to Greece. Leonard was obsessed with Greek writing throughout his life and with Athens in particular. He called Virginia Aspasia in his diaries (and “Aspasia” appears in a manuscript of Jacob's Room). Aspasia was the mistress of Pericles, who, Leonard thought, made Athens in the fifth century a universal model for civilised society, and Leonard frequently quoted Pericles's funeral oration described by Thucydides. Pericles had ordered the building of the Parthenon on the Acropolis. Leonard also associated the Acropolis with photography. There he had met a photographer whose “intelligence, knowledge, humanity of this man were extraordinary” Leonard noted in his autobiography.13 Not surprisingly, both Woolfs might wish to willingly mistake a Greek building or two.

Alongside the discipline of psychobiography then, we should also employ visual studies. To indulge in what Garber calls sexy research, but is clearly anorak not sexy, Leonard could have used a Kodak self-timer. The Kodak self-timer was available as early as 1918 and, for the same camera model as Woolf owned, is priced at $1.25 in a 1920 catalogue — relatively cheap (McKeown). But there is no cable release line in the photograph and the lack of movement of the figures combined with the amount of foreground suggests a human photographer (although — more anorak research — Greece had far fewer professional photographers than any other European country at this date). The figures are advertising their individuality in their stances and by the use of detail such as clothes and bags (perhaps wary of placing these objects out of reach in a public space). The photograph creates stability for the figures.

External space is a symbolic objective correlative, and together with mood, clothing, and objects, creates a network of representative meanings. The single focal point focuses personalities. It is a frozen moment of visual intensity and self-projection. And what of the visual grammar of reproduction? Why postcard reproduction? Particularly because postcard reproductions for snapshots were produced by Kodak as early as 1910, and there were millions reproduced each year from that date. The aesthetic meaning is important. But equally psychobiography can contribute meaning. Perhaps the solid postcard format counterbalanced the narrative indeterminacy of snapshots for amateurs. Ironically, the inventor of the snapshot and Kodak, George Eastman, diagnosed with terminal cancer, sat at his piano, also in 1932, three months before this photograph, and shot himself in the heart (Brayer). But if postcard reproductions were available as a format as early as 1910, the question is: why do the Woolfs use this format much more in the late 1930s? This might indicate the Woolfs’ increasing need to retain and make permanent their views of the world as well as permanency for their friendships. The choice of reproductive format, the visual language of the image, its size, and the Woolfs’ categorization are all as
significant as the building in the rear of the photograph. To understand any visual image, and its resonance for the Woolfs, requires a multidisciplinary approach: psychobiography, architecture, classics, visual studies, and cultural studies.

To return again to the collage. As I suggested, the lack of spatial separation between the images is an important feature. The use of space is a key feature of any visual media. It is a key visual grammar. For example, the painter Seurat utilized a spatial trick of visual perception in his paintings. Using a very bright red in the centre of some paintings and juxtaposing red immediately with green, Seurat knew that the viewer’s eye would carry the outline of the red image into the green as a ghostly shape, or space, reinforcing the presence of the red object. The space of an image also carries its memory, most literally in the theft of the Mona Lisa from the Louvre in 1911, when, after the theft, more people came to view the space in which the Mona Lisa had hung, between Titians and Correggios, than had previously visited the painting (Cumming). In the collage, the choice of space, or more importantly, the choice to omit space, is an important aspect of visual grammar.

These visual grammars also draw on historical, biographical and cultural contexts. Visual technologies are a syntax and cannot be aesthetically evaluated separate from the cultural moment in which Woolf worked. In an essay about film, Fredric Jameson sketched out the parameters of an appropriate critical response to media. A medium, he said, is defined by the conjunction and admixture of three components: the form of aesthetic production, the specific technology of the medium, and its social and institutional locations. Going further than Jameson, the critic Mieke Bal, in “Working With Concepts,” argues that “the analyst [must see] that lines, motifs, colours and surfaces, like words, contribute to the production of meaning” (6). So, following Jameson and Bal, perhaps a hexachordal method of multidisciplinarity would be helpful way of approaching Woolf’s use of multimedia. First, we could play across the visual media Woolf knew or might have known; second, examine the cultural and artistic events of the moment; third, assess any psychobiographic features; fourth, detail references to visual media in Woolf’s work; fifth, analyze how the stylistic quality of media inflected her writing; and, sixth, and most obviously, assess her choices of content. A hexachordal, multidisciplinary approach, constantly juxtaposing critical components, offers a better synthesis. Derrida calls these critical mixtures performative acts implying that affect is never a single, stable aesthetic.

Woolf herself held contradictory views about disciplines. She lamented how “three-quarters of the novels that appear today are concocted of experience to which no discipline, except the mild curb of any grammar and the occasional rigours of chapter division, has been applied” (CE2 132). In “An Essay on Criticism” she deplored a publisher who suggested “the softening feminine influence is absent—either through training, discipline, death or situation” and furiously countered “whether we are to understand by this that women are incapable of training, discipline, death or situation, we do not know” (CE2 256).

But equally Woolf admired writers who resisted disciplines and categorization. In her essay, ”The Russian Point of View,” Woolf celebrates Dostoevsky’s ability to be “incapable it seems, of submitting to the control of logic or the discipline of poetry” (CE1 242). She favoured de Quincy’s more creative discipline which was “executed,” she argues “most drastically, by the fitness of his own ear” (SCR 134). In her personal life Woolf supported the breaking of disciplines, noting that her friend Madge Vaughan always tried to allow her children “to go their own way” against Will Vaughan’s “discipline and true pedagogic
manner” (L1 157). She liked the way in which “forcing one’s brain the other way for a time” enabled her to “see how vigorously it spurts back” (D4 139), and celebrates Orlando’s urge “to leave the rule and discipline of the world to others” (O 160). In “How It Strikes a Contemporary,” Woolf ridiculed a false nostalgic view of past discipline: “Once upon a time, we must believe, there was a rule, a discipline, which controlled the great republic of readers in a way which is now unknown” (CE2 154). The breakdown of historical disciplines, Woolf acutely knew, opened up new social and cultural possibilities. Rancière suggests that writers in the 1920s and 1930s chose what he calls a “chaotic form” precisely to show that the “reigning order is as much a disorder” (61).

Woolf’s grasp of the gestural and emotional significance of visual materials and multidisciplinarity is very evident in her short fictions. In “Solid Objects,” John gains an identity and an affective, aesthetic understanding from the objects he collects which cease to have utility value (Mark). “Blue and Green” forefronts the significance of perceptions as, for example, in Woolf’s choice of a pictorial syntax (ibid). “The affinities between” Bertrand Russell’s move beyond mind and matter dualisms and Woolf’s writings, as Patricia Waugh argued in her plenary at last year’s Woolf conference, challenge a view of creativity as a teleological process (32). Bergson might be mentioned here. Although Woolf famously claimed never to have read Bergson he was certainly influential on Bloomsbury. Bergson describes his concept of “duration” as a virtual multiplicity. In Time and Free Will, Bergson says that duration involves “heterogeneous moments” which “permeate one another” (72). In a letter to Harald Höffding, Bergson is at pains to point out that this “reciprocal penetration” is “very different from (simple) numerical multiplicity” requiring the “rupture of many frameworks, something like a new method of thought” (367), a little like Woolf’s understanding of multiple visual media. For example, the compositional structure of photo albums shapes Woolf’s short fictions, “Portraits,” as I have noted in Modernist Women and Visual Cultures (2002). “Portraits” are like an album of eight synchronic moments in the lives of bourgeois women and men in modernity. The fictions are creative modernist image/texts which utilize scopic devices of looks and gazes but are set within a homology of seeing and feeling.

Modernist aesthetics work against fixed genres, what Rancière calls “regimes of representation” (24), and Bloomsbury above all, as I describe earlier, was fascinated by mixed media. Modernism’s complex positionality of subject/object in relation to the visual is an important feature of Woolf’s writings. This is never over-determined by disciplinary constraints. I would argue that Woolf’s exploration of visual media allowed her to explore multiple “selves.” An example is her essay “The Cinema” in which by responding emotionally to the chance appearance of a shadow on a screen, the narrator experiences multiple consciousnesses—the rational viewer of a newsreel, and the affectivity engendered by a shadow (CE4). In his short essay about the films of Guy Debord, the French situationist, Agamben, building on Deleuze’s cinema writings, argues that “cinema can enter a zone of indifference where all genres tend to coincide” and that it is repetition (like Woolf’s constant photographic repetition in her albums) which, Agamben claims, gives cinema its potential (“Difference” 330). Agamben seems to share Woolf’s understanding of cinema as a “transcendental condition of montage” (ibid). It is not surprising to find similarities between Agamben’s writing and Woolf’s. A major feature of Agamben’s work is his fluid movement across the borders of disciplines and, like Woolf, his focus on marginal objects,
in Agamben’s case toys and fetishes, in what he calls “third space,” the space “between subject and object” described in his book Stanzas (33). Stanzas is a multidisciplinary text mixing methods and concepts from poetry, philosophy, and art. Separate disciplines, Agamben argues, are inadequate responses to the demands of modernity and to representations of subjectivity in modernity.

Part of what Agamben describes can be seen in Cézanne’s paintings with the sheer physicality of paint and his thick painterly gestures. Woolf shared Bloomsbury’s “intoxication” with Cézanne agreeing that Cézanne’s paintings have “some very mysterious quality of potation” (D1 140-1). She revelled in a Bloomsbury discussion of a Cézanne painting: “6 apples in the Cézanne picture. What can 6 apples not be”—the answer is that there are seven apples in the painting (ibid). Woolf read and owned Roger Fry’s Cézanne, Ambroise Vollard’s un-translated Paul Cézanne, and the Wildenstein catalogue Homage to Paul Cézanne. Woolf often sets up an opposition between a writing that uses words intransitively as a painter uses colours, and writing that uses words to show and prove things. But Cézanne was only one of the many modern visual media that influenced Woolf. For example, much later the Hogarth Press commissioned work from McKnight Kauffer known for his multimedia and painting, posters, and graphic design. The cover of Leonard’s Quack, Quack designed by Kauffer draws on many genres: painting, advertising’s geometric shapes, and photography and graphics.

Conclusion

So to conclude, painting, photography, cinema, architecture, graphics, advertising, and many more arts, offered Woolf differing representations of subjectivity. Her work is characterised by fluidity across disciplines making the nature of the first person pronoun problematic but never empty. In contradistinction to Mao and Walkowitz, I would argue that we have to read the active play of Woolf’s visual languages as dynamically as Woolf’s narrative languages. And, by analysing the relationship between Woolf’s use of media and her writing hexachordially we can resist reduction and can allow the various ‘texts’ to speak their own complexity free from tight generic signatures—to offer a genuine multidisciplinary Woolf and multiple Woolfs.

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Notes

2. Quoted in Jean-François Chevrier, “Between Terror and Ecstasy,” Tate Etc. 24 (Spring 2012): 70.
4. André Malraux’s terms musée imaginaire and “museums without walls” characterize not only the decontextualisation of art in through reproductions of art, but also characterise the viewer’s imagination in creating

5. http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~hou02067
6. In addition, some identifications and paginations seem inaccurate.
7. See Snapshots of Bloomsbury.
9. “Anorak” is a British derogatory term for obsessive, narrowly focussed research. First used in the 1980s, the term is taken from the waterproof jackets (anoraks) worn by train-spotters (known for obsessive attention to train numbers) at British railway stations.

Works Cited


History was the focus of my very first presentation at a Woolf conference, at Bard College in 1994. The motivation for that paper was a chance remark by a very UnWoolfi an administrator at my own university: “£500 a year? What would that mean now? $100,000? $500,000? Woolf was so out of touch with real life.” My response was captured in my title “Opening Historical Doors to the Room.” To understand Woolf’s metaphor, and the material foundation that supported it, I argued, we needed to engage both monetary and psychological conversion: in addition to knowing what £500 would mean in 1990s dollars, we needed to know more about Woolf’s attitude to money, plus “what, in 1928/9, £500 would buy” (210).¹ Remembering that paper, I am struck by at least two observations that are pertinent today: that motivations for writing are often attempts to dispute problematic assumptions, and that, while history itself is now a contested approach, it is also a valuable tool in entering the fray.

My present paper is prompted by another need to speak back to another deliberately provocative remark, one made by Eric Hayot at the 2011 conference of the Modernist Studies Association: “Nobody doing historical work has added anything new to our understanding of modernism.” What followed was a heated exchange, but such controversy isn’t out of place at MSA. Subsequently, Hayot wrote a more moderate, but indeed more challenging, critique of historical studies, published in a special issue of New Literary History devoted to a re-examination of “context.” Introducing the issue, editor Herbert F. Tucker admits that the problem lies in an “historical contextualism narrowly construed,” and he expresses his hope that a revivified sense of context would be “capable of sponsoring inquiries freshly elastic in outlook and vitally close in their findings” (vii). Nonetheless, at least some of the essays attack current historical work for restrictive practice, and verge on a call for a “posthistoricist” turn (Felski 576). Eric Hayot argues that periodization instantiates a “logics of totality” and embeds “the concepts of originality, development, and belatedness” by “emplotting” historical narratives with “beginnings, middles, and ends” (745). Rita Felski, despite her own excellent work in feminist historicism, mounts a multi-pronged critique, highlighting four points:

a) the literary work gets lost in an historical maze of surrounding social texts, and becomes just another social text like any other;

b) the literary work is locked in “a single moment of origin” (579), creating an unbridgeable distance between the text and us;

c) the literary historian adopts one of two totalizing narratives; either the literary text is complicit in “manufacturing docile bourgeois subjects” or it heroically performs “subversion, resistance, negation, transgression, and rupture” (589);

d) the result is to deny agency to the literary text and the importance of affect for the reader.
Felski thus inveighs against the use of “context as a kind of box or container in which individual texts are encased and held fast,” and castigates those “coffinlike containers called periods” (577, 590). In response, I look beyond “Opening Historical Doors to the Room” to engage the larger question of “Opening History.”

My first question of such attacks on history is, “where is Woolf?” While Felski does claim that one ought to be able to make any writer, with Woolf as her example, “an object of obsession” (582)—something indeed many of us have been doing for years—she makes no mention either of Woolf’s own advocacy for a flexible historicism, or of historical scholarship on Woolf. But does not Felski sound like Woolf when she writes, “Time is not a tidy sequence of partitioned units, but a profusion of whirlpools and rapids, eddies and flows, in which objects, ideas, images, and texts from different moments swirl, tumble, and collide in ever-changing combinations and constellations” (578)? Is not Woolf’s model of historical reading one that urges the need, quoting Felski, “to acknowledge affinity and proximity alongside difference, to grapple with the coevalness and connectedness of past and present” (579), to listen to “voices that speak back to our own explanatory frameworks and classificatory schemes” (580), and to respond to “the power of art to make us think and feel differently” (583)? In my 1998 essay “Virginia Woolf and the Varieties of Historicist Experience,” I argued that Woolf was an historicist theorist endorsing precisely these views. Yet Felski’s authorities for a revivified practice are the male theorists Bruno Latour, Michael Serres, Walter Benjamin, Jonathan Gil Harris, Bruce Robbins, and Tony Bennett; she cites two female critics, Jennifer Fleissner and Wai Chee Dimmock, but no Woolf. And what of Woolf scholarship? How vulnerable is it to Felski’s critique? In the last volume of Selected Papers from the conference Contradictory Woolf in Glasgow, there are approximately 120 references to context, not including references to titles; even allowing for the fact that approximately half of them are in the first two essays—by Judith Allen and Michael Whitworth—in which context is a main theme, that still indicates a pervasive fascination. But context appears in an amazing multiplicity of combinations: variants include historical context, external context, cultural context, Western context, narrative context, public context, urban context, intellectual context, mathematical context, and institutional contexts; contexts of our reading such as academic context and research contexts; and also transformative and flexible constructs such as new contexts, fuller context, wider context, shifting context, multiple contexts, and Karen Levenback’s marvelous “whatever context” (285). Clearly in Woolf scholarship, historicism is not dead, nor is it narrow, constraining, nor fixed in a single rooted idea. Woolf’s own flexible historicism models a way we can do historical work without being restrictive or totalizing, and Woolf studies can and should become an important voice in debates concerning any “posthistoricist” turn.

I am not dismissing the value of re-assessment. Again from my past, I remember a challenge mounted by Sonita Sarker at the 1997 MLA: most Woolf criticism, she charged, is written from the position of looking over Woolf’s shoulder—too strongly identified, too close. There was truth in her “accusation,” but there is also justification for adopting the “inside” view. Faced with the need to speak back to long-entrenched assumptions, “over the shoulder” readings usefully correct and counterbalance what has been, in Woolf studies, often the more dominant position of frontal attack. How often we have needed to say, but she doesn’t mean it in that way! Yet the other half of our work is to see the larger
picture, to move away from looking over Woolf’s shoulder to a position on the sidelines, and at some distance away, seeking to understand what role in both past and present culture Woolf’s writing plays. There is no question here of abandoning context, but we need to confront the underlying challenge of the NLH special issue, and to question how we use context and where in relation to our historical materials we as critics and readers stand. In my own work, I can identify three critical modes, or voices, or strategies, which I will call “ventriloquize,” “surround,” and “bounce.” To some extent, the three modes track an evolution in my work, with the important qualification that no voice or strategy is abandoned along the way. But, in the context of challenges to historical criticism, it is the bounce, I suggest, that that most helps us to open history.

About ventriloquize, I need to say very little. The position of writing over Woolf’s shoulder says it all. The one point perhaps to be asserted is the crucial importance of this position, and—since Woolf has arguably been subject to more summary ad hominem judgment (see my opening example) than any other major writer—the continual need for explaining and clarifying her views, her voice, and her style. When I first discovered Woolf, it was as a teacher, not a student, since—and this in itself is telling—I had no exposure to her writings throughout my undergraduate and graduate career. At the time, Woolf was recognized for her handling of time and psychology, and her friendships in Bloomsbury, but it needed a host of ventriloquist voices to reveal her engagement with feminism, sexuality, and war, let alone the numerous topics that appear on our conference program, such as empire, science, music, dance, cities, nature, animals, photography, and publishing, to name but a few. There is transformative potential in ventriloquizing voices, and we need to employ them; but as our criticism inevitably moves to comparisons and/or contextualization, we begin to step back from our subject and move to the mode of surround.

Comparative and contextual work moves us to a position along the sidelines as we surround our primary subject with related texts or relevant social events. The wider, more distanced view reveals more connections between Woolf and her world than we previously saw, while the broader view offers a new perspective and occasions an alteration in scale. Think of the way Rachel looks back on England from the departing ship in The Voyage Out, or Cam looks back on the island from the position of the boat at the end of To the Lighthouse, or the way Eleanor views Devonshire after her trip to Spain in The Years: for each of them what was large becomes small. The diminished Woolf, smaller in her role of being merely a part of circulating discourse, appears less exceptional, in the meaning of unique (although that doesn’t preclude making evaluative judgments about the exceptional brilliance, breadth, sensibility, or perhaps extraordinary blindspots, in her work). Surrounding Woolf in this way can overcome what Felski critiques as “a division between ‘exceptional texts’ that exceed their historical moment and ‘conventional’ or ‘stereotypical’ texts that remain determined by it” (574), while at the same time, the surround exposes a larger Woolf than the writer frequently confined, in general studies of modernism, to aesthetic and/or feminist space.

Seeking a methodology of the “surround,” I entitled a recent essay “Paradigms of Global Consciousness in and around Virginia Woolf” with the irony that the title of the volume changed, in the process of publication, from Global Woolf to Virginia Woolf’s Bloomsbury. The new title installed precisely the opposite connotations from those I intended, confining the scope to the limited circle of Bloomsbury and even placing this
complex and contradictory circle under the possession of Woolf. In contrast, my surrounding of Woolf incorporated books on history and geography stimulated by League of Nations’ educational policies, the Indian writer Bipin Chandra Pal, T. S. Eliot, and Mulk Raj Anand (and even, transhistorically, Sir Thomas Browne). And the difference from ventriloquizing emerged in at least two ways. First, learning to speak in the enemy’s voice. It is very easy, and especially tempting in Woolf circles, to target more hegemonically inclined writers like Eliot and Priestley—I name two that I’m guilty of targeting myself—and use them as antagonists to explain what we consider Woolf’s more enlightened views. But the surround position requires a more impartial stance. As Raymond Williams wrote, “an ‘enlightened Radical or Liberal ought,’ as Mill said of Coleridge, ‘to rejoice over such a Conservative’ as Eliot,” arguing further that “if Eliot is read with attention, he is seen to have raised questions which those who differ from him politically must answer, or else retire from the field” (302). All the works I discussed were concerned with multiple voices, all making efforts to hold together the opposites of unity and diversity, together raising common questions with which modernist responses to incipient globalization were having to deal. In successive revisions of my essay, I tried to be less polemic and derogatory about Eliot, and to better acknowledge his perceptive analysis of the problems, in balance with my critique of his proposed solutions and my analysis of why they break down.

The second difference from ventriloquizing involves attending to what Christopher Bayly terms the “multi-centric” origins of change. The critic who surrounds comprehends alternative sources of Woolf’s ideas elsewhere in the culture. Mulk Raj Anand, for example, developed in his autobiographical writings what I described as “the novelisation of conversation” (172) and “a crystallisation of voices” (173), another source for fluid discourse modeling, and one that takes us from looking over Woolf’s shoulder to an Indian perspective looking at her. Anand’s suggestion that Woolf had a Hindu sensibility relocates her in his terms. To quote from my essay, “cultural voices enter and inform the work; the work responds to and leads back into the flow of ideas around it”; we enter a realm of “circulating global talk,” “rather like the relation Woolf traces between Chaucer’s art and the Paston family letters”: “a way of thinking with vast differences in application and articulation, but with interconnecting bridges nonetheless” (160–61; 173).

Tracking multi-directional global flows leads to a mobile history informed by what I’ve called “the bounce factor,” in which words of the past bounce against each other and out against us. It is rather like taking the varying and transformative effects of repeated words in Woolf’s texts that Judith Allen discussed in her talk last year as an approach to cultural history. The bounce also resembles what Michael Levenson, in that special NLH issue, terms “adjacencies.” Arguing that “the consolidation of modernism in the 1920s was not due to the excavation of subtle symbols, but to the simmering of conversation, the unstoppable circulation of jokes and curses, critical dicta and common-readerly buzz” (677), Levenson supports a historicism based on “a network of heterogeneous manifestations—artifacts, utterances, inscriptions,” (676), “which needn’t be elevated to ‘frameworks’ or ‘metanarratives’” (675). But to go beyond simple juxtaposition to interaction, I add the bounce.

My increasing awareness of the bounce factor comes from my work on Modernism: Keywords—a forthcoming book with Wiley Blackwell Press. The approach derives from Raymond Williams’ Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (1976), and is
grounded on the premise that we can best understand the character and thought of an era not through its dominant beliefs, but through its problems and debates. Rather than a periodization that sums up an era’s beliefs, a keywords approach tracks controversial words that mattered enough to become magnets of circulating cross-talk. For the concept of bouncing words, think of the word poppycock in *The Years*. “Poppycock” first appears used by Nicholas in the 1917 chapter, where Eleanor asks what it means, and Renny replies that it’s American, applying the same designator to Nicholas, who, however, refutes the label, saying that he is a Pole. Later in the Present Day section, poppycock is remembered by North as a word used by Sara sometime during the war, making it uncertain whether Sara picked up the word from Nicholas, or she from him. In her essay “American Fiction,” Woolf uses poppycock to illustrate new words coined by Americans; in the larger cultural transmission, however, the word was very possibly derived from the Dutch *poppe-kak*, meaning “doll’s poop.” We may be reminded of Judith Allen quoting Bakhtin: “there are as many meanings of a word as there are contexts,” while the contexts themselves are “in a state of constant tension, or incessant interaction and conflict” (8).

A bouncing keyword in the modernist era was the word “atom,” which of course triggers immediate associations with Woolf: Miss Anning and Mr Serle thinking of themselves as “atoms, motes […] and their lives […] as long as an insect’s and no more important” (“Together and Apart” 115); visions “of flesh turned to atoms” (*To the Lighthouse* 204); “impressions” as “an incessant shower of innumerable atoms” (“Modern Fiction” 190); Eleanor’s “Millions of things came back to her. Atoms danced apart and massed themselves” (*The Years* 395); and the young who “smash to atoms” (*Between the Acts* 214). But the varying meanings in Woolf’s texts are circulating in the discourses of the modernist period too: Marinetti, generally a writer taken as adversarial to Woolf, writes, “we should express the infinite smallness that surround us, the imperceptible, the invisible, the agitation of atoms.” In *Memoirs of a Social Atom*, W. E. Adams—the son of a plasterer and the editor of a local weekly—describes himself as “a small speck on the surface of society” but still affirms that “the hopes and aspirations of the common people” are important to record. Henry Adams contemplates the reduction of “the atom of gas to pure motion,” which he finds emblematic of a “supersensual world,” powered by “chance collisions of movements”; more fearfully, a character in a John Buchan novel worries about “the danger of splitting into nebulae of whirling atoms,” yet for David Lowe, the divisible atom was proof that the earth was “as fluid and fluxible and flexible as thought itself,” drawing us “nearer the divine breath.” In his poem “Relativity,” D. H. Lawrence celebrated “quantum theories” for creating uncertainty, and making him feel “as if the atom were an impulsive thing always changing its mind,” while for Havelock Ellis, “the very structure of the ‘atom’ [was] melting into a dream” and the “physical world” was becoming “more impalpable and visionary.” Bart Kennedy took the new atomic model as a sign of cosmic continuity: seeing the atom as the “macrocsm” of the world as “a shining transplendent whole.”

Clearly what is at issue in these circulating words is not science. A keywords approach frequently concerns not what a word means, but what it is passing for. What “atom” is passing for here is a new modernist perception of the fragment, balancing the minuteness of individual monads against the vastness and complexity of the chaotic patterns in which they play a part. The tensions are evident: between isolation and singularity; between
disintegration and interconnectedness; between anxiety about the dissolution of the previous grounds of knowledge and excitement about the new possibilities and freedoms the new modeling implies. The diversity in response to this foment makes it impossible to slot modernist into any periodizing coffin box; at the same time, the repeated use of a particular image suggests a cultural interconnectedness of common thoughts. A common disturbance is circulating. Writers are writing “atom” when they mean minute particle or chaotic motion, not only because the image captures the imagination so much better than abstract terms, but also because the atom suggested something partly unknowable, something in excess of normal perception, and something participant in profound and fundamental change. “Atom” is a modernist keyword, and Woolf’s using it is not exceptional in the sense of unusual; the word is part of her public sphere. What is exceptional is the extent to which she herself captures the multiple connotations of atom, revealing how well attuned she was to the turbulent thoughts of her time.

An open history is like a dance of atoms, a landscape in motion, a vast field of chaotically bouncing balls. They bounce on the ground, ricochet off each other, pass from hand to hand, and bounce out to the watchers too. Sometimes we catch a ball and hold it and use it, but it is slippery and we are liable to lose our grip. And what we are likely to see is a rapid series of still shots, capturing only partial aspects, although long exposure and slow watching help us imaginatively to glimpse the whole. But together we can build a composite image, a task too complex for any one critic to do. For reading and writing are collective endeavors—or, to add one word to our conference epigraph: We take our life from “some collaboration in the collective mind.” Who then better to seek and defend an open history than the Woolf community, with its dedication to inclusivity, to the value of all approaches, and to the power of dialectically combining views?

Notes

1. Although A Room of One’s Own was first published in 1929, Woolf’s talks at Cambridge, which provided the foundation for this book, were presented in October 1928.

2. “The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong” (Geertz 452).

3. The quotations are drawn from the entry on “Atom” in Cuddy-Keane, Hammond, and Peat, Modernism: Keywords.

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“FULL OF EXPERIMENTS AND REFORMS”: VIRGINIA WOOLF, JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES, AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF ECONOMIC MODELING

by Alice Keane

Much of Bloomsbury’s fiction takes economics as a central concern—for example, Virginia Woolf’s Night and Day and The Years, as well as E. M. Forster’s Howards End and A Passage to India, and Leonard Woolf’s early anti-imperialist novel The Village in the Jungle. This is even more characteristic of Bloomsbury’s essays and polemics, including Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas. Mutually influencing each other in the multidisciplinary context of Bloomsbury, Keynes and Virginia Woolf—as well as Leonard Woolf and E. M. Forster—all, in varying ways, conceive of economic goals not as ends in themselves but as a basis for the production of art and the achievement of the good life. They work toward these aims by using a method of inquiry that, because it acknowledges uncertainty, is experimental and iterative, and yet paradoxically more accurate in representing the empirical conditions of the “real world” than overly reductionist neoclassical precision can yield.

Scholars of intellectual history have established a linkage between Keynesian macroeconomics and Bloomsbury’s philosophy, tracing influences on Keynes from G.E. Moore to Ludwig Wittgenstein. I argue for a further linkage among these two disciplines and Bloomsbury’s literature. Why, and to what effect, as Virginia Woolf reflects upon the interplay of economics and literature, does she repeatedly foreground contradiction, complexity, and irreducible vagueness? Woolf’s insistence upon acknowledging complexity constitutes useful and realistic exploration, mostly avoiding too-easy, and potentially erroneous, fixed certainties about what is necessary to achieve a fully engaged and sustainable artistic life. Woolf experiments with possibilities, some pragmatic and some impossibly utopian, to optimize her “model” for the woman artist of her own class in particular, but also with potentially more general applicability, in a changing modern England.

An essential piece of this puzzle relates to language, vagueness, and the acknowledgment of uncertainty in all of Woolf’s attempts at economic modeling. This characteristic is also crucial in Keynes’s development of the General Theory, as he moves from courting what he calls a kind of “grey” and “fuzzy” indeterminacy (Keynes’s Lectures 100-101), deliberately welcoming open dialogue and debate from others in his field, to crafting a mature and more concretely realized—but never fully fixed—empirical and theoretical model of the modern macroeconomy. Keynes’s non-absolutist approach in the General Theory is also consistent with the kind of small scale “experiments” that he advocates in his more utopian, even fanciful, 1930 essay, “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren,” and Woolf repeatedly privileges this kind of modest, empirical, experimental method as well. Although it has potential drawbacks, especially for those who are rightly impatient for much-needed socioeconomic change, one real benefit of employing such a method is that some kinds of errors may have a greater chance of becoming (to borrow a Joycean phrase) portals of discovery, and others may more easily be mitigated, allowing for course correction before significant negative consequences ensue.
Woolf in particular and Bloomsbury in general can shift modes from something akin to Keynes’s “grey, fuzzy” initial phase of modeling to a more precise and concrete kind of calculation or accounting, and back, whichever works best in a given economic scenario—or fictional scene. Both techniques remain available, avoiding extremes of either analytical abstraction that is no longer reasonably reflective of messy empirical reality, or utopian impracticality, in an atmosphere of experiment, change, and critical debate. Such a pragmatic valuing of openness to debate is similar to what Christine Froula has characterized as the sensus communis of Bloomsbury (3). This “double lens” of Bloomsbury’s modeling methodology, in economics and in language, is a useful way to characterize the process that enables the development of Woolf’s and Keynes’s interventions.

The thinkers and writers of Bloomsbury use both techniques on an experimental, ad hoc basis, maintaining the capacity to shift between them in theory and in practice. We can see this in the master economist Keynes’s, or Night and Day’s slightly absurd fictional character Ralph Denham’s, propensity for both detailed account-keeping and speculative leaps: each employs both, at the right times, to achieve his simultaneously pragmatic and idealistic aims. This “novel of fact,” as Woolf characterizes Night and Day, can be read usefully in conjunction with A Room of One’s Own, where the “£500 and a room” concept is itself complicated and problematized, to mutually illuminate the two works’ economic and sociocultural concerns.

Surely Woolf’s best-known aphorism on the subject of economics and literature, the one that readers are most apt to assume they can recall accurately, is that a woman must have five hundred pounds a year and a room of her own if she is to write fiction. That is not quite the way Woolf ever states the prescription in Room, however. Among several variations of the refrain that recur throughout Woolf’s polemic (37, 69, 88, 98, 109, 112, 116-17), one is voiced by a narrator who recounts the advice of one of Room’s fictionalized personae, Mary Beton: “She has told you how she reached the conclusion—the prosaic conclusion—that it is necessary to have five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door if you are to write fiction or poetry” (109). “Prosaic” and specific this advice may be, but it is immediately brought into question, for the once-removed “conclusion” of Mary Beton opens a paragraph that concludes with the narrator’s acknowledgment of error as a useful means of experimentation: “in a question like this truth is only to be had by laying together many varieties of error” (130).

Room calls for such women to lay their hands on resources that may admittedly be difficult to access but that are conceivably within reach given their implicitly assumed class positioning and cultural capital. But “£500” and “a room of one’s own” are considerably less concrete, more metaphorical, and thus more consistent with Woolf’s usual mode of rhetorical indeterminacy than they may initially appear. Even a literal exchange-value measure depends on the factor of time. Moreover, Woolf’s “five hundred pounds a year” carries, particularly in the context of Cambridge economics, historical and class connotations, metonymic elements that are at least as relevant as a precise accounting of purchasing power. Melba Cuddy-Keane, examining a number of articles published in The Nation and Athenaeum in early 1927, notes that “[s]etting perhaps the target figure that Virginia Woolf was to use one year later in A Room of One’s Own, Keynes asked, ‘How many authors are there in England who can reckon on earning from their books above £500 a year on the average?’” (63). Also, Alfred Marshall, Keynes’s mentor in economics, had prob-
lematically but influentially contended that material prosperity was the necessary condition of “moral growth,” and that a “gentleman” needed £500 a year for this to be possible (Skidelsky xxiii). If the latter is indeed Woolf’s source for this number, whether directly or through Keynes, this would not only underscore the indeterminacy in relative purchasing power of an identical fixed annual sum from Victorian to pre-Great Depression times, but would demonstrate that, like the class-inflected coinage of Three Guineas, Woolf’s central trope for money in Room is also class-inflected and drawn from Victorian commonplace. It simultaneously undoes this commonplace, by putting the sum in the hands of women instead of gentlemen, in a polemic that encourages them to imitate the rule-breaking virtues of Aphra Behn rather than the repressive “drawing room” norms urged upon Mary Carmichael’s grandmother.

Woolf’s model is insufficient to address the needs of “poor” poets, men or women, and that is a flaw. But it does allow enough flexibility for readers ranging from middle to upper-middle-class, with a prospect of earning their 500 pounds a year or so by wits or inheritance, valuing and calling upon Aphra Behn’s robust virtues or trying to move beyond Mary Carmichael’s drawing room limitations, to attempt a range of related, but never identical, experiments, building iteratively upon empirical failures and successes to improve the model. This prescription is, in essence, both Keynesian and Mooreist. On the one hand, Woolf recognizes that relative impoverishment can be degrading, both literally and in its impact on “heart, body, and brain all mixed together” (18), which we might, from her vivid description of the effects of scanty meals in a women’s college (17-18), characterize as “animal spirits,” even several years before Keynes’s famous promulgation of that term in the General Theory. But excess is similarly to be avoided: “watch in the spring sunshine the stockbroker and the great barrister going indoors to make money and more money and more money when it is a fact that five hundred pounds a year will keep one alive in the sunshine” (39). The seemingly “fixed” and exact variable of five hundred pounds a year is sufficient for independence, for a modern measure of as much artistic and personal freedom as the culture might allow for. It is neither grossly insufficient nor egregiously greedy. One can “stand roughly here”—as an indeterminate variable, it is Wittgensteinian, usefully vague. “Five hundred a year” is Keynesian not only in its emphasis on refusing to privilege excessive accumulation (39), but also in its somewhat utopian time frame of “a century or so” (117), a forward-looking prospect that Keynes would later invoke in the General Theory and “Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren.”

Suzanne Raitt has noted that “[t]he fantasy of ‘a room of one’s own’…is present with especial force in Night and Day” (xxi). Both works treat economic matters in general, and the question of a material basis for art in particular, in depth at a point in Woolf’s oeuvre that is before—in the case of Room, just on the verge of—the economic and political crises of the 1930s and the development of Keynes’s General Theory. How can we interpret the necessities for the artist that Woolf lays out in Room in terms that also apply to Woolf’s earlier characterization of a young man, Ralph Denham, portrayed in a dilapidated and oppressively domestic “room” of his own in Night and Day, as he weighs his earnings from an oppressive profession and the risks and prospects of a literary vocation? Conversely, what of Woolf’s characterization of Mary Datchet, who attempts, in lieu of settling for a place in either the traditional domestic economy or the modern alienated
workforce, to seek a genuinely valuable and unalienated professional and political role, but at the cost of isolation?

There are rhetorical and figurative parallels, or perhaps a line of continued consideration, between the fictionalized “Mary” personae in Room and the fictional character of Mary Datchet in Night and Day. “What was the good, after all, of being a woman if one didn’t keep fresh, and cram one’s life with all sorts of views and experiments?” Mary asks, as she embodies a positive model of a modern, feminist working woman (76). For Ralph, who has managed to save “three or four hundred pounds” (25), but asks “What does it matter what sort of a room I have when I’m forced to spend all the best years of my life drawing up deeds in an office?” (27), escaping law for a cottage in the greenwood requires both an economic accounting and experimentation. Ralph has to consider the numbers; perhaps this is his own variation on his fiancée Katharine Hilbery’s preference for the precision of mathematics, for the numbers are useful, but not decisive.

This is a new kind of accounting: it reworks questions of value in a Mooreist vein, and the fuzzy equations to optimize this model sometimes call not only for accumulation but for speculation and risk-taking: value of coin, value of time, value of work and love and community are all brought into question and they are not always translatable in fixed and equivalent terms. Equally important is Ralph’s Keynesian recognition that, at a certain point, accumulation to the exclusion of all else destroys rather than promotes value. Exact accounting gives way to modernist indeterminacy; concepts of valuation are here best interpreted through the lens of economic anthropology. Ralph’s modernist accounting meets with Mary’s and Katharine’s approval, but Woolf’s more impersonal and distancing narrative voice seems to caution that it might not add up in his individual attempt. And yet Ralph’s new valuation of labor, time and money is very much akin to Woolf’s “500 pounds a year” read as metaphor in Room; it is the material basis for something else: independent, unalienated literary work performed within a marriage that is a quasi-modern partnership, and among a modernizing community of friends. This is a fictional iteration of the dual Bloomsbury model of “value,” one representation of what value and the “good life” in G. E. Moore’s terms might encompass in a modern economic context. Ultimately, perhaps Night and Day itself might be characterized as a “thought experiment,” drawing upon and mapping potentials for Bloomsbury’s own modernist experiments.

But the shift is not complete. For Bloomsbury, “fuzzy models” work best for literature—and economics, and, as Katharine’s and Ralph’s courtship suggests, perhaps even interpersonal relationships. As Megan Quigley has observed, Woolf and other modernist authors “probe […] vagueness as the best way to examine psychological depth, to depict sexual indeterminacy, or to register disenchantment with the capitalist, bourgeois, and symbolic status quo while still existing within those systems” (105). The economic element of these literary experiments is similarly modernist. Woolf’s move toward the vague, the un-enumerable, the unaccounted for, ties into new ways of thinking about economic matters and models—Keynesian ways, feminist ways, and potentially socioculturally and artistically transformative ways. Becoming modern, for Woolf in Night and Day, is about entering into new kinds of economies and reframing new measures of value, without abruptly or completely dropping the old, yet casting them into doubt and acknowledging their flaws.

Finally, there are larger questions that go largely unaddressed in Night and Day, and
that, although acknowledged in *Room*, do not constitute that polemic’s central focus. The domestic economy in *Night and Day* represents not only a waste of human potential, its repetitions and repressions allowing Katharine to use only a fraction of her mind, but it also supports the running of the professional, alienated economy—the hierarchical framework that Woolf critiques in *Three Guineas* as a progenitor of recurring violence and war. As Woolf herself revisits the “novel of fact” in the 1930s with *The Years*, she addresses a wider range of permutations of the domestic economy than in *Night and Day*, and she turns more directly to a critique of the macroeconomic circumstances that cannot be disentangled from her characters’ private dilemmas and experiential arcs. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf recasts the early thought experiments and feminist economic arguments of *Room*, radicalizing them to a greater extent in response to new historical necessity. Woolf’s economic model, altered and further radicalized in *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, expands to explore the necessity for wide-scale sociocultural change.

Keynes demonstrates a similar focus, albeit his goals are less radical, in the *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, published in 1936. There are striking parallels regarding modernist uncertainty and linguistic vagueness between Woolf’s claim that “Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end” (“Modern Fiction” 4) and Keynes’s observations about uncertainty, animal spirits, and the limits of strict rationality and mathematical formalization for making actual policy decisions under conditions of economic crisis and complexity. In Chapter 12 of the *General Theory*, Keynes offers a famous characterization of “animal spirits”:

> Most, probably, of our decisions to do something positive, the full consequences of which will be drawn out over many days to come, can only be taken as the result of animal spirits—a spontaneous urge to action rather than inaction, and not as the outcome of a weighted average of quantitative benefits multiplied by quantitative probabilities. (161-62)

Here, in contrast to traditional macroeconomic assumptions about “rational” economic behavior, Keynes underscores the role of irrationality in economic decision-making.

Virginia Woolf, as Alex Zwerdling among others has argued, is very much engaged throughout her oeuvre with the “real world,” and, foregrounding economic complexity and linguistic vagueness, Keynes emphasizes that his fellow economists must be also:

> […] in ordinary discourse, where we are not blindly manipulating but know all the time what we are doing and what the words mean, we can keep ’at the back of our heads’ the necessary reserves and qualifications and the adjustments which we shall have to make later on…Too large a proportion of recent ’mathematical’ economics are merely concoctions, as imprecise as the initial assumptions they rest on, which allow the author to lose sight of the complexities and interdependences of the real world in a maze of pretentious and unhelpful symbols. (297-98)

Linking this observation with “animal spirits,” when something akin to Freudian ego gives way to something akin to id, economic behavior cannot be captured adequately within
the formal equations of a mathematical model. Words, necessarily vaguer, then prove more usefully flexible, for they can convey a wider scope of information.

Secondly, both Woolf and Keynes conceive of money as a substrate, a material basis, for art and the "good life." This reflects an ongoing influence from G. E. Moore’s *Principia Ethica*. Moreover, following upon their recognition of modernist uncertainty and vagueness, Woolf and Keynes both invoke an iterative, experimental method as essential. Woolf opines in *Room* that “truth is to be had only by laying together many varieties of error” (130), and Keynes, in his 1937 essay, “The General Theory of Employment,” calls for continuing, collaborative work to refine his *General Theory*.

Both Keynes and Woolf thus examine contemporaneous structures of socioeconomic and political experience, taking them as a means of and a substrate for modernist literary experimentation and cultural intervention. In the aftermath of war and economic crisis, their approaches to the subject of economics can be situated in the context of Bloomsbury’s interdisciplinary modernism—an experimental modernist paradigm that changed over time and in significant ways in response to the forces of historical contingency. The key inflections of Keynes’s economic theory are not wholly bounded by the discipline of economics—rather, they encompass modernist concepts, rhetorical moves and symbols that are also literary and cultural. As literary critics or cultural historians, we *have* to understand Keynes from an interdisciplinary perspective in order to understand Bloomsbury's paradigm of the good life.

As a final point, what might the stakes be today, for pedagogy in both literature and economics? One recent comment from University of Chicago legal theorist and economist, Richard A. Posner, writing in 2010, begins to suggest the value of this kind of inquiry: "Economists may have forgotten *The General Theory* and moved on, but they have not outgrown it or the informal mode of argument that it exemplifies, which can illuminate nooks and crannies closed to mathematics" (287). Interdisciplinary work, the interdisciplinarity that Bloomsbury itself exemplifies, can, perhaps, help scholars working in different fields to illuminate those "nooks and crannies."

**Works Cited**


DESIRING STATUES¹ AND AMBIGUOUS SEXUALITIES IN JACOB’S ROOM

by Vara Neverow

Introduction

The multiple references to statuary in Jacob’s Room have generated significant scholarly response over the years, and much of the prior discussion of statuary has focused on the elegiac. For instance, Kathleen Wall contends that “Greek art [and by association, statuary] is used to figure forth Jacob Flanders’s mortality and other characters’ sense of loss” (193). I want to examine mainly the eroticism apparent in specific statues and will argue that most (if not all) references to statuary are infused with complex nuances of desire and that much of this statuary is linked directly to Jacob, particularly to his sexual allure and sexual ambiguity in the novel, whether he is the object of desire or is himself aroused.

In the published novel, Jacob is explicitly aligned with four classical Greco-Roman figures—the gods Hermes/Mercury and Dionysus/Bacchus, and the mythical heroes Ulysses and Achilles. In the holograph, Jacob is also implicitly associated with the gods Priapus and, I would argue, more subtly, Hermaphroditus. Jacob’s statuesque elements can also be connected to an actual historical figure, Antinous, who has survived in historical memory primarily through the statuary honoring him centuries after his untimely death in 130 CE.

The Missing Statues

In Chapter Eleven of the novel, Woolf focuses on Jacob’s visit to France, his first stop on his Continental grand tour. In Paris, he meets Edward Cruttendon and Jinny Carslake with whom he develops a rather complicated relationship that ends badly:

And finally under the arc lamps in the Gare des Invalides, with one of those queer movements which are so slight yet so definite, which may wound or pass unnoticed but generally inflict a good deal of discomfort, Jinny and Cruttendon drew together; Jacob stood apart. They had to separate. Something must be said. Nothing was said. (136-37)

But what has transpired? The aftermath of Jacob’s visit to Versailles with his new acquaintances is preserved in the published version of the novel, but the reasons for this discomfort are missing. In the holograph, Woolf includes variant versions of Edward and Jacob’s heated argument about art and indecency. In one of these passages, the narrator revisits the critical confrontation through the characters’ much later memories of the episode at Versailles: “The queer thing about this argument was that it was all stuck about, forever, in all their minds with pink hyacinths; a lozenge shaped bed; a yew hedge; the figure of Priapus, which stands or some other tapering White God” (Holograph 196). The longer
passage hints strongly that Jacob has been drawn into a sexual triangle with Jinny and Edward (see Neverow, “Editorial Risk-Taking”). The motif of a sexual threesome seems to be referenced specifically in the deleted section and also recurs in other relationships elsewhere in the novel.

Priapus, the god of fertility, couldn’t be more explicitly a desiring statue with his abnormally huge erect phallus indicating his procreative sexual function. His presence seems to be linked to Jacob’s own exceptional ability to procreate since Jacob apparently fathers at least two children during his short life—not only Florinda’s nameless offspring (*JR* 178), but also Sandra Wentworth Williams’s son, appropriately named Jimmy, a variant of Jacob (179).

Woolf’s reference to the “other tapering White God” is much more ambiguous but seems to be equally sexualized. I would speculate that the statue or figure of the White God is a depiction of Lugus, the God of Light, a Celtic god worshipped by the Gauls and mentioned by Julius Caesar in *De Bello Gallico* where he equates Lugus with the Roman god Mercury (“Lugus” 1203). As Miranda Green observes, “A number of gods in Gaul […] were represented with the triple-headed or triple-faced image” (171) or even equipped with triple *phalli*. Both Lugus and Mercury are associated with this mystical triadic symbol typical of Celtic religion, known also as Triplism. Green even references a polyphallic “bronze figurine of Mercury, from a cemetery at Tongeren in Belgium, […] [that] once boasted three *phalli* (one in the normal place, one on top of his head, and a third replacing his nose)” (184).

The obscure White God may also be a reference to a herm, typically a stone carving with the head or bust of Hermes topping a column that features only an erect bas-relief phallus. John Addington Symonds, a passionate late-Victorian advocate for Greek Love, makes reference to “a Term or Hermes that combines Aphrodite, Priapus, and Hermaphrodite in one—three heads upon a common pedestal—forming a trinity of sensuous joy” (425).

Significantly, Jacob, Edward and Jinny are visiting “the summer-house where Marie Antoinette used to drink chocolate” (135). Jill H. Casid confirms that a statue of Priapus could very well have been present in the gardens of Marie Antoinette’s *hameau*, her controversial ornamental farm located close to the Petit Trianon. Casid quotes a contemporary pamphlet, describing how:

Marie Antoinette and the political antagonist Théroigne de Méricourt, who led armed bands of revolutionary women, [are] represented dancing together encircling Priapus with a floral garland and fondling the statue’s enlarged phallus, creating the spectacular triple threat of the reduction of men to tools of pleasure, of nonreproductive sexuality, and of the transformation of nature into gardens for the production of perverting pleasures. (164)

Elizabeth Colwill discusses the lascivious depictions of the Queen, referencing the evolution of an “eighteenth century pornographic genre that highlighted Marie-Antoinette’s voracious sexual appetites, including her purported taste for women” (139). Colwill notes that Marie Antoinette was viewed not only as a “tribade” but also as ‘a ‘false’ rather than
Desiring Statues and Ambiguous Sexualities in *Jacob’s Room*

‘natural’ hermaphrodite, who lacked a man’s sexual organs but nonetheless mimicked his sexual performance” (159).

Woolf does not mention Hermaphroditus in the deleted passage or elsewhere in the novel, but the passing reference to Marie Antoinette may very well be a coy allusion to her notorious sexual ambiguity. Further, it is intriguing that Symonds describes Hermaphroditus on the same page where he discusses the triadic herm, defining Hermaphroditus as “a blending of two beauties forgotten by an oversight of nature” (425). Jacob himself seems to model these hermaphroditic elements. His extraordinary level of physical beauty is irresistible to both men and women. It is also possible that Jacob evokes the sensuous life-size Borghese sculpture of Hermaphroditus in the Musée de Louvre in Paris. Woolf deleted her metaphorical references to Priapus and the White God and never mentioned Hermaphroditus, but her allusions to other emotionally and erotically charged statues remain intact in the published version.

**Jacob Flanders and the “Reverse Galatea”**

Francesca Kazan identifies Jacob as “an enigmatic figure who reverses the familiar literary topos of the statue that comes to life through speech and movement” (714), arguing that Jacob himself is depicted as a statue. For instance, she references the passage in which Florinda says to Jacob, “You’re like one of those statues...in the British Museum” (81). She notes how Fanny Elmer, another of Jacob’s lovers, envisions Jacob as increasingly “more statuesque, noble, and eyeless than ever” after he has left for the Continent. Only by visiting “the battered Ulysses” (see Bishop xxxviii) in the Museum can she assuage her longing for Jacob (180). As Kazan cogently observes, “This idea of Jacob as statue is pushed to extraordinary limits when Woolf describes him as he sees Florinda upon another man’s arm” (713) and his anger makes him seem “as if a stone were ground to dust; as if white sparks flew from a livid whetstone, which was his spine” (*JR* 98).

**Ulysses, Hermes and Dionysus**

One must speculate that, in associating Jacob with Ulysses, Fanny Elmer is fantasizing that Jacob will—after long wandering—return to her, though he never does. When she visits the British Museum, she keeps “her eyes downcast until she [i]s alongside of the battered Ulysses” to guarantee a jolt of his imagined immediacy. There, “she open[s] [her eyes] and g[ets] a fresh shock of Jacob’s presence, enough to last her half a day” (180). This “shock” from seeing the object provides her not only with the fictitious intimacy of Jacob’s presence but also with almost the same satisfaction as an orgasm, fulfilling her gnawing desire for the affection and attention of someone who is both beloved and aloof.

While Kazan discusses Jacob’s distinctively statuesque qualities and aligns him both with statuary in general and the mythical hero Ulysses specifically, Adam Parkes notes how Sandra Wentworth Williams “attempt[s] to fix [Jacob] as if he himself were a statue, with her museumgoer’s stare” (169), getting “Jacob’s head exactly on a level with the head of Hermes of Praxiteles” in the museum at Olympia in Greece (*JR* 153). This explicit reference to the god Hermes links back to the deleted passage where Jacob is aligned both with Priapus and the phallic Herm sculpture with its triadic elements. It also occurs just
at the point when Jacob is about to be drawn into his second *ménage a trois*—this time with Sandra Wentworth Williams and, vicariously, her homosexual husband Evan Williams, whom she seemingly diverts and amuses with accounts of her sexual adventures with Jacob.

The Praxiteles Hermes of Olympia holds in the crook of his left arm the infant Dionysus. The raised right arm of Hermes is broken at the wrist, but art historians have long speculated that he may have held a bunch of grapes to entertain the young Dionysus (Frazer 597). Jacob manifests both as Hermes and Dionysus in the novel. Clara and Jacob are alone together in the greenhouse as she selects bunches of grapes for him to take on his return journey to London, linking Jacob to the Dionysian grape motif. A bit later in the novel, Florinda, encountering Jacob apparently for the first time on Guy Fawkes Night, joins with other tipsy partygoers who, like Bacchants, playfully turn Jacob into a Dionysian statue by worshipfully crowning him with artificial flowers and adorning him with faux grapes:

“*We think,*” said two of the dancers, breaking off from the rest, and bowing profoundly before him, “*that you are the most beautiful man we have ever seen.*”

So they wreathed his head with paper flowers. Then somebody brought out a white and gilt chair and made him sit on it. As they passed, people hung glass grapes on his shoulders, until he looked like the figure-head of a wrecked ship. (76)

Jacob, via his association with Dionysus, is also aligned with the fertility rites of antiquity and their ritual displays of oversized phalloi that invoked and celebrated sexual prowess. The more sexually ambiguous Roman Bacchus, a re-envisioning of the Greek Dionysus, may also be of relevance. Elizabeth Bartman discusses at length the Roman artifacts that feature the God’s beautiful “downward-looking male suspended in a state of self-imposed reverie” (249-50). She examines as well the eroticism evoked by the “praxitelean” characteristics of such artworks as the Westmacott Ephebe \(^4\) held in the collection of the British Museum. This statue—missing, like the Praxiteles Hermes in Olympia, the right arm—depicts a young athlete thought to be about to crown himself with a laurel wreath.

**Achilles**

The enormous statue of Achilles at the Wellington Monument near Hyde Park Corner in London is the last sculpture explicitly referenced in the novel. Clara, accompanied by her friend, Mr. Bowley, is walking her dog, appropriately named Troy, when she pauses beneath the monument celebrating victory in war. She is suddenly distracted by an uncontrollable surge of desire for Jacob. She, like all of Jacob’s admirers, yearns for what she will never be able to possess. In her mind she silently calls Jacob’s name at the same moment that one of her own admirers, Mr. Lionel Parry, attempts to catch her attention. Woolf describes how Clara, embarrassed, gives “a foolish little laugh” and focuses instead on reading aloud the inscription honoring the enumerated military triumphs of the Duke
of Wellington. Then, suddenly startled by a rider-less horse galloping past her, Clara panics and bursts into tears, distressing the inarticulate Mr. Bowley (177).

Woolf highlights the wry disparity between Clara's spontaneous outpouring of wordless grief, foreshadowing Jacob's impending death in the Great War, and the actions of another witness, Julia Eliot, whose "sardonic smile" highlights the humorous aftermath of the horseback riding mishap. Even as Clara sobs, Julia:

rise[s] from her seat to watch the end of the incident, which, since she came of a sporting family, seemed to her slightly ridiculous. Sure enough the little man came pounding behind with his breeches dusty; looked thoroughly annoyed; and was being helped to mount by a policeman. (177)

But why did Woolf choose to shift from the ancient Greco-Roman statuary she aligns with Jacob elsewhere to a relatively contemporary work installed only 100 years prior to the publication of her novel and featuring a mythic figure erected to honor the military figure Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, during his own lifetime? The farcical history of the statue itself may have been partially the inspiration. The massive statue of Achilles, which stands on an immense plinth, was designed by the sculptor Sir Richard Westmacott, the Younger, and erected in July 1822 (Busco 920). The memorial was adorned with the inscription which either Clara (or Woolf) misstates as "This statue was erected by the women of England" (176), thereby altering the wording significantly. The actual inscription reads:

To Arthur Duke of Wellington
and his brave companions in arms
this statue of Achilles
cast from cannon taken in the victories
of Salamanca, Vittoria, Toulouse, and Waterloo
is inscribed
by their country women
Placed on this spot
on the XVIII day of June MDCCCXXII
by command of
His Majesty George IIII.

Marie F. Busco observes that the statue itself was far from being a success, noting that, “the public and press attacked the work for indecency, even though a fig leaf had been attached before the unveiling to mollify some of the anticipated moral objections” (922). When the monument was actually put in place, it generated a scathing backlash compounded by the inscription itself, which was roundly mocked: “[T]he irony of the situation was heightened by the fact that the monument was said to have been raised entirely from funds donated by patriotic British ladies. The popular press soon dubbed it the ‘Ladies Fancy Man,’ or ‘Ladies Trophy’” (920). Busco also investigates the ironies of what, specifically, the statue, is lacking:
The eighteen-foot high warrior is a bronze replica of one of the famed ancient marble Horse tamers on the Quirinale, Rome, [but] divested of his horse, and transformed into the hero of the Iliad by the addition of shield and sword. Both allusions to classical antiquity were, however, lost on the general public…. (922)

The negative reaction to the statue is particularly evident in the multiple, caustically hilarious etchings that Westmacott’s contemporary, the caricaturist George Cruikshank, generated. Robert L. Patten describes in detail the raunchy attributes of one etching titled “Backside and Front View of the Ladies Fancy-Man”:

Wellington, gazing at the enormous exaggerated figure, is puny and stooped, a scarecrow in comparison to the bulging biceps and gluteus maximus of Achilles. “What is it meant for?” inquires one lady. Her friend replies, “I understand it is intended to represent his Grace after bathing in the Serpentine & defending himself from the attack of Constables.” Wellington’s companion, a blowsy Regency type, exclaims, “See…what we Ladies Can raise, when we wish to put a man in mind of what he has done & we hope will do again when call’d for!!” Others in the crowd predict that “it will stand any thing”; a little girl points upward and asks, “what is that Mama?” And two ladies exchange speculations: “This will be a place of great attraction in the height of the Season.” “You mean the fall of the Leaf I suppose?” (see 235 fig. 48)

And Busco notes yet another embarrassing aspect of the statue: “To add to the confusion, the figure remained on view for many years without a sword[..] […] The empty, clenched fist heightened the ambiguity of Achilles’s gesture, and reminded some spectators of a prize fighter. At least one prankster armed the figure with a broomstick” (923).

It seems plausible to argue that Woolf featured the Achilles statue specifically because she was aware of the monument’s history and its embarrassing unveiling. Carol Ohmann observes with regard to the monument: “We are in the presence of an anachronism or even of absurdity, in the presence of an old model of heroism, born of the myth of Greece and nourished by the history of the British Empire (at times no doubt also heightened to the level of myth)” (172), but, as Busco argues, “The Achilles did not succeed as a public monument because it could not inspire patriotism from the beholder” (924). Woolf seems to have deliberately crafted a risible pairing of the monumental sculpture featuring the ultra-buffed warrior Achilles with an irritated little man, the joke being that neither the horse-tamer nor the horse-rider has a horse.

Jacob and Antinous: Absent Objects of Desire

Jacob is infused with the charisma of mythical gods and heroes through various references to statuary, but Woolf may also have drawn on the magnetism of an actual historical figure—Antinous—to craft his character. As Sarah Waters argues, Antinous is representative of the surge in Victorian era fascination with Greek Love. The story of Antinous was, by the early twentieth century, “well known and his homoerotic significance assured” (Waters 220). As Waters summarizes, Antinous was “the pederastic beloved of [Hadrian],
a philhellene emperor” (203); after Antinous’s death, Hadrian “granted Antinous divine status and fostered the cult that subsequently sprang up around his name and image” (198), a cult which still seems to exist today (see, for instance, http://www.sacredantinous.com/Cult.html).

Waters points out that all these depictions of Antinous “share distinctive features—a broad, swelling chest, a head of tousled curls, a downcast gaze—that allow them to be instantly recognized” (198), characteristics that are also very similar to those of the Westmacott Ephebe—and Jacob himself. While nowhere in Jacob’s Room is the protagonist’s appearance described in precise detail or great length—as Kazan observes, “We hardly know what [Jacob] looks like” (711)—when Mrs. Norman is trapped in a railway carriage with Jacob en route to Cambridge, she does anxiously study his appearance to determine if he is dangerous: “The lips were shut. The eyes bent down, since he was reading. All was firm, yet youthful, indifferent, unconscious[…] Grave, unconscious” (28-29). This description is strikingly similar to Waters’s account of Antinous with his downcast eyes and disheveled hair.

Jacob, like Antinous, is both extremely beautiful and much beloved. Both are (very literally) statuesque. Antinous is reproduced at Hadrian’s command in “number[s] of statues, friezes, and coins” as well as “a variety of poses and guises of the Greek, Roman, and Egyptian traditions: as Dionysus or Hermes, for example” (Waters 198). Like Antinous, Jacob, too, is embodied in numerous sculptural variants in the novel and is, as noted, specifically linked to statues of both Dionysus and Hermes. Both young men during their short lives are adored and admired. Their deaths are equally pointless and tragic sacrifices. In Jacob’s case, he perishes as an unspecified victim of the Great War; in Antinous’s case, he takes his own life, purportedly drowning himself in the Nile to extend the life of Hadrian. One can argue that the absence of any references to Antinous in Jacob’s Room constitutes evidence of his relevance. As so many scholars have observed, Jacob himself is absent throughout the narrative—and Antinous, who survives only in statuary and other antiquities, as does Jacob in memories, becomes an absence within an absence in the novel.

Notes

1. The article was inspired by the 2012 conference Desiring Statues: Statuary, Sexuality and History, organized by Dr. Jana Funke.
2. Virginia Woolf owned the 1877 edition of Symonds’s volume.
3. Waters discusses the concept of a “reverse Galatea” (218, 221), converting the living into statuary.
4. The Westmacott Ephebe statue was owned by Sir Richard Westmacott, the Elder, and donated to the museum by Sir Richard Westmacott, the Younger.

Works Cited


CHALLENGING THE FAMILY SCRIPT: WOOLF, THE STEPHEN FAMILY, AND VICTORIAN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

by Jane de Gay

It is well known that Virginia Woolf was a feminist who had little time for Christianity. She has often been described as an agnostic like her parents; more recently, she has been regarded as an atheist, on the basis of statements such as “certainly and emphatically there is no God” (MB 84). It is therefore curious that the Woolfs’ library at Washington State University includes a small but significant selection of books on religion. These have often been assumed to be Leonard’s contribution to the collection but as this paper will demonstrate, a significant number of these works were Virginia’s. The paper will show that she read some of those books with a detached, critical interest and that they informed her critique of patriarchy and its interconnections with organized religion.

The religious books in the Woolfs’ library include several that were written by her ancestors in the Stephen family. These formed part of Leslie Stephen’s library that the young Virginia was given complete leave to explore and that she eventually inherited. The library is in part a chronicle of the family history of authorship for it showcases works by family members. Woolf’s great-grandfather James Stephen is represented in the collection by his Considerations on Imprisonment for Debt. There are three editions of Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography by Woolf’s grandfather Sir James Stephen. Works by Sir James’s brother, Sir George Stephen, include The Life of Christ and two copies of his theologically literate novel, The Jesuit at Cambridge. Woolf’s uncle James Fitzjames Stephen is represented by Essays by a Barrister and a collection of articles from the Saturday Review, Horae Sabbaticae. There is also a bound collection of pamphlets from the Metaphysical Society, including contributions from Fitzjames and Leslie. Her aunt C.E. Stephen is represented by two editions of Quaker Strongholds, Light Arising: Thoughts on the Central Radiance and a pamphlet criticizing Christian Science.

The collection also includes works the Stephens had owned, thus betraying the influence of the Clapham Sect, to which they belonged. (The Clapham Sect was a close-knit and deeply influential set of middle-class families of the nineteenth century: along with the Venns, Thorntons, Macaulays, and Wilberforces, the Stephens were Evangelical reformers committed to anti-slavery, philanthropy and humanitarian causes.) The Clapham influence is seen in volumes such as Henry Venn’s The Complete Duty of Man, the Life and Letters of Henry Venn, and Bateman’s Life of Rev. Henry Venn Elliott (grandson of Henry and founder of British and Foreign Bible Society). Other inherited volumes, such as Isaac Watts’ A Short View of the Whole Scripture History, and works by Thomas Fuller and John Calvin, reflect the staunchly Protestant and biblical traditions of the Clapham Sect. Woolf read in this library and responded to this literary legacy, for her reading drew her into theological debates and also inspired her ideas on social reform, albeit under a very different label.
A clue to the implications this family background had for Woolf can be found in an incongruous diary entry she made in 1929, where she recalls her reading and writing interests as a teenager:

I was then writing a long picturesque essay upon the Christian religion, I think; called *Religio Laici*, I believe, proving that man has need of a God; but the God was described in a process of change; & I also wrote a history of Women; & a history of my own family—all very longwinded and El[izabe]than in style. (D3 271)

This diary entry is the only reference we have either to her work of family history or to her essay on Christianity, written when she was “15 or 16,” both of which have been lost. Yet it is appropriate that Woolf should yoke these topics together, because of the importance of Christianity within her family history. Her interest in the history of women was a riposte to her family story, which had often been notoriously silent on the role of women.

Although Woolf’s Stephen ancestors were committed to humanitarian causes, they were also deeply involved in the establishment world of law, politics, the universities, and the Church of England; institutions that had traditionally excluded women. Woolf’s great-grandfather James (Jem) Stephen (1758–1832) was an MP and lawyer; his son Sir James Stephen (1789–1859) was a lawyer and colonial administrator. James was a friend of William Wilberforce and assisted him in his Bill to abolish slavery; Sir James built on the abolition of the slave trade by producing the Bill for the liberation of slaves in the colonies in 1833 in his capacity as Under-Secretary to the Colonial Office. His attitude towards this was imperialistic and patriarchal: “We emancipate our grown-up sons but keep our unmarried daughters, and our children who may chance to be rickety, in domestic bonds” (Annan 14). Furthermore, he wanted to use the empire to promote Christianity, and Christianity to support the empire. (1)

Sir James Stephen’s book *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography* is a particularly significant inherited text in that it provides a focal point for many of the wider Victorian Evangelical influences. It also exemplifies the complex path by which Woolf’s inheritance of that tradition came through her agnostic father, for the copy that Sir James gave to Leslie bears an inscription that enjoins him to continue the family tradition of writing:

On the 26th of May 1849 James Stephen gave these volumes to his son, Leslie Stephen, in the hope that, when his turn shall come, he will give to the world some book not less honestly design’d, but far better calculated, to promote the piety, the happiness, and the wisdom of such as shall read it.

Ironically, Leslie Stephen gave the world a set of scrupulously honest books, including *The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* and *An Agnostic’s Apology*, which went entirely against the grain of Sir James’s Christian ethos, thereby setting an example of resisting family tradition. Furthermore, he read the volume sceptically, making annotations such as “hardly” and “Oh! Oh!” and adding a cartoon on the flyleaf of a monkey riding a goat.

Woolf read *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography* in 1897, aged 15, noting in her journal that “father has given me Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography, which will do for me for some
Challenging the Family Script

We know from Woolf’s account of her education that Leslie Stephen urged her to read books thoroughly and would question her on them, so she probably read this work in some depth at precisely the age when she began to write her essays on Christianity, women, and her family mentioned earlier.

Woolf’s response to Sir James’s Essays was satirical, like her father’s, as can be seen in two allusions to the Essays in her novels. The first is in Jacob’s Room as part of the satirical sketch of the career-minded cleric Mr. Floyd, who rises to become Principal of a theological college and editor of “a well-known series of Ecclesiastical Biographies” (JR 24). The second is in the sex-change scene in Orlando, where the narrator—a parody of a nineteenth-century biographer—struggles with the dilemma of speaking truthfully about matters that readers will find offensive. The masque, in which the ladies of Purity, Chastity, and Modesty contest with the trumpets of Truth, alludes to Sir James’s apostrophe to Henry Thornton’s honesty: “Truth, the foe of falsehood—truth, the antagonist of error—and truth, the exorcist of ambiguity—was the object of his supreme homage” (Stephen 525-26). When the ladies attempt to throw a veil over Orlando, Woolf alludes to Sir James’s discomfort at the youthful passions of the otherwise holy Henry Martyn: “The writer of his Life, embarrassed at the task of reconciling such an episode to the gravity befitting a hero so majestic, and a biography so solemn, has concealed this passage of his story beneath a veil at once transparent enough to excite, and impervious enough to baffle, curiosity” (Stephen 557).

Sir James’s historical method is to trace developments through the exemplary lives of prominent men. Women are barely mentioned except as distractions leading these men away from their purpose. He places great importance on the establishment—Cambridge, the legal profession, and government are mentioned frequently—and his agenda is imperialist, especially in his treatment of India, where he speaks unashamedly of his desire for Christianity to take over the whole world, defeating India’s religions of Islam and Hinduism. On a more liberal note, the emancipation of slaves is a major concern and Sir James makes this a moral marker for assessing character: for example he denounces George Whitfield’s support of slavery as a blot on an otherwise exemplary character.

Woolf answers Sir James on each of these points in Three Guineas. She identifies a class of “educated men’s daughters,” middle-class women who were denied the privileges their brothers enjoyed, often forced to make sacrifices to fund their brothers’ education (TG 155-56). Middle-class men are members of institutions (the government, the legal profession, academia, the church) that exclude women and help form a society that breeds war. The establishment that Woolf describes is one that the Stephens had played an integral part in developing, and that she had therefore seen in operation both in public and within her own home.

Three Guineas is of course informed by a vast range of reading, covering texts from ancient times to the present, in a variety of forms including literature, news items, official reports and the Bible. It is therefore by no means solely a riposte to Sir James and his circle, but there are some specific references that serve to situate that group as influential figures in a patriarchal culture that excluded women. Woolf critiques the attitude towards women of various members of the Clapham Sect, undercutting Sir James’s praises by exposing them as misogynists. There is John Bowdler, whom Sir James had described in glowing terms—“The interior life of John Bowdler, if it could be faithfully written, would
be a record which none could read without reverence, and few without self-reproach” (Stephen 580)—but whom Woolf uses as an example of the educated man who forces his daughter to “bolster up the system” and succumb to patriarchal ideologies, because she needs to play the game to get married. Woolf quotes Bowdler’s letter “addressed to a young lady for whom he had a great regard a short time before her marriage,” in which he insists on avoidance of “anything which has the least tendency to indelicacy or indecorum”; in other words, stifling any wish to criticise patriarchal society (TG 382 n34).

Thomas Gisborne was hailed by Sir James for “contribut[ing] largely to the formation of the national mind on subjects of the highest importance to the national character” (Stephen 533), but Woolf incorporates him into a different historical narrative as a patriarch who was influential on delineating the position of women. Quoting from his advice on teaching women the art of religious devotion in The Duties of the Female Sex, Woolf construes that he saw “the female sex was to be ‘taught habitually to contemplate in the works of creation, the power and wisdom and the goodness,’ not so much of the Deity, but of Mr. Gisborne.” Woolf continues, with a satirical compound reference to Sir James’s Essays and her father’s famous work, the Dictionary of National Biography: “And from that we were led to conclude that a biography of the Deity would resolve itself into a Dictionary of Clerical Biography” (TG 376 n20).

Woolf therefore denounces the notion of God as a construction of patriarchy, arguing that unwritten laws of behavior that had been thought of as “natural” or “God-given” can now be seen to be produced and reproduced by those in power: “it is beginning to be agreed that they were not laid down by ‘God,’ who is now very generally held to be a conception, of patriarchal origin, valid only for certain races, at certain stages and times” (TG 410 n 42). This point is a mature articulation of the argument that the young Virginia had made about the idea of God being “in a process of change” in the essay she wrote at around the time she first read Sir James’s Essays.

Woolf’s use of the Bible in Three Guineas is a riposte to the Evangelicals’ veneration of it as the word of God. Sir James argued that “biblical knowledge, like the manna rained on the wilderness, ever tends to dissolve into a warm, and generous, and healthful nutrition.” He sees the Bible as leading the Christian into a direct relationship with God, and hails the Evangelicals, who “continually resorted to Holy Scripture,” as “restorers” of the faith (Stephen 467). Woolf, by contrast, argues that these evangelical patriarchs have used the Bible to support their views and to subjugate women: she argues that “the fact that Mr. Gisborne and his like – a numerous band – base their educational theories upon the teaching of St Paul” indicates that they want to bring up their daughters to worship men, not God (TG 376 n20).

Woolf makes a detailed critique of St Paul, in particular, as an influence on the subjugation of women. She blames his epistles to Titus and Corinthians for her society’s hypocritical emphasis on female chastity in the face of sexual double standards where male lusts were not condemned. She presents a detailed analysis of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, where Paul argues that women should be veiled when praying, identifying it as the basis for Victorian, Edwardian, and Georgian attitudes towards chastity. Woolf suggests that, far from being the word of God, the passage is an expression of Paul’s psychology. She criticizes his method for being one of assertion rather than persuasion and accuses him of invoking “the familiar but always suspect trinity of accomplices, Angels, nature and law,
to support his personal opinion.” She then shows how patriarchy has been happy to adopt
his notion of chastity to enforce the subjugation of women in society, especially in mar-
rriage and in affirming the separate spheres: “Such a conception when supported by the
Angels, nature, law, custom and the Church, and enforced by a sex with a strong personal
interest to enforce it, and the economic means, was of undoubted power” (TG 392-93
n38). Biblical authority is therefore reduced to ideology. Woolf responds by recasting the
notion of chastity: rather than an acceptance of the confinement of women to the private
sphere, chastity becomes an attitude of mind by which women can distance themselves
from patriarchal attitudes and expectations.

Woolf also crucially reconfigures the anti-slavery views of her grandfather and great-
grandfather by arguing that women have been enslaved and disenfranchised by patriarchy:

“Our” country…throughout the greater part of its history has treated me as a
slave; it has denied me education or any share in its possessions. “Our” country
still ceases to be mine if I marry a foreigner. (TG 313)

The solution, however, is not for women to bow to paternalistic attitudes and accept solu-
tions provided for them by patriarchy (as both Stephens had done with the colonies), but
rather, that women should declare themselves “outsiders” to the establishment and to the
nation as a whole:

“For,” the outsider will say, “in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman
I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.” (TG 313)

This famous statement takes and recasts a notion of world citizenship, which Sir James
had applied to Isaac Watts:

As a citizen of London, he came to the rescue of Crosby, the Lord Mayor, in his
struggle with the House of Commons. As a citizen of the world, he called on
earth and heaven to stay the plagues of slavery and the slave-trade, and advocated
the independence of America, with such ardour as to sacrifice to it his own.
(Stephen 541)

Woolf’s representation of women as the slaves of patriarchy therefore arises out of her cri-
tique of her evangelical ancestors and their values. It exposes as hypocrisy their attempts to
free one part of the human race whilst at the same time taking a paternalistic approach to
the rest of the world, also showing that attitudes to world politics redound in the private
house. Simultaneously, however, she harnesses their rhetoric to promote a new cause: the
liberation of women.

Note

“[H]e who should induce any heathen people to adopt the mere ceremonial of the Church … and to recognize
the authority of its Divine head would confer on them a blessing exceeding all which mere philanthropy has ever
accomplished.” (Quoted Shaw)
Works Cited


The 1977 winter issue of the Bulletin of the New York Public Library on The Years launched a continuing debate about Woolf’s process of revision and her expunging of factual detail in the final published version. Most significant for future scholarship were Grace Radin’s transcription of two large expurgated chunks—the first, as Radin initially and erroneously believed, part of the published 1917 wartime section, and the second an omitted 1921 section. What Radin missed in 1977 and later in her 1981 book-length study of The Years, Karen Levenback discovered in her work on Woolf and war in 1994: the wartime expurgated portion of The Years takes place on September 22, 1914 when late edition newspaper headlines proclaimed the sinking of three British cruisers by a German submarine in the North Sea (Levenback 8).1

This re-dating of an earlier section of the novel based on evidence from London newspapers, possibly The Evening Standard which ran a headline on September 22, 1914: “British Naval Disaster” with the subheading “Three Cruisers Sunk in the North Sea,” suggests a relatively neglected approach to Woolf’s late fiction. While we know that Woolf collected newspaper clippings in preparation for writing Three Guineas, none of those clippings makes its way explicitly into The Years.2 Instead, we can now accurately date several of the days within the sections labeled only by year from seemingly random references to newspaper articles the characters are reading. From the Malones’ Oxford sitting room in 1880 to the newspaper placards announcing the death of Thomas Parnell in 1891 to the death of King Edward in 1910 and the sinking of the British cruisers in 1914, we observe how Woolf carefully anchors her narrative to historical events until The Present Day where she purposely blurs references but allows past events to undergird our perception of the characters.

Here I deal largely with the scenes and implications of newspaper reading in both the published novel and the omitted 1914 section, withdrawn during Woolf’s late revisions at the galley proof stage in the autumn of 1936. In this reading Woolf’s persistent use of The Times newspaper serves as the scaffolding that, while often submerged or expunged in the published version, allows us to see how Woolf employs headlines, leading articles, editorials and obituaries to avoid the didacticism she feared would contradict her novelistic aesthetic.3 First, eschewing direct narratorial comment, she inserts specific newspaper items into her narrative to ground the reader in the history of both domestic and political culture. Second, she uses The Times articles along with other, unnamed newspapers to perform a double-reading whereby we actually read over the characters’ shoulders or through their eyes. In the final version of The Years, the characters’ responses to these specific newspaper articles convey class and political biases without the interpretative narrator of the original essay chapters in The Pargiters. Throughout the novel and the pulled galley proofs, Woolf offers characters’ responses to news items both to expose the characters’ private biases and to criticize the newspapers’ public reporting of political and social events.

Woolf’s ambivalence toward The Times and her denigration of the popular illus-
trated papers found precedent in her family's participation in the journalistic world of the late nineteenth century. Throughout his life Leslie Stephen alternately quarreled with and published announcements in *The Times*. His early association with a rival daily paper, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, from 1865 directly challenged the presumed superiority of *The Times* and in particular *The Times*' role as the official educator of the British public. Angered by *The Times*' pro-Confederacy stance during the American Civil War, Stephen published an initialed pamphlet, “The ‘Times’ on the American War” (1865) in which he accused the newspaper of false reporting. By the time Woolf agreed to write her only full-length article for *The Times* to commemorate the centenary of her father’s birth (November 28, 1932), she did not miss the irony, noting in her diary just before a discussion of her “Essay-Novel” that would become *The Years*, that she was pleased with her memoir, “a good one, I think, considering the currents that sway round that subject in the *Times* of all papers” (*D* 4129).

In 1908 Woolf published in *Cornhill Magazine* a review loosely based on a biography of John Delane, editor of *The Times* from 1841 to 1877 during Leslie Stephen's principal feud with the newspaper over the American Civil War. In the review, Woolf sketches the editor’s collusion with the government and satirizes the collective editorial authority of the newspaper: “But whose voice is it? It is not the voice of Mr. Delane, the urbane gentleman who rides along Fleet Street on his cob, nor is it the voice of Dr. Woodham, the learned Fellow of Jesus. It has the authority of Government and the sting of independence; Downing Street trembles at it and the people of England give ear to it, for such is the voice of *The Times*” (*E* 1190). Although by 1880 when *The Years* begins, the circulation of *The Times* had fallen below that of several of the popular (and cheaper) papers, it still occupied its niche as the leader of educated opinion. Throughout her diaries (and after *The Times* had been acquired by Lord Northcliffe and begun slowly to incorporate popular elements like the interview [1891] and photographs [1922]), Woolf continues to refer caustically to the newspaper as a “prophet” and a moralizer.

Woolf's most explicit and sustained use of *The Times* to display characters’ biases and to latch the lives of the Pargiter and Malone families to specific datable events appears in the 1880 section at the Malones’ Oxford home with Mrs. Malone alternating between her embroidery and *The Times*, perusing first the front page’s list of births and deaths and musing about her recently departed American guests. She quotes from a leading article on the demise of English cooking due to the difficulty of procuring skilled domestic help. The actual article warns that Americans have surpassed the English in training cooks and concludes with a statement about English abundance—“the best flesh, fish, and fowl in the world”—which Mrs. Malone reads aloud to emphasize her agreement with the writer that the Compulsory Education Act of 1880 has deprived the upper classes of servants with culinary skills. The date is Friday, April 16, 1880, and in the midst of Kitty’s reading to her mother another article in the newspaper, the Malones receive a note from Edward Pargiter that Mrs. Pargiter has died.

The newspaper reading scene is important on both thematic and structural levels. It demonstrates Woolf’s skill in employing a material object to connect diverse characters and elicit from each a response that identifies class and cultural biases. It also sets the stage for Kitty’s silent quarrel with her mother over these issues. Structurally *The Times* and its specific articles provide what Grace Radin calls a “reberverative structure” (149) that echoes elements of previous scenes and links the sections across the years from 1880 to the
1930s. In the 1880 scene the articles from the newspaper intended to unite mother and daughter through common reading instead serve the opposite purpose; the article on the loss of cooking skills in England aligns the conservative Mrs. Malone with The Times writer who “almost always said the very thing that she was thinking, which comforted her, and gave her a sense of security in a world which seemed to her to be changing for the worse” (Times, April 16, 1880: 74). In the holograph version, Kitty’s response to this article and to her mother’s attitude is softer than in the published version. In the former, Kitty focuses on the leader writer’s style: “the easy lolloping action, of the Times leader writer, as he cantered along down his column, with little stories of Lord Chesterfield” (Berg MS, vol. 3: 18). But in the final version she is harsher: “The leading article bored Kitty with its pompous fluency. She searched the paper for some little piece of news that might interest her mother” (TY 74). Kitty scans the paper, pausing and choosing to skip over articles on agriculture (the fluke in sheep), on foreign affairs (religious liberty in Turkey), and moving instead to the recent General Election in which the Liberal Party has just claimed victory. But when Kitty pronounces Gladstone’s name, Mrs. Malone promptly loses her scissors, signaling her disinterest in politics or perhaps her disapproval of the new government’s liberal policies. When she retrieves her scissors, she asks Kitty about her day with the Robsons, and Kitty, ignoring the question, switches to a neutral article about an experiment with an electric light in Gibraltar. That we can trace all of these articles latches the novel to a specific cultural and historical moment and also reinforces the divide between mothers and daughters during a transitional era for women’s rights.

Structurally, the article on the cookery dilemma links both the Fripps, the American couple who have recently dined at the Malones’ home on inadequately prepared fish, and the Robsons who have just offered Kitty fish and potatoes for tea. Mrs. Malone is critical of Mrs. Fripp’s American accent and her taste, and Kitty consequently determines not to mention Mrs. Robson, a former cook for Yorkshire relatives of Mrs. Malone, for fear of the same censure. Woolf’s use of the Times in the 1880 section allows her to connect and compress Kitty’s encounters with two different social groups in a single reading scene where Mrs. Malone and the Times leader writer are pitted against the more egalitarian and modern Kitty who will, ironically, marry the wealthy man her mother has designated for her.

The 1891, 1910, and expurgated 1914 sections all use newspaper headlines to unsettle the characters and to elicit immediate responses to the deaths of prominent people—the Irish radical parliamentarian Thomas Parnell in 1891; King Edward in 1910; or, in 1914, the over 1400 British naval reserves and officers killed by a German submarine in the North Sea. In these sections the headline, an increasingly prevalent device not yet employed in 1880 by The Times (Williams 145), signals the impact of the New Journalism heralded by a proliferation of daily papers with new approaches from the transcription of interviews to illustrations and photographs to shorter, more diverse articles geared to the rising middle and lower middle class readership. The Times was notoriously reluctant to amend its traditional layout, yet Woolf’s passing and generally derogatory allusions to the illustrated papers (in her diaries and The Years) evince her class-based preference for papers like the Times as opposed to the popular press.

After the 1891 section that uses the newspaper to record the characters’ reactions to Parnell’s death, Woolf moves toward World War I with almost annual sections—two of which
can be dated precisely: March 18, 1908 and May 6, 1910 (the latter signaling the death of King Edward VII and Kitty’s attendance at Wagner’s Siegfried at Covent Garden). Significantly, however, the most important section from a political and national perspective is the expurgated 1914 passage. This omitted section is the last that can be tied directly to the newspaper for precise dating. The section begins with Crosby taking her landlady’s grandchildren for a walk in Kew Gardens. The holograph explicitly states that Crosby reads the news headlines “Three British Cruisers Sunk” from news placards at the Richmond station (Berg MS, vol. 1: 46), but this specific allusion has been omitted from the galley proofs. The point of view in both the holograph and the galley proofs shifts from Crosby to a young salesman, Bert Parker, on the same park bench, who walks off to catch a train into London. On the train Parker notices how the passengers lower their newspapers when the soldiers get off at Hammersmith and then resume reading: “People unfolded their newspapers, spreading the sheets wide, so that ‘Three British Cruisers Sunk’ was repeated again and again in large black letters on the front page of one newspaper after another. The newspapers were turned over, as if the readers were searching for more information. But they could find nothing more about the disasters, only items” (Radin, “The Years,” Appendix 181). Employing her familiar tactic of using an external marker to shift from one character’s view to that of another, Woolf moves briefly to an old lady (Miriam Parrish on her way to meet Eleanor Pargiter at the theatre) who asks to borrow another passenger’s newspaper so that she can decipher the headline. Instead, however, of allowing us to read the news through Miriam’s eyes, Woolf now uses the newspaper headline as a transitional device to introduce another character named in the holograph but anonymous in the galley proofs. In the holograph we find Ray Sargent, after he has lent his newspaper to Miriam Parrish, reiterating the headline and meditating about the war: “Three cruisers sank he said to himself. Why what for?” (Berg MS, vol. 5: 50). In the galley proofs any mention of this news is omitted, and the scene erases Sargent’s motives for his anger: “Everybody seemed to be gloating; to have fed on the garbage in the newspapers; and to be passively chewing the cud” (Radin, “The Years,” Appendix 182). This is as close as Woolf comes in The Years to condemning both newspapers and those who devour them. In the holograph, his thoughts triggered by the headline, Sargent indicts educated men for allowing war to happen: “But they should have known better. They were the criminals. They were the [plotters]; educated men. And the newspapers, puffing up their poor half educated defenceless [readers] with their swollen words” (Berg MS, vol. 5: 52).

The holograph version allows us to glimpse how the war has already absorbed people’s thoughts and how the newspaper acts as a conduit connecting civilians to the violence and death. In contrast to Sargent’s angry retort to the newspapers and the thirst for vicarious participation among general readers, Eleanor’s more empathic view recalls her response to Parnell’s death. Reading the headline in her newspaper when she returns home from the theatre, she immediately asks in the holograph “who was drowned…,” but in the galley proofs this is changed to “She supposed she must look and see if the list were out of what Mrs Robins, her char, called ‘casualties.’ ‘Casualties, casualties,’ she murmured as she spread the paper on her knee” (Radin, “The Years,” Appendix 187-88). In both versions she discovers that Captain Rankin, a man she had met earlier that summer at her brother Morris’s house in the country, is one of the casualties. Rankin is the first person Eleanor has known to die in the war, and suddenly she blames herself in contrast to Ray...
Sargent, the newspaper reader on the train, who had faulted educated men. The late edition of *The Evening Standard* on September 22, 1914, the day of the sea disaster, carried a brief account by the Secretary of the Admiralty of the torpedoed ships which *The Times* repeated the following day along with considerably more information and opinionated
discussion. From this omitted 1914 section to the remainder of the novel, any explicit mention of The Times has been subsumed under reference to newspapers in general. In fact, The Times did carry on September 23, 1914, the day after the sinking of the ships, the exact headline on pg. 9 that Woolf repeatedly quotes: “Losses in the North Sea. [large font] Three British Cruisers Sunk.” (italics mine). The article that follows appears to be an amalgam of various sources, the first (in bold lettering) the same statement from the Secretary of the Admiralty stating the names of the three ships and their captains and offering a brief account of the rescue by another ship and “a division of destroyers, trawlers, and boats” (9). The next article reports on approximate numbers of survivors, and a telegram from a town in Holland mentions more survivors brought to port by another steamer. This paragraph is followed by a moralistic account from “Our Naval Correspondent” who acknowledges that the destruction of the ships is thus far the worst British naval “misfortune” of the war. The article is patriotic, noting that “It is the loss of gallant officers and men that is the terrible feature of this tragic event” (9). But it is also defensive, suggesting that the British public may indirectly be responsible for the tragedy with their incessant demand for news.6

Finally the same issue of The Times contains another discussion of the sinking of the three cruisers in a leader headlined “The Submarine at Work.” Even more than the account from the Naval Correspondent, this article strives to bolster momentum for the war in spite of the severe naval loss. It rationalizes the catastrophe by counterbalancing the military success on land. Liberally employing the editorial “we,” the article advises readers to summon determination and optimism: “We must expect more occurrences of this character, and must make up our minds to accept them with equanimity” (The Times, September 23, 1914: 9).7 Woolf herself was always skeptical of the tone of The Times though she had relied heavily on its news in the holograph version of the novel, and she was careful to keep her facts accurate even while
submerging them or condensing them to a headline or a phrase. She comments several times in her diaries about The Times’s attitude toward the war, notably in an entry in October 1918 where she paints a sarcastic portrait of the moralistic, even jingoistic, pro-war stance: “The Times still talks of the possibility of another season, in order to carry the war into Germany, & there imprint a respect for liberty in the German peasants” (D1 211).

In the Present Day section, Woolf avoids any explicit mention of The Times or of any of the other dailies that proliferated during the 1920s and ’30s in London. However, in one significant passage, she pinpoints, as she had in the 1880 section, the difference between the generations through an allusion to a newspaper, this time to a photograph and not to a headline or other text. Although The Times had only begun to incorporate photographs in 1922 (Williams 145), other popular, cheaper newspapers like The Daily Mail and the Mirror had long run photographs and illustrations along with shorter, more accessible articles. In the “newspaper scene” in the Present Day, just as Eleanor and Peggy are about to leave Eleanor’s flat, Eleanor pauses, stares at the evening paper on the floor “with its broad bar of print and its blurred photograph,” and picks it up (313). She comments on the face, according to Peggy, “the usual evening paper’s blurred picture of a fat man gesticulating,” shouts “‘Damned bully. . . .’” tears the paper and throws it on the floor (313). This is Eleanor’s most forceful action in the novel, though after reading in 1914 about the sinking of the British cruisers, she had wished to fling out her arm to stop Rankin from going to war. Woolf is careful neither to give a date to the paper nor to identify the source (though she would have certainly seen a number of cartoonist David Low’s caricatures of Hitler and Mussolini in the Evening Standard throughout the 1930s). Eleanor’s outburst leads Peggy to recall a similar scene with Peggy’s father Morris: “So she had seen her father crumple The Times and sit trembling with rage because somebody had said something in a newspaper. How odd!” (TY 314). By the 1930s, Peggy cannot imagine how newspapers can wield such power or elicit such violent responses. In this one scene between Eleanor and Peggy and, by extension, between Peggy and her father, characters are further solidified by their responses to current events delivered through newspapers. Eleanor has just deplored to Peggy the constant sound of the wireless blaring from downstairs, a technology that had begun to usurp the place of print media. The newspaper marks a divide between generations, between men’s and women’s reactions to events, and between the old seriousness of The Times and the new mass appeal of the popular dailies. If Woolf did not adhere to her original intention of sticking to facts or even of equally balancing reality and vision, she nevertheless managed to wield the newspaper as a tool with which to pummel her characters into visceral responses to the external world.

Notes

3. In a discussion of Woolf’s historical method in The Years and Three Guineas, Stephen M. Barber argues that

4. See *The History of The Times: The Twentieth Century Test 1884-1912*, vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan, 1947), where the editor notes that even though challenged by other dailies and evening newspapers costing less than *The Times*, the editors were reluctant to change the format, instead relying on a loyal audience who understood that “it was at once their indispensable need and paramount duty to digest, word by word, its solidly printed news and comment” (90). The headline, so prominent in the popular penny newspapers, was disparaged by *The Times* with only “a slight increase in the size” for “an item of sensational and authentic news” (91).


6. In *A History of the Great War 1914-1918*, C.R.M.F. Cruttwell briefly mentions the torpedoing of the three cruisers and notes that “No other submarine throughout the war approached this simultaneous bag” (67). That this was Britain’s worst naval loss in the war might account for Woolf’s persistent use of the headline as a key symbol of wartime destruction.

7. The four-volume *History of The Times* (owned and annotated by Leonard Woolf) explains that reporting on naval events in the war was problematic because journalists were not permitted on board warships, and the Naval Correspondent Commander C. N. Robinson’s daily article on the progress of the war at sea was thus often based more on historical precedents than actual fact (4: pt. 1: 230-31).

8. In the 1921 second expurgated section, Eleanor mentions the illustrated papers disparagingly, and Kitty admits to reading them at home. Still in 1921 Woolf makes a distinction, if a mocking one, between the serious weightiness of *The Times* and the “picture papers” in a diary entry where she dramatizes one side of a conversation between the Rodmell rector’s wife and herself. The wife tells Woolf about a conversation between her two daughters when “Olive says she [other daughter] ought to read *The Times*. We don’t take *The Times*—nor does Mr Allinson [Allison]. He lends us picture papers. But she ought to read the debates. Then she could talk to people. Why I can hardly talk to educated people now” (D2 85-86). The implication is clear: educated people “take” *The Times* while the burgeoning lower and middle classes resort to the illustrated papers. In a diary entry of June 20, 1928, Woolf mentions that she, unlike her contemporary Rose Macaulay, hasn’t yet succumbed to writing for the *Evening Standard*, the paper in which Arnold Bennett had criticized her writing and one that she considered lower in status than *The Times* (D3186).

Works Cited


“What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy? She held out a pair of Jacob’s old shoes.” (JR 187)

I situate Woolf’s representations of “old shoes,” especially her striking evocation of the death of Jacob Flanders during the Great War (1914-1918), within a cultural genealogy that includes the Dutch Post-Impressionist painter Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), the Yiddish poet Moses Schulstein (1911-1981), and the Iraqi journalist Muntadhar al-Zaidi (1979–). This paratactic analysis investigates the implications of Woolf’s memorable image, addressing the multidisciplinary interests of Bloomsbury and the transhistorical instances of war. Susan Stanford Friedman’s model of parataxis, with its “conjuncture of seemingly disparate cultural texts,” inspires my methodology: in addition to literature, I juxtapose artifacts, paintings, and performances (“CP” 37). Throughout, I strive to “avoid the categorical violence of comparison within the framework of dominance” while observing “commonalities” across differences of culture, faith, gender, genre, history, and language (Friedman, “WN” 758). Van Gogh’s influential painting *A Pair of Shoes* (1886) serves as a precedent in this discussion: his broken boots with creased leather, skewed tongue, and unraveled lace capture the cumulative exertions and fragile conditions of the body though visible brush strokes. In turn, Schulstein personifies empty shoes as “the last witnesses” to the Nazi genocide in “I Saw A Mountain” (1954), a poem cited at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (line 20). More recently, al-Zaidi, the author of *The Story of My Shoe* (2009), protested the plight of Iraqis during the “Global War on Terror” by throwing his footwear at former United States President George W. Bush. By positioning Woolf in relation to an artist, a poet, and a journalist, I aim to illuminate the cross-cultural import of her arresting image of untimely death: old shoes.

The shoe, a staple of human transit, physical protection, and social identity, signals the vulnerability of precarious life, particularly in periods of political crisis. Conditions of “precarity,” risks of bodily and psychological exposure heightened or systematically introduced in contexts of war, include bereavement, death, deportation, disease, homelessness, malnutrition, trauma, and torture: as Judith Butler maintains, “War is precisely an effort to minimize precariousness for some and to maximize it for others” (*FW* 25, 54). Yet officials often seek to regulate evidence of suffering on both sides of conflict, including the losses of combatants at home. Furthermore, dehumanizing norms facilitate the disavowal of vulnerability in designated enemies, populations denied recognition as “grievable” others (Butler, *PL* 34). Woolf, Schulstein, and al-Zaidi oppose selective constructions of war that allocate the recognition of suffering in differential ways through recourse to the shoe, a minimalist icon of precarity premised on the interplay of commonality and particularity. Its familiarity derives from cultural convention while its materiality accentuates
geohistorical contingencies. By conjoining generality and specificity in writings that mobilize this visual motif, the novelist, poet, and journalist from Britain, Poland, and Iraq, respectively, create critical iconographies of the shoe, thereby linking discrete instances of historical trauma. Everyday objects central to the commemoration of ordinary lives have thus become pivotal in the critique of state violence. Woolf undermines macropolitical justifications for organized aggression through reference to an absent body: in this respect, her perspective on the Great War correlates with subsequent modes of representing relations of violence in World War II (1939-1945) and the occupation of Iraq (2003-2011).

Van Gogh painted many canvases of shoes from the mid- to the late-1880s. These examples of the still life genre elevate the common materials of ordinary experience over the revered symbols of national culture. As Frederik Tygstrup elaborates, these subjects concern “the ephemeral sphere of everyday objects” rather than “the official and monumental self-representation of a given historical epoch” (261). In particular, the curators of an exhibition at the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne (17 Sept. 2009–31 Jan. 2010) single out *A Pair of Shoes* as “the most hotly discussed shoes in art history” (“Vincent”). Pertinent philosophical writings by Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, and others elucidate their remarkable hermeneutic appeal: as Derrida exclaims, “how they’ve made people walk and talk!” (272). Van Gogh’s iconic pictures of shoes resist iconological conventions, raising rather than resolving questions of interpretation (Tygstrup 261). Despite his restricted palette, the artist arguably imbues these humble shoes with the “radiance” he aspired to achieve in portraiture, asserting the dynamic potential of the still life in a bid to transvalue the quotidian (394). Janice West discerns that “his boots have a narrative quality which makes them fascinating to us, and they are the precursors of the boots and shoes used by artists from the surrealists to the present” (42). Moreover, his radical revaluation of things continues to shape memory-work in the twenty-first century: van Gogh’s vibrant renderings of ordinary objects and their life worlds remain a touchstone in debates on the legacies of the World Wars.

Sue Roe speculates that van Gogh inspired Woolf’s final image of Jacob’s empty shoes in *Jacob’s Room*: “When she described the moving moment in which Betty Flanders holds out a pair of empty shoes, Woolf may have had in mind Van Gogh’s painting, *A Pair of Shoes*” (118). Roe does not specify which painting she means: the artist completed a pair of paintings entitled *A Pair of Shoes* (1886). Woolf may indeed have been influenced by his vivid pictures although the nature of this inspiration remains opaque. We know that she encountered van Gogh’s work at the first Post-Impressionist exhibition at the Grafton Galleries, London (1910–1911), which displayed over twenty of his canvases, although his paintings of shoes do not appear in the catalogue (MacCarthy 20–24; 28, 30). In *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940), Woolf lists van Gogh as one of the most contentious artists in an exhibition notable for its “astonishing power to enrage the public, the critics and the artists of established reputation” (157). And yet her earlier novel *Jacob’s Room* refers to an unspecified reproduction of “Van Goch” at Cambridge, a traditional setting that strips his art of its subversive character and aligns it with the exclusivity he challenged: “How like a suburb where you go to see a view and eat a special cake!” (38). Woolf’s awareness of the variable reception of van Gogh’s work complicates questions of influence, prompting an examination of the specific contexts motivating her recourse to shoes.
Before she published *Jacob’s Room*, Woolf acknowledged the social impress of gender on everyday objects. In “Haworth, November, 1904,” boots and shoes galvanize Woolf’s reflections on Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855). Initially, Woolf dismisses the “inanimate collection of objects” in the Brontë museum (7). Yet she enjoys contact with the body of the writer through the items that “[outlive]” her: “the most touching case—so touching that one hardly feels reverent in one’s gaze—is that which contains the little personal relics, the dresses and shoes of the dead woman” (7). Woolf also mentions the “thin little cloth boots” placed “under glass,” unfit for the “stony” streets of Keighley (6). These delicate feminine artifacts illustrate the domestic ideology of separate spheres that consigned middle-class women to the private house, a dramatic contrast to van Gogh’s durable leather goods (6). And in *Night and Day*, Woolf invents Brontë’s masculine counterpart, deceased poet Richard Alardyce, a man accorded a “religious temple” in the Hilbery home devoted to his “relics” (7). Within this shrine to his creative genius, a “pair of large, worn slippers” garners the admiration of his descendant (7). Such slippers also signify cultivated leisure rather than the arduous labor honored by van Gogh. Unlike Brontë’s cloth boots, however, they attest to public withdrawal rather than private confinement: her diminutive relics clash with his prodigious possessions. In both cases, Woolf adopts a skeptical approach to memorial spaces, detecting the violence inherent in differential norms for men and women in her depictions of shoes, boots, and slippers.

Woolf stages a haphazard confrontation with loss in *Jacob’s Room* at odds with the orchestration of relics in *Night and Day*. We know nothing about the color, design, or texture of the shoes that Betty Flanders holds although we can recall her child playing on the beach, the student walking at Cambridge, and the tourist sight-seeing in Greece. Contrary to Isabel M. Andrés, who denies that his belongings evoke pathos (27), Roe suggests that they serve as vehicles for readerly identification: “we might even perhaps imagine ourselves, just for a moment, in his shoes” (118). Yet Jacob’s masculine birthright often blinds him to interdependency, the basis of his own precarious life: “‘What for? What for?’ Jacob never asked himself any such questions, to judge by the way he laced his boots...He was young—a man” (170). Woolf’s oblique narrative clearly evinces his androcentric assumptions and civilian preoccupations. Alternatively, the novelist delineates the dispassionate observation of nameless war casualties, “young men in the prime of life” who “descend” into the sea while “blocks of tin soldiers” become “fragments of broken match-stick” through “field-glasses” (164). In these scenes of carnage, differential privilege yields to instrumental ends and “variable norms of recognition” enable the spectacle of dehumanization (Butler, *PL* 43). Woolf couples Jacob’s privilege with his vulnerability in patriarchal society: the empty shoes of the citizen-soldier exemplify both banality and extremity. The tacit hierarchies of peace inform her subtle account of a grievable youth killed in war. Woolf’s iconography of the shoe discloses the vicissitudes of precarity, ranging from gender inequality to state violence, implicit in everyday life.

Following the recurrence of global strife in 1939, a war that Woolf anticipated with mounting anxiety, the civilian shoe became paramount to the remembrance of historical trauma. In distinction to the black boots of Nazi officials and the wooden clogs of concentration camp inmates, the “iconographic shoes of the Holocaust” are “unlaced, derelict peasant’s shoes” (Jones 203). “I Saw A Mountain” concerns massive piles of unsorted shoes taken from prisoners in Majdanek, Poland. The Third Reich appropriated personal
belongings as commodities for impersonal exchange: Schulstein resorts to personification to recollect lost individuals, families, and communities. He restores particularity to mounds of mute plunder, naming places, such as “Prague, Paris and Amsterdam”; trades, such as “butchers” and “carpenters”; and occasions, such as dances, weddings, and funerals (lines 22, 28-29). As Schulstein reminds us, shoes were once implements for shopping, traveling, and working, as well as devices to attract attention, or protect the body from water, weather, and wounds. He repudiates the reduction of living persons to things by ascribing to things the sentence of grievable persons. The shoes miraculously assemble on behalf of the missing bodies from which they were taken: “The mountain moved... / And the thousands of shoes arranged themselves / By size—by pairs—and in rows—and moved” (lines 10-12). This poignant vision of post-genocidal reckoning musters hundreds of thousands of shoes into a relentless “shoe army” that marches in search of “judgment,” acting in concert to embody myriad histories: “We are the shoes, we are the last witnesses” (lines 19, 42, 20). In the absence of the private room, the pair of shoes, and the private mourners that Woolf coordinates to mark violent death in the Great War, Schulstein reconstitutes an imaginary collectivity from thousands of mismatched belongings.12 His iconography of the shoe transforms an abject remnant into the righteous agent of a persecuted people.

The shoe enables us to glimpse the intimate repercussions of war, genocide, and, finally, occupation: notably, the modern state of Iraq, a former British mandate (1920-1932), was founded as Woolf wrote Jacob’s Room.13 Al-Zaidi came to public attention in Baghdad on 14 Dec. 2008 at Bush’s televised press conference, an event that prohibited questions from the audience. The young journalist affiliated with the TV network al-Baghdadia threw his shoes at the visiting head of state to protest the occupation: as he pitched his second shoe, he dedicated it to “the widows, the orphans, and those who were killed in Iraq” (“Bush”).14 Al-Zaidi conveyed his outrage at the unilateral terms of recognition structuring the relationship between a war-torn country and a warring empire: “We might think of war as dividing populations into those who are grievable and those who are not” (Butler, FW 38). Although Bush greeted al-Zaidi’s actions with laughter, authorities arrested the journalist and subjected him to torture. Security forces destroyed al-Zaidi’s shoes and local officials ordered the dismantling of a one-and-a-half tonne shoe monument erected to commemorate his actions: in this manner, state iconoclasm countered popular iconography.15 Upon his liberation (15 Sept. 2009), al-Zaidi defended his protest in The Story of My Shoe, a discourse that figures the poles of domination and resistance under the American-led occupation through the boot and the shoe, respectively: the shoe encounters and transmits the suffering of people “under its boot.” Both Woolf and al-Zaidi enlist shoes to criticize the state: however, imprisonment and torture provide telling evidence of the perilous conditions of dissent in contemporary war zones. Al-Zaidi’s performative iconography of the shoe condemns the effects of asymmetrical warfare on civilian populations, emphasizing the disavowed realities of death, privation, and violation.

Woolf, Schulstein, and al-Zaidi invoke civilian shoes in their representations of war, stressing the complex convergence of state power and corporeal experience. In this connection, West ventures that, “the notion of footwear as a class of objects that deserves to be viewed as a subject in its own right seems to have occurred first to Vincent van Gogh” (42). His iconic pictures of shoes arguably model the ethos of western memorial practices
that validate objects in collective mourning processes. Critical iconographies from both east and west thematize this motif in specific contexts of historical trauma through writing and/or performance. Woolf’s novel concludes with the shoes of a privileged youth who dies prematurely in a modern industrial war; Schulstein’s lyric animates the shoes of Jewish prisoners killed in Nazi campaigns of racial extermination; and al-Zaidi’s speech upholds shoe throwing in solidarity with citizens living under foreign domination. These writers expose differential norms of grievability in particular circumstances of duress, ranging from mobilization to genocide and occupation under liberal, fascist, and neoliberal regimes, respectively. While Schulstein and al-Zaidi confront the violence of Jewish and Arab histories, Woolf reveals the social variables shaping the apprehension of grievable lives within the British Empire during the conduct of total war. Together, they contest official rationales for mass death, provoking thoughtful consideration of the continuities and discontinuities of state regulation from 1914 to the present.

This paratactic analysis contributes to interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary research on Woolf by investigating the implications of her work in diverse cultural, historical, and social contexts. In the process, I deviate from the rubrics of established scholarship on her oeuvre such as gender, genre, movement, period, and style by juxtaposing geo-historical junctures of violence. This approach situates Woolf in a geographically dispersed and temporally staggered global network that may decenter her modernist milieu even as it enhances an understanding of her contemporary ethical import. As Friedman muses, “The refusal to compare texts from different places, times, or cultures privileges one kind of context (temporal-spatial) and renders other contexts invisible” (“WN” 757). A deliberately disjointed reading of this kind, however, does not seek to unify discrete cultures and events, but rather to highlight conjunctions afforded through recourse to the shoe in a range of places and times. Significantly, critical iconographies by Woolf, Schulstein, and al-Zaidi indict dehumanizing constructions of others without subordinating cultural differences to humanist ideals. To summarize, this cross-cultural genealogy links a compelling array of aesthetic and political responses to conflict through a shared motif. Because civilian shoes, which potentially serve as icons of subjection and resistance as well as pathos and protest, promote a “sensate understanding” of war, they may also potentially foster a “sensate opposition” to state violence (Butler, FW 100). As such, the words of Betty Flanders—“what am I to do with these…”—continue to resonate.

Notes

1. Salamander provides scarce publication information on Schulstein’s poem (316).
2. The American Friends Service Committee organized “Eyes Wide Open: The Human Cost of the War” (2004-2007), a national traveling exhibition of empty shoes and boots signifying the lost lives of Iraqi civilians and US service personnel, respectively, an effort circumventing public prohibitions on images of the dead through objects (“Eyes”; cf. Mitchell 95). Feldman contrasts the “field of shoes” in war memorials with the “mound of shoes” in Holocaust exhibitions (126-28).
3. As Butler cautions, however, “there is no singular human form” (FW 52).
4. On iconology, a transdisciplinary method of visual analysis developed by Aby Warburg and Erwin Panofsky, and its relationships to iconography, see Müller.
5. Landsberg proposes “an emerging iconography of the Holocaust” premised on objects, distinguishing the “life world” of van Gogh’s boots from the “deathworld” of Holocaust shoes (71, 80).
6. See Faris and Walker on the “modernist latent icon” in van Gogh and Woolf (641).
Vincent Van Gogh, Virginia Woolf, and Old Shoes

7. As Stansky indicates, “The catalogue had to be hastily assembled, and it is an unreliable guide to what was there. Although the exact number and contents of the show will never be known, it was unquestionably a large exhibition created very quickly” (193-94).

8. For another reading of Woolf’s visit to Haworth, see Zemgulys (153-55).

9. Outka links personal relics to commodity fetishism in Night and Day, an approach that overlooks the complex historical and social dynamics of memorial spaces (132-33).

10. Olson denies the inextricable relationships between traumatic experience, state violence, and everyday life when she affirms “the power of the everyday to trump trauma” in Woolf’s fictions (76).

11. During the war crimes trial of Adolf Eichmann (1961), shoes became central to the public reception of the Holocaust (Feldman 122-23). Arguably, memorial shoes facilitate the multifaceted exploration of loss, unsettling associations with the commodity fetish and the psychosexual fetish. Ruben, however, implies that leather shoes may serve as a historical fetish for the wooden clogs worn in the concentration camps (30).

12. The recent fire in the barracks at Majdanek Museum (10 Aug. 2010) destroyed thousands of old shoes. Sara J. Bloomfield, the director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, stated, “These shoes are iconic symbols of the Holocaust since they are personal and each represents an innocent life. Our millions of visitors tell us overwhelmingly that the display of victims’ shoes was the most unforgettable part of their Museum experience” (“United”).

13. Fisk, a Middle East correspondent and the son of a British Great War veteran, compares the recent invasion of Iraq to modern conflict in the region (170-81).

14. On the media coverage of the incident, see Muppidi. Rather than conceiving of shoe throwing solely as an Arab practice, Levin and Smith identify its occurrences in Britain.

15. Children in the Tikrit Orphanage Complex assisted sculptor Laith al-Amiri in building the shoe monument that was dismantled within twenty-four hours of its unveiling on 29 Jan. 2009 (“Bush”). Elsewhere, the Asmita Theatre Group directed by Arvind Gaur premièred The Last Salute in Delhi (14 May 2011), a play based on al-Zaidi’s life and writings.

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STOPPED AT THE BORDER: VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE
CRIMINALIZATION OF DISSENT IN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES

by J. Ashley Foster

August 2012:

Two months may seem like a long time to ruminate upon, what must be to you, a minor incident. I do not even know if you remember me. Certainly, in your mind, no response is necessary. You ostensibly posed me no profound question; your interrogations were routine, pedestrian, and after being answered and verified, required no ongoing conversations or follow up discussion. When you asked me at the border between Canada and the United States, “Why are you entering Canada?” and “What are you presenting on at the Virginia Woolf Conference?” I do not think that you understood that even if your language did not provoke a dialogue upon a larger, more abstract topic—your actions—call certain philosophical and ethical problems into being, and manifest theoretical quandaries that provoke larger thought. So, it is the questions that your actions posed to which I am responding—questions that Virginia Woolf, in *Three Guineas*, pondered eighty-four years earlier: what does it mean to be a citizen? What does it mean to uphold the law? What is this “patriotism” that we speak of? In whose benefit does the phrase “our country” work? What is our obligation to “our country?” And ultimately, in Woolf’s words, “How in your opinion are we to prevent war?”

This letter, modeled upon Woolf’s series of letters in *Three Guineas*, is not only an address to the issues raised by my experience of entering Canada, but is also written in homage to Virginia Woolf and *Three Guineas*. It is truly ironic that, going to a conference to present on a peace panel whose subject was *Three Guineas*, you would embody all that Woolf confronting in her “Communist Manifesto for women,” and that you made real all the concerns for masculinist military posturing that she raised. I know that before you met Conor Tomás Reed and me, Woolf was an author you had only heard of in passing, and that you were completely unfamiliar with *Three Guineas*. Permit me to take this opportunity to introduce you to a text that is essential to you and your line of work, even if you do not yet know it.

But—wait! You may have no idea as to how I see you, and you may very well have forgotten Conor and me. So, let me describe you so that you know the character to whom I am writing, for as Woolf says, “let us draw what all letter-writers instinctively draw, a sketch of the person to whom the letter is addressed. Without someone warm and breathing on the other side of the page, letters are worthless.”

You carry yourself with military efficiency and military pride; dressed in a navy-blue border patrol outfit, complete with pants tucked into your black lace-up boots and a spiky-blond buzz cut, you walk in short, clipped steps, with the posture of someone who sleeps well at night. Your clear blue eyes convey a sense of self-righteousness. It is apparent by your mannerisms and behaviors that you are not just performing tasks for your job as one of the supervisors at Canadian customs, but that you whole-heartedly believe in what you are doing. You are the poster child for individuals becoming the embodiment
of the law; you are not a subject of the law, but feel as though you are the law, destined to uphold the edicts of the state towards the end of some ideological greater good. This is the outcome of totalitarianism, which is an effect of Fascism; Hannah Arendt describes the totalizing effect of the state in the minds of the people. The people cease to be individuals and instead become microcosms in the efficient mechanism of state control.

Now let us consider this “state” which you fight so hard to protect; the state where, in the name of Freedom, freedoms have incrementally dissolved. I had known that the United States was progressively limiting its personal freedoms, with George W. Bush signing the Patriot Act, and the governmentally sanctioned racism in detentions, interrogations, and surveillance that followed 9/11. However, it was not until Conor Tomás Reed and I got stopped at the Canadian/United States border in Portal, North Dakota and were prevented from attending our scheduled panel presentation on Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas* at the International Virginia Woolf Conference that I understood the United States’ erosion of civil liberties had spread to Canada. Conor and I were barred from entering Canada due to Conor’s involvement with Occupy Wall Street. Your forbidding Conor to enter Canada, sir, I read as an attempt to illegalize legal, public dissent—the very kind of dissent that distinguishes democracy from Fascism.

Woolf’s *Three Guineas* speaks to the structural problems embedded in a patriotic, patriarchal, capitalistic hierarchy and shows that Fascism is the extreme trajectory of such a system. *Three Guineas*, written between 1936-1938, traces the historical progression of Fascism, women’s oppression, and institutionalized militarism in confluence with the university systems. She demonstrates that Fascism is the ultimate expression of a patriarchal hierarchy and that as long as a society exists in which some men are above other men and all men are above women, as long as great financial disparity and power imbalances exist, Fascism is part of both the state and the home structure. Jane Marcus has pointed out that “Woolf shows Fascism at home in the English family,” which is then reflected in the state. For Woolf, the natural progression of a capitalistic, patriarchal hierarchy is Fascism; it is not a movement confined to Italy, Germany, or Spain but an insidious undercurrent of any pyramidal system where few have power and many exist to support power. It is a disease that is endemic to power wanting to perpetuate itself and maintain its own power—the state serves the ruler and the sanctity of the state governing structure as opposed to the people.

Maybe you remember me now? I was the one to whom—when I noted how upset I was that Conor’s cell phone was being searched—you handed a law book full of regulations that proved that you had the “right” to read our emails. I told you that we were peace scholars, attempting to make your post unnecessary. We came to Canada because we were invited to participate in an intellectual collaboration with the Virginia Woolf community and you treated us with suspicion above and beyond normal customs searches, and prevented my colleague from joining me on our panel.

The work that we were heading off to do in Canada undertakes the exploration of patriotism and peace, of writing and politics, as Woolf herself was deeply affected by the question of effecting change. She saw writing as her fighting. She believed in fighting Fascism with intellectual and artistic creativity, the freedom of expression, and the necessity to write unimpeded by political and editorial censorship: “my natural reaction is to fight intellectually: if I were any use, I should write against it: I should evolve some plan for fighting English tyranny. The moment force is used, it becomes meaningless & unreal to
stopped at the border

This was written in Woolf’s “Memoir of Julian Bell” on July 30, 1937, roughly a week after Woolf found out her nephew Julian Bell had been killed in the Spanish Civil War. She developed her plan to “fight English Tyranny,” and outlined it in her great political manifesto Three Guineas, the same political manifesto upon which we were to present and which you kept us from discussing in a forum of our peers. In effect, your border patrol regulations interrupted the good work Virginia Woolf started decades earlier.

When Jean Mills, Conor Tomás Reed, and I were accepted to the International Virginia Woolf Conference in Saskatoon to present on our proposed panel “‘To ‘Think Peace into Existence’: Virginia Woolf’s Global Pacifism,” we were thrilled to be going to the conference, but amazed at how expensive airline tickets were. Conor and I decided to drive to Saskatoon, Canada from New York City because gas in my little Ford Focus was one-third the cost of one plane ticket. I was moving west anyway, and driving northwest for the conference and then southwest made more sense than flying in and out of New York and then driving.

The road trip started smoothly, with lots of music and great conversation. Conor learned how to drive a stick so he could negotiate the long stretches of miles and miles of miles and miles that is the Great Northern Plains. We talked about politics, pacifism, Marxism, organization of political movements, and ways to effect change in the world. Our primary concerns were how to make the world a better place and what role academia has in that process. We talked about our obligation as citizens to dissent, to protest, when we feel our state is not on the right path. We talked about our obligation to our community and to the other. It became clear to me that Conor’s protest, as my own Peace Witness, comes from a place of love for the society in which he is invested, emotionally and materially. I think Woolf would have approved of the non-hierarchical structure of Occupy Wall Street, a movement which Conor had a major hand in organizing and in which I played a minor role by participating in demonstrations, marches, and protests.

This is all to say it is truly ironic that, in the middle of these conversations that Conor and I were having, in the midst of discussing how important dissent is for a healthy society and for an expression of human rights, how ethics and the ethical call is expressed in our obligation to the other, we had a Fascist encounter. What happened to us at the border between Canada and the United States crystallizes that Woolf’s work must be continued. The concerns she had in 1938 are still affecting us now, except in a truly fascizoid gesture, the strictures on dissent are becoming more and more increasingly technologized.

By the time Conor and I got to the border, we were in a rattled state. The weather had held all the way through Minnesota and Wisconsin, but the afternoon of June 7, outside of Minot, North Dakota, we ran into a storm so bad that, we discovered later, the government was “seeding” it to weaken its strength. Waves of water splashed over the car and I felt submerged by the ocean, as though I was jumping waves and frequently tumbled; I could not hear or see anything but water. I spent about half the time pulling over to the side of the road with my hazards on because I had no visibility at all. When we finally got through the roughest patch, the border was close by. Needless to say, a downpour of that magnitude had set us back a bit on time, and we were very much looking forward to driving straight through to Saskatoon, about six or seven hours northwest of Portal, North Dakota.
We approached the border, handed your colleague, the Canadian guard, our passports, and confidently went through the initial questions:

“Where are you from?” The guard said.
“Why are you coming to Canada?”
“To deliver a paper at the International Virginia Woolf Conference in Saskatoon.”
“Who is putting the conference on?”
“The University of Saskatchewan.”
“Have you ever been to Canada before?”
“Yes, every six months I go to Montreal,” I said. “No, I have never been to Canada,” said Conor.
“Do you have any items that you need to report?”
“No.”
“Do you have any alcohol or tobacco?”
“No.”
“Are you carrying any firearms?”
“No, we are peace scholars here to deliver a paper about peace.”
“How about knives?”
“No, no weapons of any kind.”
“How about mace or pepper spray?”
“Nope, no weapons.”
“How about hand guns or any guns?”
“No, no guns.”
“Ok, please come inside. Park over there and come in through the side.”

This was the first indication to me that something was wrong. I had traveled to Canada every six months or so for the last couple of years, and never been asked into the Canadian customs building. Without giving us any information or indication as to why we were asked to come inside, the customs officers pointed us to a corner and told us to wait. Conor and I sat down in red vinyl chairs and waited in an area that had a counter and a room adjoining the counter, glassed-in, shades drawn. After a few moments, Conor was not called over to the counter, but into the room. I waited for the better part of an hour, wondering what could possibly be taking so long.

When Conor came out of the room, he explained to me that there was a problem with his entrance into Canada because he had been arrested at Occupy Wall Street and Occupy CUNY demonstrations. All of the arrests had been tried but, unknown to Conor, though he had accepted an ACD (Adjournment on Contemplation of Dismissal), the charges were technically still open until the end of a six-month probation period. However, Conor had traveled to Brazil on his passport in January, only three months after his arrests, without trouble. The United States had no strictures or instructions concerning him leaving the country.

A note about Conor’s arrests: Conor was arrested while he was protesting the current political and economic system in good faith, trying to register his dissent against a system skewed towards mobilizing the current power structure to gain more power and keeping those without governing power outside of state governance. As Martin Luther King, Jr. has shown us, sometimes it is necessary to register political dissent in the form of direct
action. Direct action ought not be thought of as a threat to democracy, but the very thing that constitutes democracy’s strength. (And by democracy, I absolutely do not mean the way we enact “democracy” in the United States, but in its ancient Greek sense—though not necessarily practice—“rule of the people.” The root of democracy, *demos*, means “the people.”) Conor, in participating in protests and demonstrations, is fulfilling his obligation as a citizen to register his disagreement with current policy. The fact that he was arrested in New York City already undermines the democratic process and enhances the push towards a totalitarian regime.\(^{12}\)

After it was established that Conor was not to be admitted into Canada and that we had to turn around and go to the U.S. side of the border, we were required to pull into a steel gray garage. Two long plastic picnic tables lined the walls of the garage on each side of the long side of the rectangle. Next to the tables sat an x-ray machine, the kind used in airport security. Customs security instructed Conor and me to sit in the chairs at the picnic tables. There were two guards present: one woman and one man. While the man started to unpack my trunk, the woman stood at the table reading Conor’s email and going through his phone. She read all his text messages and went through his emails. My phone was in the car, without a pass code lock, so I am not sure if they went through it. From the position of our seats, we could not see what was happening inside the car or on most of the table space. I know that all of the important objects of my life were put on the tables, searched, and then scanned through the x-ray machine. Because I was moving, it took quite a long time for them to go through everything. Meanwhile, you, the supervising officer, entered and while the other two officers were engaged in examining our things, you asked us about our level of satisfaction with the search. I mentioned to you that I felt it was a violation of our rights to read our emails and go through our cell phones. I mentioned that I did not feel as though we were being treated particularly well, as it was quite obvious from the 50 pounds of books in the back of my car that we were headed to an academic conference, just as we had said. Considering that most of the books were by Woolf, or works of Woolf criticism, it was clear that we were presenting on Woolf. You took time to address my concerns by trying to impress upon me that what you and your crew were doing was legal, that you had the right to explore any vehicle, and that laws passed in the last decade allowed you to go through anyone’s phone or email. This is where I objected: though what you were doing may have been legal, it does not make going through emails and text messages right. As Martin Luther King, Jr. reminds us in “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,”\(^{13}\) everything Hitler did was legal. And this is one of the two ways in which, in my encounter with customs, “protecting the public” intersects with Fascism. The United States and Canadian borders reserve the right to violate everyone’s privacy in the extreme case that they might find something incriminating. You seemed to want us to agree with you, to tell you that you were right. You appeared to need my and Conor’s approval. You seemed to want our blessing in invading our privacy. What I told you was that I fundamentally did not believe in what you were doing, I was not going to be satisfied with the situation, if you were aiming to make me happy it was under impossible circumstances, but that if the law reserved you the right to read my emails and search my car, I was not going to stop you.

The second way in which this encounter reeks of Fascism is that Conor and I were invited by the University of Saskatchewan to present on our panel. When Conor was denied entrance into Canada, he was also denied entrance to the conference. The customs
officials interfered with our ability to fulfill our academic obligations and in the process censored academic freedom. In illegalizing political dissent and protest by barring Conor from the country, the Canadian border patrol also ensured that political activists could not participate in an intellectual meeting and regulated who should and should not be able to speak at a university gathering.

After the search was finished, Conor and I were turned around at the border. I wonder how customs benefited from searching a car that you had already rejected. Regardless, we were turned around at the border and had to go through it all over again, this time with fewer questions and interrogations. The United States customs called us inside, asked us why Canada had rejected us, and then searched our car. The difference, however, is that Conor and I did not get to watch their search: the United States side conducted the search and packed the car without us witnessing it.

This entire process took hours and hours. By the time we were done with the searches, it was almost 11 pm at night. We were offered no resources, internet access, or a way to make a phone call. We were three hours from the nearest town (in good weather) and had no sense of where we could find room and board. The United States customs officials said that there was a hotel about 45 minutes (in good weather) down the road. So, back into the storm we drove. It took us two hours in the rain, this time pitch-black outside the window. We finally arrived at a town that consisted of an inn and a pub. The next morning I had to drive all the way back to Minot. Conor decided to hop a Greyhound bus home, to New York, and Minot was the closest bus station available.

Three hours after I dropped Conor off, I found myself at Canadian customs—this time with no tornados or storms. After going through the entire questioning rigmarole at the customs window, I was called inside, and this time I was the one interrogated. I had been marked as having sympathies with Conor and was flagged by the system. The woman behind the interrogation desk kept insisting that I did not need to enter Canada because my panel at the conference had already occurred. When I explained to her that my panel was rescheduled for the next day so that I could present, she insisted that the conference was over. Then she wanted to call Ann Martin, director of the conference, to verify that I was supposed to present, even though the full PDF schedule was online. We went round and around in circles, she insisting that I did not actually need to get into Canada and me insisting that I did. She finally let me into Canada on a limited visa, with a timeline that expired two days after the conference ended.

The next thing that happened was possibly the scariest of the entire trip. I walked out to my car, after I had been given legal admittance into Canada, and a male customs officer told me to stand against a brick wall while he searched my car. He went over it carefully and then asked me if I could verify that I packed my car and that everything in it was mine. I responded, “Absolutely not. I did not pack this car. First, I was searched yesterday, and your customs officers packed it, then I was searched on the U.S. side of the border, and the customs officers over there packed it. They searched my car without my seeing it. I have not repacked since last night.” He was flustered by the response and asked again if all the stuff was mine. I told him I had no way of knowing because I did not pack the car. He brought me back into the garage, but this time there were no other officers about. There were also no women. He displayed his gun prominently on his hip and demanded that I sit down at the picnic table. He lowered the door, which meant that no one could see
inside the garage at all. There were no windows and only opaque doors. I asked for you, who had searched me yesterday, to be present, because even if you are a Fascist I knew you were not going to hurt me, and the officer told me that his supervisor (meaning you) was on the phone. He then proceeded to take everything out of my car again, turned on my computer, started fiddling with it, and unpacked my luggage (after he had already done all of this in the parking lot). He found an antique tobacco pipe that my grandfather had smoked (remember, I had everything dear to me in my car because I was moving and did not want the moving truck to have the most sentimental or valuable things on it). When it was clear there was nothing in the pipe, and that it had not been used in at least 8 years since Grandpa’s passing, he started to swab the pipe and ran chemistry experiments on it, and appeared to be looking for traces of drugs. When he did not find any apparent incriminating evidence, he ran a cloth, testing my car, dusting the steering wheel, the dashboard, swabbing the seats, again in the absence of any actual contraband, looking for traces. I was standing, watching, behind the picnic tables. I asked for the supervisor’s presence, your presence, a second time. He ignored my request and started screaming at me to sit down. I then insisted, in no uncertain terms, that I needed the supervisor in the room at that moment. The officer who was running a chemistry lab on my car called you in. You took stock of the situation and immediately packed up my car and sent me on my way.

Though this experience was emotionally devastating, sir, I have to thank you. Your behavior and conviction extends an invitation to examine our laws and the ways in which our governments function, not in the service of its people, but in the service of itself. Additionally, however, your behavior also forces those involved in the university systems to consider what world we are creating and supporting and what kind of community we encourage in our classrooms. Most of our students attend college to get a better job, to be able to join the workforce. Universities could be a space of contemplation and artistic endeavor, but more often they become a place invested in upholding institutional and cultural values. Woolf is greatly concerned about the connection between universities and violence, as she sees universities as a breeding ground for militarism and the patriotic ideals that reinforce war. Colleges mass-produce capitalist workers, teaching them how to function commercially within their national arena. Indeed, in Three Guineas Woolf avers:

Need we collect more facts from history and biography to prove our statement that all attempt to influence the young against war through the education they receive at the universities must be abandoned? For do they not prove that education, the finest education in the world, does not teach people to hate force, but to use it? Do they not prove that education, far from teaching the educated generosity and magnanimity, makes them on the contrary so anxious to keep their possessions, that “grandeur and power” of which the poet speaks, in their own hands, that they will use not force but much subtler methods than force when they are asked to share them?14

Here we can see that Woolf draws a connection between the universities and the power
structure. Universities graduate individuals who then ascend to positions of power and wealth, which encourages those individuals to fight to keep the “grandeur and power” that they have gained. This puts power in the hands of an elite few instead of disseminating it throughout the population and encourages those who have power to protect it at any cost. It teaches university students to think of themselves, and instead of considering the other as an ethical obligation, perpetuates a system based on individualist gain and the hoarding of resources.

Virginia Woolf believes that women joining the workforce, because they have historically been excluded from the power structures and are not invested in maintaining them, are the “new weapon” against war. Banded together into an “Outsiders Society,” women contain the promise of changing social structures; however, Woolf’s fear is that if women become educated within the university systems and within the values of men, they will internalize the patriarchal ideals of capitalism and war, and therefore fail to effect any change or hope for a better society. Therefore, Woolf is tempted to recommend burning the universities to the ground, to ensure that the educated man’s daughter does not get educated within the current system (though she does resist that impulse, her reflex is to guarantee that women do not internalize male values by forbidding them a university education).

When asked to donate money to women’s colleges, Woolf responds:

No guinea of earned money should go to rebuilding the college on the old plan; just as certainly none could be spent upon building a college upon a new plan; therefore the guinea should be earmarked “Rags. Petrol. Matches.” And this note should be attached to it. “Take this guinea and with it burn the college to the ground. Set fire to the old hypocrisies. Let the light of the burning building scare the nightingales and incarnadine the willows. And let the daughters of educated men dance round the fire and heap armful upon armful of dead leaves upon the flames. And let their mothers lean from the upper widows and cry, 'Let it blaze! Let it blaze! For we have done with this “education”!'"}

I thank you, sir, for giving me the opportunity to not only reflect upon your position, but my own, and to reflect upon how my position creates yours. Because it is a truth, I teach at the University, and am pursuing those honors and awards that Woolf writes so vehemently against. But, as Woolf herself concludes in the end of the first section of Three Guineas, we cannot refuse women, as we cannot refuse disenfranchised men, a university education, for if we refuse a university education, all hope for change is lost. We can, however, adjust the nature of that education. Woolf describes the ideal new college, the one we ought to build:

What should be taught in the new college, the poor college? Not the art of dominating other people; not the arts of ruling, of killing, of acquiring land and capital… The poor college must teach only the arts that can be taught cheaply and practiced by poor people; such as medicine, mathematics, music, painting and literature. It should teach the arts of human intercourse; the art of understanding other people’s lives and minds… The aim of the new college, the cheap college, should be not to segregate and specialize, but to combine… For there would be none of the barriers of wealth and ceremony, of advertisement and competition...
which now make the old and rich universities such uneasy dwelling-places—cities of strife, cities where this is locked up and that is chained down...\footnote{17}

We can metaphorically, if not actually, burn the universities to the ground. We can instill new values, not based on capitalist endeavor, but based on social responsibility and an ethical obligation to the other. Our current system promotes violence against people in its war cries and thirst for military vengeance; I am, in solidarity with Woolf, advocating that we “set fire to the old hypocrisies.” Maybe a fair amount of destruction to our current philosophies, our current beliefs, and our current way of life is necessary. I do not expect, sir, that you will greet this idea positively, for its stated intention is indeed to eradicate all that bolsters your position, to render unnecessary things such as border control and patriotism obsolete. It might serve us well to adjust Woolf’s battle call in \textit{Three Guineas}: “As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world”\footnote{18} and instead cry: “As a person, I have no country. As a person I want no country. As a person my country is the whole world,” for I implore you to put down your gun and to cry with us.

I beg you, Mr. Customs Supervisor, to help us halt the trajectory upon which “our countries” are headed. Hannah Arendt, in “Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government” illuminates that what distinguishes totalitarianism from any other form of governance is an issue of momentum: in a totalitarian regime, once the state conceives a certain logic, and claims it as its own, there is nothing in the way to keep the logic from careening to its most ultimate expression. And what is “logical” is often what evades morality and ethics. \textit{Because there is no dissent} in a totalitarian regime, there is nothing to stop the process of human rights being violated. Arendt writes: “Terror as the execution of a law of movement whose ultimate goal is not the welfare of men or the interest of one man but the fabrication of mankind eliminates individuals for the sake of the species, sacrifices the ‘parts’ for the sake of the ‘whole.’”\footnote{19} Like a hockey puck skating on ice, totalitarian regimes function essentially unimpeded, subsuming individuals and morphing them into the state apparatus. As Arendt states:

\begin{quote}
In a perfect totalitarian government, where all men have become One Man, where all action aims at the acceleration of the movement of Nature or History, where every single act is the execution of a death sentence which Nature or History has already pronounced, that is, under conditions where terror can be completely relied upon to keep the movement in constant motion, no principle of action separate from its essence would be needed at all.\footnote{20}
\end{quote}

When a safe and politically sanctioned structure for dissent is eliminated, Fascism sets in. When people are not allowed to protest the government in their own best interest, Fascism sets in. When individual rights are overlooked, ignored, or subjugated to, not the social interest, but the preservation of the governing bodies of the state, Fascism sets in. And when politics becomes about maintaining positions of office instead of governing, Fascism sets in. Which is why Virginia Woolf wrote, in 1937/38:

\begin{quote}
Let us shut off the wireless and listen to the past. We are in Greece now; Christ has not been born yet, nor St. Paul either. But listen:
\end{quote}
“Whomsoever the city may appoint, that man must be obeyed, in little things and great, in just things and unjust… disobedience is the worst of evils… We must support the cause of order, and in no wise suffer a woman to worst us… They must be women, and not range at large. Servants, take them within.” That is the voice of Creon, the dictator. To whom Antigone, who was to have been his daughter, answered, “Not such are the laws set among men by the justice who dwells with the gods below.” But she had neither capital nor force behind her. And Creon said: “I will take her where the path is loneliness and hide her, living, in a rocky vault.” And he shut her not in Holloway or in a concentration camp, but in a tomb. And Creon we read brought ruin on his house, and scattered the land with the bodies of the dead. It seems, Sir, as we listen to the voices of the past, as if we were looking at the photograph again, at the picture of dead bodies and ruined houses that the Spanish Government sends us almost weekly. Things repeat themselves it seems. Pictures and voices are the same today as they were 2,000 years ago.21

Yes, things repeat themselves, it seems. It seems, Sir, as though pictures and voices are the same today as they were in 1938. We still look upon dead bodies and ruined houses; we still think what is right now is better than what could potentially be with different choices. Because, as Woolf, Jean-Paul Sartre, Sigmund Freud, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ghandi all show, these dead bodies and ruined houses are a choice, and Conor’s work on Occupy Wall Street and Occupy CUNY, and my work in the classroom and as a pacifist Quaker, I believe, is in part to encourage people to make a different choice. Unless we make different decisions tomorrow than the ones we make today, we will always be looking at dead bodies and ruined houses, and, as the Western countries are exhibiting right now, we will bring ruin upon our house, if ruin is not already here.

Notes
4. Avital Ronell, in the film *Examined Life* (2008) directed by Astra Taylor, ruminates upon anxiety and conscience: “Anxiety is the mood par excellence of ethnicity, I think…. However, could you imagine Mr. Bush, who doesn’t give a shit when he sends everyone to the gas chamber or the electric chair. He expresses no anxiety. And they are very proud of this—they do not loose a wink of sleep, they express no anxiety.”
6. Judith Butler, in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2004), observes: “The Patriot Act constitutes another effort to suspend civil liberties in the name of security… In versions 1 and 2 of the Patriot Act, it is the public intellectual culture that is targeted for control and regulation, overriding long-standing claims to intellectual freedom and freedom of association that have been central to conceptions of democratic political life” (XVI).
7. In analyzing the political and governmental implications of the “indefinite detention” of Guantanamo, Butler illustrates that the ramifications are not isolated to war zones or a liminal spaces of suspended war zones, but also are brought home: “The license to brand and categorize and detain on the basis of suspicion alone, expressed in this operation of ‘deeming,’ is potentially enormous. We have already seen it at work in racial profiling, in the detention of thousands of Arab residents or Arab-American citizens, sometimes on the basis of last names alone; the harassment of any number of US and non-US citizens at the immigration
Stopped at the Border

borders because some official ‘perceives’ a potential difficulty; the attacks on individuals of Middle Eastern
descent on US streets, and the targeting of Arab-American professors on campuses” (Precarious Life 76).

8. I had a student in class, about halfway through the semester, ask me what Fascism is and I realized that
Fascism was one of the hardest movements to describe. Unlike communism, there are no simple 10 tenets
that one can rattle off to a student and assert with any kind of certainty “this is Fascism.” It is a movement
that celebrates a technological thrust into the future while nostalgically idealizing the past and following
traditional, conservative social rituals. The first thing all Fascist regimes do is take control of the press and
eliminate freedom of speech and freedom of expression—this is so no one can protest the decisions of the
governing structure. All art must be in support of the state. Then, Fascists send women out of the public
sphere and deny them education or work. Fascism subordinates all individuals and human life to the state
apparatus. People become solely functions and preservers of the state—the state does not serve the people;
rather, the people’s sole raison d’etre is to advance the state of which they are a part, even if the state is on a
wrong path.


10. I recognize that some readers might think that Fascism was a movement of the 1930s and that drawing
a parallel between contemporary politics and Fascist movements is an anachronistic gesture. In response,
I would quote Butler in saying that: “the historical time we thought was past turns out to structure the
contemporary field with a persistence that gives the lie to history as chronology” (Precarious Life 54).


12. Conor was arrested protesting the proposed increase in tuition hikes for the City University of New York
system during a CUNY board of trustees meeting taking place at Baruch College. As Conor himself de-
scribes: “We were met with severe police force, coupled with an administration that refused any responsibil-
ity for placing students, teachers, staff, and the community in danger.” CUNY commissioned the “Review
of Events Occurring at Baruch College on November 21, 2011,” now known as the “Kroll Report,” which
was released on January 4, 2013. According to the report, “Kroll was retained by the City to conduct an
independent investigation into the events surrounding a protest that occurred at Baruch College (‘Baruch’)
on November 21, 2011.” The report, however, glosses over the violence against students that occurred and
fails to show any accountability for endangering the students and faculty of Baruch College. The report can
be found online at: http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/chancellor/Kroll-Report2013.pdf. For an
analysis of the problematic nature of the report, please see Studentactivism.net “Report on CUNY Protest
Buries Evidence of Police Violence” at: <http://studentactivism.net/2013/01/16/report-on-cuny-protest-


14. TG 38.

15. TG 21.

16. TG 45.

17. TG 43.

18. TG 29.


21. TG 167.
The image of the body heap in wartime—the gruesomely iconic pile of dead, frequently unarmed civilians—is thoroughly embedded in modern social consciousness, returning again and again as a kind of chorus to history’s cacophonies. From Francisco Goya’s early-nineteenth-century print series *Disasters of War*, to Carl Sandburg’s 1918 poem “Grass,” to Ronald Haeberle’s 1968 photographs of the My Lai massacre by U.S. soldiers in Vietnam, artists, writers, and photographers have repeatedly documented this scene, rarely pausing to debate whether it may ensure their perpetuation. In her 1938 work of radical feminist pacifism, *Three Guineas*, Virginia Woolf describes the experience of receiving photographs from the embattled Spanish Republic during its revolution and civil war, which “the Government sends with patient pertinacity about twice a week” (TG 14). The author writes,

They are photographs of dead bodies for the most part. This morning’s collection contains the photograph of what might be a man’s body, or a woman’s; it is so mutilated that it might, on the other hand, be the body of a pig. But those certainly are dead children, and that undoubtedly is the section of a house.

Although *Three Guineas*’ assertion centers on whether women can effectively align with men to end war if severe social, economic, and ideological inequalities exist between them, Woolf continually refers to these haunting photographs, these “dead bodies and ruined houses,” which act as almost the rising steam to her arguments’ pistons (see TG 14, 83, 167 et al.). Under the indiscriminately falling bombs of European fascism, Spanish men and women are not just dehumanized in their mass deaths, they become *un*humanized into eviscerated animal clumps, while children eerily maintain compact familiarity even after being torn apart. The Republic selects and distributes these scenes of horror to enlist international aid and volunteers, while also forewarning what potential futures may unfold elsewhere without this urgently needed solidarity. Another Republican poster from the conflict portends, “if you tolerate this, your children will be next” (see Stradling).

And yet, Woolf doesn’t include these images of atrocity in *Three Guineas*, which Jane Marcus suggests, in her 2006 introduction to the book, may have been out of the severe concern that it would incite people to further violence. Woolf contends, “those photographs are not an argument; they are simply a crude statement of fact addressed to the eye” (TG 14); she instead chooses to document in visceral prose what the horrors look like splayed across her table. However, Woolf does intersperse throughout the text five photographs of men in the gilded uniforms of government, church, economy, military, and academia, a critical move which Marcus rightly calls “a new ‘weapon in the struggle’ in the great age of documentary” in her introduction (lx). This radical feminist version of culture-jamming works to explain the causes for the body heap by visually redirect-
ing readers to its political source, a kind of textual/visual montage in the tradition of wartime left propagandists like John Heartfield and Josep Renau, and more recently, the Canadian magazine *Adbusters*. Woolf ruptures the finery of these men in power to show the bomb-blasted, bullet-riddled bodies contained in every button, rosette, and stripe of their specialized garb, or in the words of Dylan Thomas, Woolf provides a face to “the hand that signed the paper [and] felled a city…doubled the globe of dead and halved a country” (67). One particularly wistful-looking military man in the book, Lord Baden-Powell—who was, incidentally, the founder of the Boy Scouts—is absurdly covered in overlapping piles and rows of medals, which in this new estimation appear like a shiny graveyard weighing him down. Another picture depicts Archbishop Cosmo Gordon Lang sternly hoisting a long encrusted scepter that seems better suited for impaling victims than spreading the word of God. Woolf’s experimental new mode of critical visual discernment can, as Judith Butler suggests in her 2009 work *Frames of War*, allow us to “interpret the interpretation that has been imposed upon us, developing our analysis into a social critique of regulatory and censorious power” (72).

The issue remains, though, whether this provocative method of pacifist iconoclasm can indeed rupture the tightly regulated dissemination of images of power and duress. Following Woolf, should we not depict photographs of massacres, provided that they may fuel more carnage, and instead circulate images of political leaders whose policies author these murders of unarmed civilians? For instance, when U.S. or U.S.-funded bombings in Iraq, Afghanistan, Gaza, Pakistan, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Somalia, and elsewhere produce further body heaps, should anti-imperialist media flash images of U.S. President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, or Defense Secretary Leon Panetta alongside trenchant verbal critiques and descriptions of the bloody scenes of wreckage? Can the potential power of these counter-visual cues match the well-orchestrated maintenance of how such individuals in power are portrayed? Furthermore, what is erased, elided, and indeed effaced when we don’t show body heaps, and how may this decision undermine the political aims of pacifism?

Susan Sontag’s 2004 response to Woolf’s concerns, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, advances a critique that opens up these questions of principles, strategies, and tactics for pacifism in visual culture. Sontag argues—perhaps, in bad faith, denying Woolf’s rigorous attention to historical conditions—“To read in the pictures, as Woolf does, only what confirms a general abhorrence of war is to stand back from an engagement with Spain as a country with a history. It is to dismiss politics” (*Regarding* 9). Nonetheless, Woolf’s lamentation while viewing the photographs that “Things repeat themselves…Pictures and voices are the same today as they were 2,000 years ago” (TG 167) contains the potential danger of flattening these conditions to a traumatic determinism that doesn’t explain what complex dynamics lead to massacres in different periods of human conflict. Sontag writes, “For Woolf, as for many antiwar polemicists, war is generic, and the images she describes are of anonymous, generic victims…The case against war does not rely on information about who and what and when and where; the arbitrariness of the relentless slaughter is evidence enough” (*Regarding* 9). Perhaps part of the fault lies with the Spanish Republic: did these photographs contain captions detailing time, location, a local community’s ties to the Republicans or the Nationalists, whether these deaths were the result of air raid or firing squad? Even so, following Sontag, to embrace pacifism in wartime entails an acute
historical attention that can explicate why each conflict may be similar, but never identical to others. This calculated rupture of the recurring visual trauma of massacres can instill a sense of political orientation towards ending conflicts.

Sontag’s different texts contains fruitful contradictions to explore: her assertion that images of body heaps must be presented and contextualized still wrestles with the double-bind of war photography’s power to abstractly frame and immemorialize violent actions. She writes in the 1977 work On Photography, “photographs are a way of imprisoning reality, understood as recalcitrant, inaccessible… or they enlarge a reality that is felt to be shrunk, hollowed out, perishable, remote” (163). This phenomenon may in part explain Woolf’s sense of frustration while shuffling through the endless Spanish Civil War photographs in her home in England. After all, the people in the photographs have already been murdered. This cannot be reversed. A mass-distributed visual record of the events could almost seem futile, perverse. Sontag probes further into this predicament of one’s proximity to war being tied to the disorienting act of looking at its images:

\[\text{The feeling of being exempt from calamity stimulates interest in looking at painful pictures, and looking at them suggests and strengthens the feeling that one is exempt. Partly it is because one is “here,” not “there” and partly it is the character of inevitability that all events acquire when they are transmuted into images. In the real world, something is happening and no one knows what is going to happen. In the image-world, it has happened, and it will forever happen in that way. (Photography 168)}\]

That the body heap is so firmly implanted in the image-world of social consciousness portends that it can seem indivisible from life, inexorably linked to history as it unfolds. Once such an image has been repeatedly captured and viewed, Sontag argues, society’s imagination conforms to its teleology.

And yet, photographs can also legitimately mourn tragedy, galvanize viewers to action, and inform the practice of archiving as a method of self-preservation. Sontag writes,

\[\text{Photographs of the suffering and martyrdom of a people are more than reminders of death, of failure, of victimization. They invoke the miracle of survival. To aim at the perpetuation of memories means, inevitably, that one has undertaken the task of continually renewing, of creating, memories—aided, above all, by the impress of iconic photographs. (Regarding 87)}\]

That Woolf was haunted by these images of dead bodies and ruined houses compelled her, in the words of Walter Benjamin, to “activate the emergency brake” (402) and critique why so many social institutions are fundamentally structured to embrace the logic of war. In this light, Woolf’s powerful rhetorical contribution remains: to construct a recognition of horrors into a verbal narrative so as to stop the cycle of visual trauma, which can in turn rupture the expectation of endless war and mass death from which we both distance and shackle our sense of selves. And yet, the distribution of images of body heaps—our ability to grieve with the tangible evidence to substantiate our grief—can shout, “Look! Remember! Let our people not die in vain.” This response to scenes of violence can ideologically
open up, Judith Butler argues, the “question of grievability: whose life, if extinguished, would be publicly grievable and whose life would leave either no public trace to grieve, or only a partial, mangled, and enigmatic trace?” (75). We can more fully apprehend that the mass sacrifice—the mass sacredness—of a massacred people must be dialectically catalyzed into mass radical action for the future possibility of peace. Sontag warns of what may occur without such a coordinated response. “Compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers” (Regarding 101). Woolf’s decision to pen this mighty letter demonstrates one potential act of witness to the body heaps. Another example, from which this piece is entitled, is a famous lithograph poster made by the Artist Workers’ Coalition of a photograph by Ronald Haeberle of the Vietnam War’s My Lai massacre. The artists added red captions, “Q. And babies? A. And babies,”1 across the top and bottom of the body heap image. The dialogue was taken from a CBS interview between Mike Wallace and Paul Meadlo, one of the soldiers involved in the massacre. In yet another form, as various peace and justice movements have enacted, sometimes a crowd can perform a “die-in” to simulate the mass carnage that the status quo churns out, and then suddenly transform the scene of tragedy when they begin to rise from the dead and then continue to move in nonviolent political action. Our cultural familiarity with the body heap can be the very reservoir from which we struggle to avenge its senselessness.

I want to suggest, finally, that we can extend Woolf’s gesture to another potential rupture in these image economies of power and powerlessness. The critical work of addressing and resolving our visual and even political trauma can be applied as well to decentering the very images of those in uniformed power who she incriminates in Three Guineas. We are constantly forced to imbibe media images of these processions of hegemonic figures in government, church, economy, military, and academia, which can indeed arrest and erase our own self-perceptions as powerful democratic actors in society. In this way, both the images of body heaps and those in power must be historicized so as to challenge their ubiquitous inevitability. Furthermore, the mass entrance of crowds in the political sphere and visual media registers, as evident in the Arab revolutions, mass education strikes in Chile and Quebec, and the slow but steady emergence of the global Occupy movement, is a sign that the rigidly coordinated iconography of those in power is being dramatically unsettled by our actions. With this scope in mind, when we energetically embrace Woolf’s internationalist call to find new words and create new methods for achieving peace and social change, we can work together to actually transform a global society from one currently predicated on dead bodies and ruined houses into one where every outsider is welcome.

Note


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PHOTOGRAPHY, HISTORY, AND MEMOIR
OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR: INTERDISCIPLINARY VIEWS

by Lolly J. Ockerstrom

When she went to Spain with Leonard in 1923, Virginia Woolf wrote to Vita Sackville-West: “We’ve had a splendid time up in the Sierra Nevada, staying with a mad Englishman, who does nothing but read French and eat grapes” (L3 28). That mad Englishman was Gerald Brenan, a Bloomsbury acquaintance and author of *The Spanish Labyrinth*, first published in 1943—still in print and considered to be a seminal text to the background to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Brenan’s wife, Gamel Woolsey, an American writer from South Carolina, wrote a memoir of Spain, *Death’s Other Kingdom*, which describes the impact of the war on the community of Churriana, just outside Malaga in southern Andalusian Spain where she and Brenan lived. Woolf’s *Three Guineas* famously argues that gender issues underlie the structures of war. All three of these works, written within a period of six years of one another, represent distinct interdisciplinary perspectives on the Spanish Civil War: a history, a memoir, and a pacifist polemic with repeated references to photographs.

While Woolf was writing in England, reading about the build-up of war in Spain, the Brenans were looking out their window in their village just outside Malaga and watching Spain burn. The Brenans witnessed the disappearances and deaths of their neighbors and farm workers, all of whom, by and large, were a gentle people, more concerned with getting the crops in than in fighting a revolution. The Brenans’ gardener, Enrique, summed it up: “I am for that party…who let me cultivate my cabbages” (Woolsey 93).

Though each of these three writers contributes to the history of the Spanish Civil War, each also raises questions regarding the nature of knowledge: how do we know what we know? What is the role of myth as we live through and theorize about national and international events, particularly those events that are traumatic or painful? Myth, generally understood as something “made up” and not “real,” is understood by historians and theorists as significant storytelling that helps construct memory of key national and international events. Such storytelling for Woolf, Brenan, and Woolsey was quite literally based on where they were located when the events occurred.

John Corbin, a British social anthropologist, writes:

Any story of a past event is determined only in part by the event itself. The story is also determined by the circumstances in which it is told. The teller always constructs the story to suit the circumstances of the telling—the audience, the time, the place, the teller’s identity and sense of what is appropriate. The teller selects from possible elements of the tale those that best suit the circumstances of the telling. Any story of the past has a double construction of the telling. The truth of the tale is its historical truth; the truth of its telling is its mythical truth. (609)
Corbin invokes Levi-Strauss and others and notes that “mythical truth…may, but need not, distort historical truth” (610). Mythical constructions help individuals and communities understand the past. Myth helps us construct our way of knowing things. Corbin notes: “We all tell stories, and underlying each telling is an unspoken conjugation… or way of understanding the self… Myths are part of an everyday process of negotiating, affirming, and confirming meaning” (610). Local narratives of atrocities are differently explained according to who tells them. The details of who did what and when and how, change according to who is doing the telling.

This manipulation of detail is not denial, but a way for each person to understand events that are beyond comprehension—particularly when the story is about the deaths of persons one may have known, or is in some other way traumatic. Mythical thought, Corbin writes, is “intellectual bricolage” (609), a term from Levi-Strauss, which explains how humans absorb horrific details. There must be, in other words, ways to tell the stories that are too hard to tell.

Brenan, Woolsey, and Woolf appear to engage in this bricolage as they piece together different strands of the complex narrative of the Spanish Civil War. Each of these authors addresses details too painful to describe, and they speak through different constructions in their writing. Woolf writes about Spain even as she was grieving over the death of her nephew, Julian Bell, killed while working with an ambulance crew in Spain, but she never mentions this in her essay. She writes herself as a fictional character that has received a letter from a barrister requesting money to support his society to prevent war. She constructs specific, but fictional, scenarios in response to a mythical request for money for the support of peace. The closest Woolf gets to identifying herself in the text is through her reference to Wilfred Owen, whom she feels articulates her own perspective on war as “barbarous…insupportable…and beastly” (15).

Jane Marcus observes that “Woolf keeps the reader's experience of the atrocities of the deaths of women and children in the Spanish Civil War purely verbal. Atrocity photographs would incite us to fight and she refuses to show them” (lxviii). Yet, as Maggie Humm has observed, Woolf constructs *Three Guineas* tightly around a central motif of photographs, using the phrase “dead bodies and ruined houses” nine times throughout the essay (609).

Brenan and Woolsey both witnessed the deaths of persons close to them in their small village. Ultimately, they themselves were displaced from their home, and found themselves inadvertently, while on a trip to Portugal, caught up in an exodus out of Spain with other ex-pats: they could not go home, and did not return to Churriana from England for five years. In contrast to the Brenan’s direct experiences in Spain, Woolf experienced Spain through reading about the war in *The Times*. Despite the seriousness of the theme of *Three Guineas*, however, Woolf engages in verbal play as she constructs various voices. She writes:

> Suppose that the Duke of Devonshire, in his star and garter, stepped down into the kitchen and said to the maid who was peeling potatoes with a smudge on her cheek: ‘Stop your potato peeling, Mary, and help me construe this rather difficult passage in Pindar,’ would not Mary be surprised and run screaming to Louisa the cook, ‘Lawks, Louie, Master must be mad!’ That, or something like it, is the cry that rises to our lips when the sons of educated men ask us, their
sisters, to protect intellectual liberty and culture. But let us try to translate the
kitchenmaid’s cry into the language of educated people
   Once more we must beg you, Sir, to look from our angle… (103)

Trying on other voices, Woolf speaks though the voice of a maid, one of many acts of
ventriloquism in the text producing different voices. But even more important are Woolf’s
references in Three Guineas to photographs, about which Maggie Humm writes:

Woolf was highly conscious of the gap between the artificial symbolic images of
war and personal memories. Throughout her life she contrasted the accuracy of
private memories of war with deceitful public history… Woolf’s descriptions of
the absent photographs…act in dialectical tension with the five visible photo-
graphs. (646)

It is Humm’s view that

the absent photographs, or, rather, the narrator’s memory of these photographs…
in a major way shape[s] the narrative of Three Guineas and its dense visual pleni-
tude… Woolf’s ‘radical’ method subverts a masculine photographic narrative of
public events with the affect and self-reflexivity of her narrator’s visual memo-
ries… Woolf describes the absent photographs with such unmotivated vividness
that, rather than a Swiftian intellectual irony, the photographs produce a power-
ful emotional response in both Woolf and her reader. (647)

Over and again, Woolf invokes the photos much like a dirge. Humm notes that Woolf’s
nine references to “dead bodies and ruined houses” provide a structure for the essay with
each reference functioning “as a transactional act of memory between narrator and specta-
tor… The imagery in the absent photograph encourages us to connect our private histo-
ries to those horrific public events” (650-51).

Thus, the photos in Woolf’s text evoke in the reader strong reactions. Whether or not
those photos existed—no one has been able to find them, including Maggie Humm—
they are part of the mythmaking Woolf constructs to empowers herself to write Three
Guineas. Are they a composite of many photos, many news stories? Has Woolf simply
merged one set of photographs with others, and in a sense made them up, or at least
shaped their existence to fit her story? Regardless, they play an important role.

Similarly, Gamel Woolsey’s memoir, Death’s Other Kingdom, creates in the reader a
strong reaction, not because of haunting photographs but because of Woolsey’s storytell-
ing: evocative, inviting, down-to-earth. Republished in America in 1997 as Malaga Burn-
ing: An American Woman’s Eyewitness Account of the Spanish Civil War, and in England
by Eland Publishing in 2004 under the title: Death’s Other Kingdom: A Spanish Village
in 1936, the book uses traditional narrative description to tell the story of one family in
a small Spanish village. The voice of the narrator offers a compelling story from the per-
spective of an expatriate in Spain. The memoir’s theme of home, community, and sense
of belonging is irresistible, even as it offers a heartbreaking story about the ruptures and
destruction of community that happen in wartime.
Woolsey invokes a strong sense of the rhythms of daily life in the small village of Churriana, just outside Malaga in Andalusia on the southern coast of Spain. The memoir provides an eyewitness account from the perspective of an outsider who has become very much an insider in her community. While, like Woolf, Woolsey is also a pacifist, her book is not an anti-war polemic, but a first-hand account of life in Spain as an expatriate as the war breaks out. The focus of the book is not on herself or her views; it is on Spanish culture, daily life, and the individual personalities that make up the community as war breaks. Her mythmaking is like a soft weaving, its colors subtly guarding that which is painful, even as it narrates the breakdown of civil society and the coming of war: “As I sank into a deeper darkness of sleep—I heard a voice below...like the voice of fear itself” (21).

The opening chapter carefully sketches routine life at the villa in Churriana—life as it was before the war. She introduces the farm workers; describes the fountain and the late summer dahlias and yellow daisies and the lunch they eat that day prepared by the maid, Maria; mentions the intense heat of the afternoon. She writes of taking tea in the garden as a wind blows from the sea and evening comes. They look out over a field of green to the olive trees beyond. She writes of the prewar, bucolic landscape:

I could hear a sheep bell that seemed as if it came from a thousand miles away...
Some labourers going home through the field called their friendly greeting...
The evening was too lovely to be thinking of agrarian reforms and the doubtful future of Spain.

The sounds of the village came floating up to us, dogs barking, children playing, women calling; and the bitter-sweet scent of burning herbs mixed with the scent of flowers in the darkening air. The lovely day was over, the tranquil evening drew into a peaceful tender night. (14-15)

By the next morning Malaga was burning, and throughout the day “the lorries roared and thundered and hailed Saludos with undiminished zeal” (18). Crowds gather in the streets. Woolsey and her household listen to a Seville-based radio station for news; they watch as most of the expatriate community leaves Spain.

Later in the book, Woolsey describes providing safe haven in their villa for a neighbor, Don Carlos, a landowner and royalist. Despite his politics, he and his family were cared for: loyalties within a small village trumped national issues. They kept him hidden in plain sight as much as they could. Eventually, the Brenans managed to get him passage to Chile. They got him to the dock by going “quite openly on the eight o’clock morning train” (130). The very next morning, seventy bombs fell within 200 feet of the Brenan’s villa. Only two goats and a donkey were killed.

While Woolsey records the local reactions to the buildup of war, Brenan writes of the historical events that led to the outbreak of war. *The Spanish Labyrinth* sets up the social and political background to the Spanish Civil War and maintains a single, individual voice—the voice of the historian constructing a certifiable set of events. However, each chapter begins with a quote from either a figure in history or a contemporary leader, resulting in a multi-vocalic text much like the one Woolf creates in *Three Guineas*.

Brenan focuses on the conditions of the working classes and on the agrarian question. He discusses issues in the eighteenth century that eventually lead to the war in 1936. But
as Corbin has stated, “Any story of a past event is determined only in part by the event itself” (609), so even as Brenan writes the past, the voices he inserts at the beginning of the chapters are suggestive of circumstances, such as poverty or lack of education, which contributed to the eventual outbreak of war in Spain.

Brenan’s sympathy with workers predetermines the reader’s perspective, much as Woolf frames *Three Guineas* by her repeated invocations of the “dead bodies and ruined houses.” Both authors select details that Corbin characterizes as “elements of the tale…that best suit the circumstances of the telling” (609). Brenan uses a pithy, provocative quote from Sir William Napier’s *History of the Peninsular War*, a six-volume history that covers events of 1828-1840: “Everything was rotten in Spain except the hearts of the poorer people” (87). Whatever the context of this quotation, it speaks to Brenan’s sense of identity with the poor in his region, and his sympathy with them. The second quotation Brenan uses for this chapter is taken from a sixteenth-century text, *De Rege et Regis Institutione*, written by a Jesuit cleric, Father Juan de Mariana (published in Toledo in 1599). Mariana wrote: “It is the duty of humanity for us to open to all men the riches which God gave in common to all… God wishes…that a part should always be set aside for the consolation of the people’s infirmities… In a Republic in which some are overstuff ed with riches and others lack the very necessities, neither peace nor happiness is possible” (cited in Brenan 87).

Not surprisingly, Brenan follows in the footsteps of these early writers in his description of the peasants:

The first thing to notice is that Spain is one of those countries with an undeveloped, primitive economy, which is divided by a fairly definite line into two sections. Above are the upper and middle classes…who vote, read newspapers, compete for Government jobs and generally manage the affairs of the nation. Beneath are the peasants and workmen, who in ordinary times take no interest in politics, frequently do not know how to read and keep strictly to their own affairs. Between these two completely different worlds there is a gulf, imperfectly filled by the small shopkeepers and artisans. (87-88)

Brenan uses voices of early historians to authorize his own version of history and politics during the Spanish Civil War. Positioning himself within an agrarian tradition, he uses the past to understand the present. He does not distort the truth in mapping the events leading to the Civil War, but he seeks to understand them—just as Woolf worked to convince her readers that, historically, wars were made by men who held positions of power, and just as Woolsey wrote about her own community in her attempt to understand what happened in Churriana. All three writers engaged in research and scholarship, but none, as Corbin notes about academic writers, dispensed with political or ideological partialities. The question for all three writers was not whether to tell their stories, but how: Woolf blurred fact with fiction to argue how to end all war; Brenan took a deep look at the past to explain the present; Woolsey recorded events from the perspective of the everyday experience of ordinary villagers.
Works Cited and Consulted


Patterns, Practices, Principles
“WAVING TO VIRGINIA”

by Brenda R. Silver

Part 1.

Where to begin? Perhaps with an origins story. The original title for my project was “Waving to Virginia: Gay Men, AIDS, Suicide, and Woolf.” The starting point was Julian Schnabel’s 2000 film Before Night Falls, based on the autobiography of the Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas; in December 1990, dying of AIDS and unable to write any longer, Arenas committed suicide in his New York apartment. Watching the film with my neighbors I had one of those moments that have led my friends to accuse me of seeing Woolf everywhere. In the last scene, just before the suicide, a friend enters the apartment carrying an “I ♥ NY” plastic bag that will shortly be used to facilitate his death. The friend goes into the study, bends down, and there, on the wall behind him, is the Man Ray portrait of Woolf with her arm raised in the air. “That’s Virginia Woolf,” I said; “you’re seeing things,” my husband and neighbors responded. So I took the film home and froze the scene: yes, it was Virginia Woolf.

The next thing I did, of course, was to google “Reinaldo Arenas / Virginia Woolf,” where I found an article written to coincide with the release of the film by Octavio Roca, another Cuban artist, called “Remembering Reinaldo.” Among his memories appears the following: “I remember the clutter of his little apartment, the piles of books and the pictures of Cuba. Above his desk were photos of his literary idols: Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust and Virgilio Piñera. I remember his gentleness.” Piñera was one of Arenas’s mentors in Cuba; I’ll return to him.

At that point I began to bother my friends who teach Latin American and/or Cuban literature, who put me in touch with others in the field. From these exchanges I learned that yes, Arenas was intertwined with Woolf, especially Orlando, both the novel and the character, who, I later discovered, appears in her female form in Arenas’s own picaresque quasi-historical novel Hallucinations (El mundo alucinante); more enigmatically, a tongue twister about Virginia Woolf appears in his novel The Color of Summer (Color del verano). Although I did not follow up on these associations at the time, Woolf’s connection to Arenas, persecuted and imprisoned in Cuba for his homosexuality and his non-party line writing before coming to the US on the Mariel boatlift, continued to haunt me.

In part, the picture of Woolf hanging on the wall of Arenas’s apartment returns me to the starting point of my explorations of Woolf as cultural icon: to the poster of Virginia Woolf hanging on the wall of Rosie’s study in Sammy and Rosie Get Laid. Although there are multiple ways one can read these appearances, in both cases the connection with suicide is clear: in Sammy and Rosie, when Rafi, Sammy’s father, hangs himself, Woolf looks on.1 But, I immediately find myself adding, it’s not the same story that I discovered over and over again during the years I have tracked her iconicity: the story of the vulnerable and/or mad woman artist, whose suffering and death are emblematic, I sometimes think, of how far we have NOT come in terms of the representation of women artists—and women in general—as strong, self-willed, principled, even if they take their own lives.
And this takes me back even farther, to the 1960s, when I first started working on Woolf. Whenever I told people my subject, I got one of two responses: what does she have to do with *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*?; or, how does it feel to write about someone who killed herself? At the time I was in my early twenties and my response was to say, “Well, her death is different from Sylvia Plath’s or Ann Sexton’s; she was much older: she was fifty-nine, she had written all these novels and other works, she had lived a full life, she made a principled choice.” As I say, I was in my early twenties. Then, suddenly, I found myself in my late fifties and heard myself declaring, what was I thinking? Fifty-nine is not old! But it did not change my view of her death as a principled choice.

With all this in mind, I set out to explore whether there’s another way to look at her suicide, one that does not hinge on madness, “femininity,” and/or tragic pathos. What if I looked at it through Arenas, who was dying of AIDS in the presence of Woolf, and through Richard Brown, the gay poet with advanced AIDS in Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours*, the contemporary incarnation of *Mrs. Dalloway*’s Septimus Smith, who made the same choice? And what if I added Patti Smith’s performance at the Fondation Cartier in Paris on March 28, 2008, the anniversary of Woolf’s death, that gave me my title, “Waving to Virginia,” where she interweaves passages from *The Waves* with her own poetry? As I quickly discovered, this is a huge topic and not without its perils; the study of Arenas and of Cuban culture in general, not to mention the debates about AIDS and its representations, can be both contentious and political; feelings run deep. Nevertheless, looking at Woolf’s suicide in these contexts has led me to feel more strongly than ever that one can read it not only as considered and principled, but, perhaps, also exemplary: an act of resistance in the face of political and personal circumstances that threatened everything she believed in. That is my underlying premise here.

**Part 2.**

I’m going to begin this time with some images from the scene in *Before Night Falls* that started it all.
The setting is Arenas’s walk-up apartment in New York’s Hell’s Kitchen. We know at this point that he has AIDS. In the previous scene, returning from the hospital, he trips on the stairs and damages the small plant he is carrying; at the end of that scene he is standing by his window replanting it. The final scene opens with him at the window again, the plant now in bloom, watching his friend Lázaro Gómez Carriles cross the street on his way to the apartment; Carriles carries the “I ♥ NY” bag that seems to enter the apartment before him, a “visible comment on Arenas’s conflicting” love/hate “relationship with New York” (Ocasio 186). Carriles carries the bag into the room behind the kitchen, Arenas’s study, bends down to deposit the bag, and reveals the picture of Virginia Woolf on the wall; her image is visible at several points during this sequence. Later in the scene Arenas makes Carriles promise that he won’t let him wake up in the hospital. He takes a number of pills and, when he falls unconscious, Carriles places the “I ♥ NY” bag over his face.

From everything I’ve read, the film was made by people who knew and loved Arenas: he seems to have inspired love in his friends. It is this love, one critic has suggested, that accounts for writing Carriles into the scene and into the act, when, as far as we know, Arenas was alone when he died. The fact that Carriles was a co-scriptwriter on the film, he continues, and in part responsible for this representation, “adds testimonial character to the film” as a whole, while the death scene “provides a positive view of friendships, which is negated in Arenas’s autobiography as he prepares to die alone” (Ocasio 185). The closeness of the film makers to their subject also gives credence to the presence of Virginia Woolf in the scene, providing his friends with a lasting image of the writer as they knew him in life: at his desk with his literary idols watching over him. This is confirmed in the emails I received from Octavio Roca, whose article first alerted me to the connections: “His little Hell’s Kitchen walk-up[,] including the picture of Virginia Woolf that he got in Miami, by the way, really was lovingly, eerily reconstructed in the movie.” When I asked why Woolf, he replied: “The appearance in the film may well be just accuracy: he really did have that little picture near him in his desk in New York, together with pictures of Virgilio Piñera and Marcel Proust. I was surprised and moved by these details in the movie, which I think was very successful. I don’t believe Reinaldo re-read Woolf in exile (or ever read her in English), but I do think she remained a strong formative memory as well as a comforting bit of inspiration.”

Arenas’s biography would seem to be the opposite of Woolf’s in almost every way. He was the child of an unwed mother who grew up in rural poverty; he joined the revolution as a teenager, which led to a scholarship to study agricultural accounting and his subsequent move to Havana; there, his emergence as a writer all too soon resulted in the banning of his books. Given this, Woolf’s inclusion among his literary idols is especially telling. All three—Woolf, Proust, Piñera—were homoerotic and/or homosexual; all three wrote experimental fiction that broke with the realist tradition and, in the case of Piñera and Arenas, refused to toe the revolutionary party line that demanded, as one critic put it, “social realist literature that fostered the creation of a revolutionary consciousness”: the representation of the new Cuba and what was known as the “new man,” a man who was decidedly not homosexual (Soto, Reinaldo Arenas 2, 25).

In some ways, we can assume, Piñera was the closest to him, the figure one would expect to be on his wall. A generation older, he recognized Arenas’s talent early on and served as one of his most important mentors in negotiating the literary scene. Piñera was also
homosexual; he was imprisoned in one of the first roundups of homosexuals under Castro and then retreated into silence, publishing little after that until his death. Nevertheless he continued to support his more outspoken protégé, as Arenas makes beautifully clear in the “Introduction” to Before Night Falls, called, poignantly, “The End.” The “Introduction” opens with the statement, “I thought I was going to die in the winter of 1987” (ix). It ends with the following story:

On my return home from the hospital, I dragged myself toward a photograph I have on my wall of Virgilio Piñera…and I spoke to him in this way:

“Listen to what I have to tell you: I need three more years of life to finish my work, which is my vengeance against most of the human race.”

I think Virgilio’s face darkened, as if I had asked for something outrageous. It is almost three years now since that desperate request. My end is near. I expect to keep myself calm and collected until the very end.

Thank you, Virgilio. (xvii)

So why isn’t Piñera’s picture hanging on the wall in the film? One practical answer might be that not many people in Schnabel’s audience would recognize Piñera, whereas putting Woolf on the wall not only evokes recognition, it anticipates what happens next. (As an aside: Piñera, or “Saint” Virgilio [Colchie, xix], is present in the film’s New York apartment: two prints hanging on the walls of Piñera’s Havana apartment when Arenas was writing there reappear in New York.) But I would like to think there’s more going on here than just recognition and suicide, especially since, as I discovered on re-watching the film, the picture of Woolf makes a fleeting appearance in an earlier scene and not just before his death. Instead, I would like to think there’s celebration, there’s defiance, there’s a nod to what Arenas and Woolf shared as writers, and one of the things they shared was the figure of Orlando and the novel that he/she inhabits.

As I mentioned earlier, Orlando, always referred to as “that strange woman” (rara mujer), appears in Arenas’s novel Hallucinations: Or, The Ill-Fated Peregrinations of Fray Servando, his second novel and the one that first got him into trouble with the authorities. It’s a postmodern retelling of the early nineteenth century memoir by the iconoclastic Mexican friar Servando Teresa de Mier, who was convicted of heresy and imprisoned in Spain, spending much of the rest of his life either in prison or in flight from the Inquisition; his revenge was the picaresque, iconoclastic memoir adapted by Arenas for his own fantastic, highly political, sexually charged, and often scurrilous work. Orlando is at the center of Fray Servando’s experiences in England, and critics tend to treat her presence there either as an example of the anachronistic, carnivalesque, parodic nature of the novel, or as an example of the predatory women who repeatedly pursued and tormented him (Rodriguez-Monegal 129; Willis 78).

There are two versions of their encounters in London, just as there are two or three versions of every event in the novel. In both versions Orlando discovers the starving Fray Servando, takes him home and feeds him, and introduces him to Emma, Lady Hamilton, Lord Nelson’s mistress; she, in turn, agrees to pay Fray Servando, who was present when Nelson died, a pound for every word of his story of what he saw. In both versions Orlando propositions Fray Servando, evoking her lineage, her long life, and her sexual change, but the repre
sentations are radically different. In the first, he demurs and she backs off, introducing him instead to another rebel who wants to return to Mexico to fight for independence. In the second version, where Orlando initially assures him “that of her first origins there remained not a trace (which indeed appeared true enough) and that therefore I should have no fear” (178), she is transformed at the end of the chapter into a monstrous hermaphrodite with male sexual organs that grow larger and larger as her underwater pursuit of him goes on:

She was swimming toward me laughing and pointing with Her Great Unmistakable Categorical Imperative that swung from left to right and back again as her body slithered through the sea. And it seemed to grow more imperative at every moment. (181-82)

This description is not dissimilar to other of Arenas’s grotesque, irreverent, excessive descriptions, which do not necessarily have a negative inflection. Indeed, I’ve begun to wonder whether one could read Orlando here as a manifestation of the witches who dominated Arenas’s imaginary and included, one critic writes, “the gender-transcendent figure of the queen, *la loca*” (Ortíz 100). “Sometimes,” Arenas tells us, “witches would assume a half-masculine form, which could make them even more sinister”: “The world is really full of witches, some more benign, some more implacable; but the kingdom of fantasy, as well as patent reality, belongs to the witches” (*Before Night Falls* 296, 294-95).

There is also another entrée into the Woolf/Orlando/Arenas connection that is more in line with what they shared as writers of picaresque, parodic histories: their attitudes toward history, time, and narrative. “I have always distrusted the ‘historical,’” Arenas writes in a “Prologue” to the novel,

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those “minutiae,” the “precise date,” or “fact.” Because what, finally, is History? A file full of more or less chronologically ordered manila folders?…History sets down the date of a battle, the number of dead, to give some idea of its intensity—sets down, that is, the evident, the visible. These frightful tomes fix the fleeting, the ephemeral, the fugitive (and there is much of that)….That is why I have dug more into Time than into History….Generally, historians see Time’s infinity as linear. What proofs have they that time works in that way? With the simplistic reasoning that shows that 1500 came before 1700, or that the Trojan War came before Marie Antoinette’s guillotining? As though Time cared about such ciphers, as though Time knew anything about chronologies, progress, as though Time could advance… (xxv)

Seymour Menton, in his study of *Latin America’s New Historical Novel*, certainly saw the connections, describing *Orlando* as the precursor not only of Arenas’s novel but of the New Historical Novel as a whole:

Although [Alejo] Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo* [*The Kingdom of this World*] (1949) is clearly the first of the Latin American New Historical Novels, it is antedated in Europe by Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* (1928), subtitled *A Biography*…. What identifies it most as a precursor—if not actually the first New Historical
Novel—is its carnivalesque nature, with the protagonist changing sex midway in the novel, its intertextuality, and its metafiction. The biographical implausibility is heightened by the inclusion, as in a traditional biography, of photographs of Orlando in different stages of his/her approximately 350-year life, as well as a complete index. Although the Latin American New Historical Novel can hardly be said to have originated from Orlando, it should be noted that the Virginia Woolf novel was praised and translated in 1936-1937 by Jorge Luis Borges, and that Orlando actually appears as a character in two Latin American NHNs: Arenas’s Hallucinations (1969), and Denzil Romero’s Grand tour (1987), where he serves as Francisco de Miranda’s guide in a tour of London, and on board The Mayflower explains their mutual attraction in terms of Platonic love. (33)

I am far less certain how to read the appearance of Virginia Woolf as the subject of one of the tongue twisters that punctuate The Color of Summer, the fourth of the five novels that constitute the Pentagonia, a monumental work described by Francisco Soto as a “homosexual bildungsroman” (Reinaldo Arenas 36); based on Arenas’s life, it is also a history of Castro’s Cuba. Arenas wrote The Color of Summer during the three years between his diagnosis and his death, and in many ways it is the most fantastic, the most carnivalesque, of the series. In the “Foreword” to the novel, which, in good meta style appears in the middle, Arenas describes it as “an attempt to reflect, without idealizing or investing the story with high-sounding principles, the half-picaresque, half-heartbreaking life of a large percentage of Cuban youth…a vision of an underground homosexual world that will surely never appear in any newspaper or journal in the world, much less in Cuba” (255). The tongue twisters in the novel, we learn in Before Night Falls, belong to a genre Arenas invented while still in Cuba as a way to “get even” with someone who had betrayed him and became a weapon “I used against those who had harmed me. In 1977 those tongue twisters became famous throughout Havana; in them I ridiculed over thirty well-known people in the city’s theater and literary world” (238-39). This is confirmed by another Cuban writer, Roberto Valero: “The majority of the tongue twisters circulated extensively throughout Havana. Writers knew them by heart, and a kind of oral and satirical samizdat was achieved” (cited in Soto, Reinaldo Arenas 62). In Soto’s telling, they were “subversive countertexts to the established official publications of the revolutionary regime”; “[t]aken as a whole, the tongue twisters lampoon the diabolical and backstabbing literary scene in revolutionary Havana as well as that of the international literary establishment” (Reinaldo Arenas 62, 61).

This is the tongue twister as it appears in the novel:

Man and woman, once warp and woof woven into human weft, oft warred. One half of weft, womb, woman, was worn by work of giving birth, oft to words, however wondrous sprung, and wanted rest; one half, worthy though oft wordless, was restless, wept for unspoken yearnings, would wound.

Woolf, wishing to give words to work of birth, to wounds, to man-woman war, but adrift in words unable to be sung, one day finds harbor.

Woolf moored, war won, words sung, wondrous armistice engendered, Woolfian splendor: Orlando.

For Virginia Woolf (169)
I do not yet know when this tongue twister was written or why, but it seems to be an exception to the rule governing their origin and intent; in this way it parallels the one dedicated to Piñera, which, Soto notes, "playfully pays homage to a famous Cuban writer whom he greatly admired" (The Pentagonia 174 n. 5) — as, of course, he did Virginia Woolf. It suggests as well why she was so dear to Arenas's heart.

One last word here: In my initial correspondence with Cuban literature scholars one of them, Jose Quiroga, introduced another writer into the Arenas/Woolf connection, Djuna Barnes: "What I know for a fact is that one of Reinaldo's favorite novels in the world was Djuna Barnes' Nightwood. He raved about it and he turned me on to it, way back." "The question you posed made me think that, whereas a lot of the boom writers sort of fixated on Faulkner for their stream-of-consciousness play with narrative, Arenas comes from a sort of different territory, which owes more to a different set of writers — perhaps Woolf or Barnes." I would add here that it was more than just these writers' style that attracted Arenas to both Orlando and Nightwood.

Part 3.

Given all this, I've come to believe, the filmmakers' decision to have Virginia Woolf preside over Arenas's death is more than the link with suicide: it is a nod to what they shared as artists, including the courage to fight against the odds, to write the literature they felt they had to write in order to survive and, when they felt they could no longer write, their decision to die in their own way.

Which is, of course, the decision that the dying poet Richard Brown also makes in The Hours, a novel saturated with suicide, where we learn that, even more than his body, his mind has been ravaged by the disease; this fact rendered the drugs that by 1998 had become available to AIDS sufferers useless against his encroaching end. I am not a fan of The Hours, so I was curious to see how it would read when I returned to it with this project in mind. When I finished it, I found myself thinking that there is something about Richard's suicide that feels false to me. What struck me in particular — and I was surprised by this, not remembering it this way — was that Richard's suicide, although built up throughout the novel, is almost like an afterthought: we see so little of him; we never hear how he feels about his illness or much else. Unlike Septimus Smith, his consciousness is not privileged in its own right. It's as if the illness and suicide are there for Clarissa to respond to; what we have are her thoughts and feelings, not his. Yes, Richard tells Clarissa that he is a failure as a writer, that the only reason he is getting the award is because of his illness: "I got a prize for having AIDS and going nuts and being brave about it, it had nothing to do with my work" (63). This, of course, echoes the thoughts Cunningham puts into Virginia Woolf's head in the opening scene before she kills herself: "She herself has failed. She is not a writer at all, really; she is merely a gifted eccentric" (4). This is a far cry from the Virginia Woolf admired by Arenas and present with him when he died.

After I finished The Hours, I read an article suggested to me by Chris Reed, whom I had written to about the project, Henry Alley's "Mrs. Dalloway and Three of its Contemporary Children," which offers a critique of The Hours, both novel and film, and Robin Lippincott's Mr. Dalloway. Here I found that others shared my sense of authorial distance in the representation of Richard, a distance and lack of empathy that is often, as
in Alley’s reading, linked to the use of a consistent present tense, so that “the voice of the novel is not so much a person as an observance.” “Although Cunningham will offer one character’s reflections on another,” he notes, “as he does in Clarissa Vaughan’s musings on Richard’s special gifts, mostly we are getting news as it happens. Even Virginia Woolf’s historic suicide and death are told in the present tense, so that while one may draw one’s own conclusions from the note the despondent author of *Mrs. Dalloway* leaves behind… the narrator does not offer any reasons” (405).

In some ways this insight explains one of the things that struck me years ago when I originally read every review of the novel I could find: why Richard, not to mention AIDS, plays such a small role in the critical responses, when to me, translating Septimus’s shell shock into Richard’s AIDS was the most interesting part of the novel. Almost every mention of him in the reviews refers to him as Richard, best friend or former lover, who is dying of AIDS, and that’s it. Several times he is not even referred to by name, but simply as the best friend or former lover, who is living with or dying of AIDS. One doesn’t feel in Richard the urgency about finishing one’s work, the desire to speak out, to share one’s vision that characterizes not only the final sections of Arenas’s autobiography but Septimus’s death as well, although we might read it as an act of resistance. One doesn’t even get a real sense of the supposed “madness” induced by the AIDS. As Jeanette McVicker observed early on, “his disease seems almost irrelevant; he could have been dying of cancer instead of AIDS” (8).

**Part 4.**

At this point I want to step back and introduce some of the avenues I’ve begun to explore that situate both Arenas’s act and Cunningham’s text in their larger contexts, ones that bring to the fore questions of political activism and private needs in what seemed to be apocalyptic times. These, I believe, are part of the framework for a re-reading of Woolf’s death as more than an example of tragic pathos.

1) **The cultural contexts of Arenas’s suicide.** Before he died, Arenas wrote a letter to be sent to friends and Spanish-language newspapers after his death.

Dear friends:
Due to my delicate state of health and to the terrible emotional depression it causes me not to be able to continue writing and struggling for the freedom of Cuba, I am ending my life. During the past few years, even though I felt very ill, I have been able to finish my literary work, to which I have devoted almost thirty years. You are the heirs of all my terrors, but also of my hope that Cuba will soon be free. I am satisfied to have contributed, though in a very small way, to the triumph of this freedom. I end my life voluntarily because I cannot continue working. Persons near me are in no way responsible for my decision. There is only one person I hold accountable: Fidel Castro. The sufferings of exile, the pain of being banished from my country, the loneliness, and the diseases contracted in exile would probably never have happened if I had been able to enjoy freedom in my country.
I want to encourage the Cuban people out of the country as well as on the Island to continue fighting for freedom. I do not want to convey to you a message of defeat but of continued struggle and of hope.

Cuba will be free. I already am.

Reinaldo Arenas
TO BE PUBLISHED (Before Night Falls 317)

As the letter makes clear, and everything I’ve read supports this, for Arenas, writing and fighting for Cuba’s freedom were one and the same; they were also a form of survival. “In Cuba,” he tells us in Before Night Falls, “I endured a thousand adversities because the hope of escaping and the possibility of saving my manuscripts gave me strength. At this point,” he adds, referring to his illness, “the only escape for me was death” (ix). This is not the first time Arenas had attempted suicide when it seemed the only way to be free; Before Night Falls describes three attempts associated with his original arrest and then his incarceration in the notorious Morro Castle Prison. Nor is he the only Cuban to associate suicide with freedom. Cuba’s “political history,” Arenas asserts, “is an endless history of suicides” (Before Night Falls 44), a declaration corroborated in great detail in Louis Perez’s extraordinary study To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society. Perez begins his book at the time of the European invasion. The “Native American people in Cuba,” he tells us, died, like the other indigenous peoples of the New World, in battle, of abuse and exploitation, or of disease and illness. “But they also died by their own hands, many thousands of men and women who chose to commit suicide rather than submit to subjugation by the Spanish.” One demographer estimated that “almost one-third of the total pre-Columbian population of Cuba” committed suicide (3), providing a precedent that became an integral part of the Cuban imagination, psyche, and life.

Not surprisingly, Arenas makes several appearances in Perez’s study: a description of the scenes in two of Arenas’s works that describe the suicide of the protagonist (298); Arenas’s agreement that those Cubans, as one writer put it, who “threw [themselves] into the sea” on rafts or small boats or anything else that floated, saw the act as “[pursuing] the possibility of a new future or [dying] in the attempt” (363). In Arenas’s words, “A desperate situation has only two alternatives…You either perish or you survive, and in either case you are free” (cited in Perez 364). Suicide in Cuba, he noted elsewhere, “can be seen as an act of rebellion…. [I]n the absence of any other solution, I escape through suicide…. A liberation: it is what we can call flight” (cited in Perez 388).

2) AIDS, politics, and activism. In her article “Difficult Writings: AIDS and the Activist Aesthetic in Reinaldo Arenas’ Before Night Falls,” Diane Davidson concurs: “In both his fictional and autobiographical writing,” she states, “Arenas writes suicide as both a personal and public response to an unlivable political situation” (67); at the end of his life, this situation included AIDS. Here, though, Arenas found himself unable to write about the disease, saying little about it in his autobiography or elsewhere. Nevertheless, she continues, “Arenas’ difficulty in writing HIV/AIDS demonstrates a tension often found in AIDS narratives; that is, the difficulty of achieving an activist aesthetic” (54). For Davidson, his very inability to write about it becomes an activist statement in itself. But Arenas’s treatment of AIDS in his autobiography is more complicated than that, inscribing not
only his lack of information about the “plague” that was killing him, but also a conviction that it can not be separated from the political realities in both Cuba and the US:

[T]he actual nature of AIDS seems to be a state secret. I can attest, though, that as a disease it is different from all others. Diseases are natural phenomena, and everything natural is imperfect and can somehow be fought and overcome. But AIDS is a perfect illness because it is so alien to human nature and has as its function to destroy life in the most cruel and systematic way. Never before has such a formidable calamity affected mankind. Such diabolic perfection makes one ponder the possibility that human beings may have had a hand in its creation.

He is equally clear why this might have been the case:

Moreover, all the rulers of the world, that reactionary class always in power, and the powerful within any system, must feel grateful to AIDS because a good part of the marginal population, whose only aspiration is to live and who therefore oppose all dogma and political hypocrisy, will be wiped out. (Before Night Falls xvii)

Ricardo Ortiz includes these passages in a section of his essay on Arenas’s last writings that he calls “Before Night Falls: AIDS and the Possibility of a Pro-Life Suicide.”

The Hours has a different agenda in its representation of AIDS. By 1998, when The Hours was published, Arenas’s statement that he cannot write about AIDS because “I do not know what it is. Nobody really knows. I have spoken with dozens of doctors and it is a puzzle to all of them” (Before Night Falls xvi), was no longer the case, and the drugs that might have postponed Arenas’s death appear in the novel as a part of the fabric of conversation and life. Cunningham was already known for his treatment of AIDS in his earlier novels as just one part of the complicated interpersonal relationships among his multiple protagonists. “It’s always felt important to me when writing about a gay character,” he commented in a 1997 interview, “to place him or her in context, in a world in which most people aren’t gay” (Canning 100). In 2010 Alan Hollinghurst summarized this tendency:

Cunningham has always been the most levelheaded of gay novelists. By never making an issue of gayness he simply but subtly deepens our sense of its being unarguable. He writes wisely about gay lives and desires as completely natural, and seems never to have been tempted by the more programmatic or socially exclusive kinds of gay fiction. The poet Richard in The Hours presents a memorable image of a mind and body ravaged by AIDS, but The Hours is not an ‘AIDS novel.’ Cunningham’s rightful and capable claim has always been to represent life in general, from the viewpoint of either gender and in the light of all kinds of sexual persuasion.

But we also know from the 1997 interview that Cunningham wrote both his earlier novels as a direct response to AIDS: not as political or activist novels, but to provide books “about gay lives that delivered something that felt emotionally true” to the men who were dying in a culture where the government was “doing nothing or very little” to help them,
where gay men “were considered expendable” (92; 104). Here one hears some of the passion he expressed in his 1992 essay “After AIDS, Gay Art Aims for a New Reality,” where he emphasizes the sorrow and rage permeating theatre by or about gays, a response to the ingrained homophobia in US culture—“this country’s hatred of homosexuals”—brought to the surface by the advent of the illness (“After AIDS”).

Where does this leave The Hours? In the same 1997 interview Cunningham explains that his new novel, then still in progress, which began as a rewrite of Mrs. Dalloway set in New York during the epidemic, led him to ask: “Why Mrs. Dalloway?” When the interviewer questions, “You’d made the intellectual link between Woolf’s fictional world and the impact of AIDS on New York?,” Cunningham’s answer evokes a more personal and stronger connection between them than we find in the published book: “Yes, the whole notion of the contrast between Mrs. Dalloway, who has survived the war, and Septimus Smith, who hasn’t really, reverberated for me—as someone who is HIV-negative, trying to minister to people who were not. That was a briefly interesting idea that lost steam” (95). For many critics, including Leslie Hankins and Michèle Barrett during the 2003 panel on The Hours at Smith College, this decision constituted a lost opportunity to explore the links among war and AIDS, politics, resistance, and suicide. But for Christopher Lane, situating the novel within literary responses to AIDS, Cunningham, “rather than imagining a simple end to AIDS,…compares the epidemic to the haunting afterlife of military conflict, ‘as if the war were still on’” (31).

3) Woolf, AIDS, and suicide: a different reading. When I wrote to Chris Reed to ask if he knew of any other places where gay men, AIDS, suicide and Woolf intersect, he asked around before replying, no.

The interesting and surprising thing to me is that there is so little at this intersection, given the huge impact of The Hours and the way those themes come together there. I don’t know quite what to make of that. What Cunningham grasped, I believe, is [that] the problem of AIDS and the problem of Woolf’s suicide are, on an important level, the same problem: how to make sense of apparently senseless death. This was clearly a huge issue for a generation of gay men: what could all these devastating losses mean? It’s too heart-breaking to conclude that they were just a biological fluke…Can there be some way to allow the deaths to make the lives (Woolf’s or that generation of gay men’s) mean more intensely, more powerfully? That is always a challenge in teaching Woolf and clearly Cunningham’s theme.

Given how that all seems to go together (to me), as I say, I am surprised there is not a larger archive. What Chris Castiglia and I end up arguing in If Memory Serves is, essentially, that we have not been able to make sense of AIDS. That it has become, instead, an occasion for traumatic repression, for what we call “unremembering” in the popular and academic imaginary…[T]he lack of archive for your project is, I think, indicative of our diagnosis.

The full title of the book is If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past.
4) I want to end with a representation of Woolf’s suicide that not only ties it to a form of resistance, but directly challenges the image of the tragic woman artist: Patti Smith’s 2008 performance on the anniversary of Woolf’s death. This is not the first time that Smith had done a performance of this kind. In 2003, during a residency at Charleston, the first of two visits there, she performed two emotionally charged concerts that were part of an event called “Returning a Wave,” a reference both to Woolf’s novel and to Smith’s 1979 album _Wave_; these included both passages from _The Waves_ and a reading of Woolf’s suicide note. In the first concert, singing the phrase from her poem “Pissing in a River,” “Voices, voices, mesmerize / Voices, voices, beckoning sea….” tears came into her eyes, a result, she told Sean O’Hagan, of thinking of Virginia and how close the words were to “‘her kind of language’” (O’Hagan, “American Icon”). In 2003 Smith also took a series of photographs that were exhibited both during her 2006 stay at Charleston and in Paris; these included images, as one viewer described them, of Woolf’s “bed, the lace coverlet carefully drawn,” and “the serpentining curves of the Ouse, the river in which Woolf drowned herself” (Laing).

But by the 2008 Paris performance, the tears had gone. For one thing, in her poem about the Iraq war, “Birds of Iraq,” Woolf’s suicide—”She marched / to the river. / A letter for L. / A letter for V.”—is linked to the violence of war, including the “ambulance splattered / in Julian’s blood” (_Auguries of Innocence_ 31, 32). The Paris performance is still about death, Woolf’s death and, I’ve begun to think, Robert Mapplethorpe’s death from AIDS; the exhibit includes a recorded reading of the long poem Smith wrote to commemorate him, “The Coral Sea,” accompanied by two screens showing a seascape (O’Hagan, “Mementoes”). It ends with the waves that have permeated the text becoming stones as big as the sun, with Woolf walking to the river, filling her pockets, and walking into the water; in the final passage the beating of Woolf’s heart is synchronized with the rhythm of the waves and Smith’s own voice. But the performance is also about more than Woolf’s death; it is about writing: about the young girl who realized that she could be a writer, that she could use words to protect and project herself, a young girl who was ready.

During the reading, which begins with the opening of the novel and includes passages about Susan, Ginny, and Rhoda as children and young women, as well as a reference to _A Room of One’s Own_, Smith uses these passages, available on _YouTube_, to describe Woolf in the process of becoming:

Something within her refused to grow
something adverse, eternal;
something bold
something warrior like
in her red long dress
in her perfect collar
she looks up at the stars and she could feel as if,
she could feel as if she could
pluck them one by one
and send them spinning into the world,
in small, beautiful, elastic, mercurial weapons.
[…]


“Waving to Virginia”

It’s not that girl. No one told her anything. No one. She told herself, she told herself, she could feel…self
she watched her hand, writing word after word
that grew and expanded
that came in and out like the waves,
in and out like the sea, Virginia,
the waves, Virginia, the stones, Virginia.
But the written word, Virginia, the word,
[…]
The birds were chirping.
We took a train, she wrote, we took a train; we had a mission. (Author’s transcription)

But what struck me most about Smith’s performance, and what I will end with, is her matter-of-fact acknowledgement in her introduction of the date of the reading, the anniversary of Woolf’s death, and her treatment of the suicide itself.

Virginia Woolf took her own life on March 28, 1941. For myself, I believe that she made this decision consciously; it is what she needed to do as a human being, and so I do not think of this as sad. I just think that it’s the day that Virginia Woolf decided to say goodbye. So we are not celebrating the day; we’re simply acknowledging that this is the day. So if I had a title to call tonight I would call it Waves; we are waving to Virginia. (Author’s transcription)

The Virginia Woolf who emerges from Patti’s Smith’s performance, whose words are weapons as powerful as the waves, is as controlled and in charge of her life as the singer herself.

Notes

2. In another translation it is described as a reflection of “a great portion of Cuban youths—somewhere between the picaresque and the dissolute…” (Soto, *Reinaldo Arenas* 56).
3. I am grateful to the Fondation Cartier for allowing me to see the complete performance.

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WOOLF, DEFOE, DERRIDA: INTERDISCIPLINARY DOGS—OR THE CANINE AESTHETICS AND (GENDER) POLITICS OF CREATIVITY

by Jane Goldman

My current work, *Virginia Woolf and the Signifying Dog*, tracks the shifting canine tropes underpinning Woolf’s writings in numerous genres on multiple disciplines. Woolf’s mercurial dog figure is a sliding signifier representing the historic, unequal struggles between men and women over artistic subjectivity, authority, and voice in verbal, visual, musical, and theatrical arts. For example, in the finale to the multidisciplinary pageant, in *Between the Acts*, the megaphonic voice urges the audience, fragmentarily mirrored back to themselves, to “Consider the dogs [who] do openly what we do slyly” (*BTA* 134). Woolf’s signifying dogs intervene at the intersection between art and life, between artists and their subjects, between art and audience, between art and criticism, and between the arts themselves. What might be at stake, artistically, politically, and ethically, in the tricks performed by this evolving troupe of interdisciplinary dogs? One thing at stake I suggest is the *as such* of dasein where, according to Heidegger and others, the caesura falls between animal and man, the site of violence and creativity in all its multiplicities.

The “ironic apparatus” of the “anthropological machine,” according to Giorgio Agamben, installs a shifting caesura in the narrative of the historical “passage from animal to man” where or when an animal-not-yet-human births a human-animal, and where the acquisition of language is a key indicator of that passage from animality to humanity (Agamben 37). In patriarchy, we might add, the “passage from animal to man,” where or when an animal-not-yet-human births a human-animal, occurs every time a mother whelps a son!

The verb “whelp” serves my dogged interests here precisely because of its canine provenance. As the *OED* shows whelp is both noun and verb, the noun applicable to “the young of various animals” and humans, but distinctively canine in pedigree and often derogatory. The transitive verb, “whelp,” means of a bitch dog “To bring forth” or to give birth to “(a whelp or whelps)”; it may also serve intransitively meaning to “bring forth whelps” and again slides toward the derogatory. It has an “uncertain” etymology. Is it perhaps related to that other rare transitive birth verb “to world”? “To world” means “To bring (a child) into the world at birth” as well as “To provide with a world of people; to people, inhabit,” and has a more certain etymology.

I find only one recorded use of the term “whelp” by Virginia Woolf (then still Stephen), in a letter to her brother-in-law Clive Bell (29 December 1910), in which the gender politics of Agamben’s anthropological machine are quite apparent in her canine caricature of her sister, the artist Vanessa Bell, currently all too preoccupied with her infant sons to pay her sister enough attention (or indeed to notice the rising flirtation between her sister and her husband):
Dearest Clive,/ I didn’t deserve another letter from you because that old Bitch left off suckling her whelps and wrote—However, I did deserve one, because of the quantity that goes into mine. I didn’t neglect you; it seemed to me as though I were vociferating to a stone wall. So please write again—Nessa has a chow hand—three words, with all the fur on them, take up a line. (L1 445)

So “on or about December 1910,” the childless Woolf transforms her artist sister, whose more usual epithet was “Dolphin,” into a (now “overcomotose”) dog-woman, in danger of becoming stone! “Human character” has indeed “changed” (E3 421). The treacherous zone inhabited by women artists and writers, stalked by Samuel Johnson’s notorious and damning figure of the woman preacher (the woman speaking, performing, creating “art” in public) as a dog on its hind legs, is opened. Lapsing or devolving from artist/sister into mother/(wife), Vanessa relinquishes interdisciplinary verbal and even visual literacy and is turning dog. She rides Agamben’s caesura, the caesura between animal and man, ridden by every mother who whelps a son in patriarchy. The lupine Woolf, ever stung by Johnson’s analogy, is of course simultaneously stretching out her own paw, using the interdisciplinary dog to unite dogged sister artists.

Let’s now turn to Derrida’s passing allusion to Woolf’s essay ““Robinson Crusoe”” in *The Beast and the Sovereign* 2 (2011), in which he reads Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* alongside “Heidegger’s Seminar on World, Finitude, and Solitude” (Derrida Beast 2: 31). He embarks on a heady tour of these two heterogeneous works, touching on many other works by Rousseau, Pascal, Montaigne, Marx, Celan, Lacan, Joyce and Woolf et al. Woolf drafted the first version of “Robinson Crusoe” (1926) while also writing her own novel set on an island, *To the Lighthouse*, and a fragment of the essay appears in the holograph draft of that novel, a Robinsonian island adrift in a Woolfi an one.

Derrida likens Woolf’s “false” observations (in her 1932 version of the essay) to “false” accounts of deconstruction (Beast 2: 18). He derives this analogy from snatches of a long passage by Woolf. Woolf, Derrida explains, “explains that *Robinson Crusoe* is a ‘masterpiece’ not only because Daniel Defoe was able to maintain and impose his own perspective on us in a consistent way, but because, in doing so, he annoys us, ‘thwarts us and flouts us at every turn’” (Derrida Beast 2: 17; Woolf E5 378). Derrida snatches the following from Woolf:

> There are no sunsets and no sunrises; there is no solitude and no soul. There is, on the contrary, staring us full in the face nothing but a large earthenware pot. [...] God does not exist. [...] Nature does not exist. [...] Death does not exist. Nothing exists except an earthenware pot. Finally, that is to say, we are forced to drop our own preconceptions and to accept what Defoe himself wishes to give us. (Woolf E5 379; Derrida Beast 2: 17)

The sentences from Woolf that Derrida isolates are in keeping with her comments—here in “Robinson Crusoe” (1932) but elsewhere too—on “the massive and monumental reality of Crusoe,” and Defoe’s relentless appetite and “genius for fact” (Woolf E5 43). Derrida ignores Woolf’s own modification of this initial readerly response at the close of her essay: “Defoe, by reiterating that nothing but a plain earthenware pot stands in
the foreground, persuades us to see remote islands and the solitudes of the human soul” (Woolf E5 381). It is startling that, given his seminar title *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida is reluctant to follow the path of the Woolf, and is silent on Woolf’s closing remarks in her essay where, in reaching to this final statement, she expands on the difference between readerly expectations and the actual priorities of the fictional castaway, and re-admits humanity, death, and nature to Crusoe’s island, and, in doing so, points up how he understands himself in relation to the animals that he encounters on the island and those that he brings with him from the ship:

> When at last he exclaims, “Then to see how like a king I din’d too all alone, attended by my servants”—his parrot and his dog and his two cats, we cannot help but feel that all humanity is on a desert island alone—though Defoe at once informs us, for he has a way of snubbing off our enthusiasms, that the cats were not the same cats that had come in the ship. Both of those were dead; these cats were new cats, and as a matter of fact cats became very troublesome before long from their fecundity, whereas dogs, oddly enough, did not breed at all. (Woolf E5 381)

Woolf is referring to the dining passage in *Robinson Crusoe* that Derrida too cites later in *The Beast and the Sovereign*:

> how like a King I din’d too all alone, attended by my servants; Poll, as if he had been my Favourite, was the only person permitted to talk to me. My Dog who was now grown very old and crazy, and had found no Species to multiply his Kind upon, sat always at my Right Hand, and two Cats, one on one Side the Table, and one on the other […]. But these were not the two Cats which I brought on Shore at first, for they were both of them dead, […]; but one of them having multiply’d by I know not what Kind of Creature, these were two which I had preserv’d tame, whereas the rest run wild in the Woods, and became indeed troublesome to me at last; for they would often come into my House, and plunder me too, till at last I was obliged to shoot them, and did kill a great many. (Defoe 108; Derrida Beast 2: 28-29)

Woolf surely points up with heavy irony the shifting, spectral presence of woman and maternity in this model of “all humanity,” elided somewhere between the sovereign Crusoe (“all alone”) and his (attendant) servile beasts. Derrida himself ventures “nothing equivalent or similar, analogous was ever […] written about a woman alone: like an island in an island” (*Beast* 2: 2). Yet Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* is a novel set on an island on which we can find Mrs. Ramsay finding herself, an “elle” in “une île” (*Beast* 2: 3) perhaps: “To be silent; to be alone” (*TTL* 99).

Woolf pokes fun at Crusoe’s retrospective explanations of the provenance and genesis of the cats, over-fertile, only too willing to enter miscegenous relations with the wild cats, and therefore requiring frequent culling by him, acts of violence that Defoe has closely woven into Crusoe’s declaration of his own sovereignty. Crusoe reports his rescuing of the dog and cats on his salvaging expeditions for “many things” back to his wrecked ship, and that they are among the “things of less Value but not all less useful to me, which I omit-
ted setting down before”: “Pens, Ink, and Paper, […] Books, all which I carefully secur’d” (Defoe 48). The nameless cats and dog are commodities, then, like the inanimate goods he salvages, but the dog’s ability to swim puts him above the cats in the sliding hierarchy of man over animals. Despite his autonomous escape, the dog makes “a trusty Servant,” but fails to attain equal subjectivity by his inability to talk. And the colon after “but that would not do,” commenting on the dog’s lack of language, suggests some sort of connection with the observation that follows it, on his master’s salvaging of the tools of his advanced literacy: “I only wanted to have him talk to me, but that would not do: As I observ’d before, I found Pen, Ink and Paper, and I husbanded them to the utmost” (Defoe 48). The human/animal hierarchy is inscribed between and by the very tools of inscription salvaged during—and now inscribing—this very event.

The dog’s superiority over the cats seems affirmed by Crusoe’s account of his assistance on hunting expeditions to kill other animals including cats (Defoe 53). Crusoe uses the diminishing epithet “Dog” of himself, in a sanguine, matter of fact way, recalling the danger of losing his life, his own sovereignty: “I only said to my self often, that I was an unfortunate Dog, and born to be always miserable” (Defoe 66; Derrida Beast 2: 80). The dog, then, is Crusoe’s inferior companion, a commodity tasked with guarding other commodities, or with assisting—“so taking my Gun, a Hatchet, and my Dog” (Defoe 79)—in the hunting and killing of them. However, the dog is no match for the wild goats “for they all fac’d about upon the Dog, and he knew his Danger too well, for he would not come near them” (Defoe 56). The irony is not lost on Woolf (whose own nickname was “the Goat”).

The cats too are of special interest to Woolf, something Derrida overlooks in her essay: “cats became very troublesome before long from their fecundity, whereas dogs, oddly enough, did not breed at all.” The dog, who cannot whelp nor find a wild canid to make whelp, eventually dies, but is nevertheless miraculously replaced, and not by the reviled feline method of birthing! It is Poll the parrot who draws Derrida’s eye. But notice Crusoe’s fear of being devoured by the over-fertile cats! Notice too that family making for Crusoe is more emphatically the art of violent culling rather than birthing. In contrast to the proliferating cats whom he is “forc’d to kill […] like Vermine, or wild Beasts” (Defoe 75) Crusoe’s companion dog is reproduced, so to speak, when Crusoe fortuitously finds another fully grown male dog while attempting to salvage goods and commodities from a second ship-wreck. Notice how “a dog appear’d upon her” (Defoe 138) rather than out of her! Woolf’s comment on the oddity of the commodified dog’s not breeding may also extend to Crusoe himself and to the three male human “subjects” his island eventually admits: “Man Friday […] his Father […] and the Spaniard” (Defoe 174; Derrida Beast 2: 31). The population of men increases, just as the dog has been replaced, without recourse or reference to whelping.

Whereas Woolf archly points to Crusoe’s representations of the oddly non-breeding dog, thence to the bracketing of whelping and maternal birth, Derrida cites the passage on dining with the animals in illustration of the “auto-affirmation of sovereignty by Robinson himself” (Derrida Beast 2: 28, 31), a path of argument that will open to his preoccupation in The Beast 2 with dying and death, of being buried alive, savaged by beasts, ingested by cannibals. He couples this affirmation of (violent) sovereignty over wild and domestic creatures with the passage on Robinson’s sovereignty over his three human sub-
jects. These passages set Derrida on his path to “do an initial reconnoiter […] around one word” in his reading of “Heidegger’s famous triple thesis, distinguishing between man and animal: 1. The stone is worldless [weltlos]; 2. The animal is poor in world [weltarm]; 3. Man is world-forming [weltbildend]” (Derrida Beast 2: 57; Heidegger 176). Derrida identifies in Walten “a recurring word that in [his] opinion is given too little attention in Heidegger in general.” He draws out its violent valences, its “sense of sovereign and superhuman violence.”

The Walten, Derrida makes explicit, “produces nothing less than the difference between Beings and beings; […] between human Dasein, and the animal: the animal is unable to accede to the as such of beings” (Derrida Beast 2: 105 n.25). He returns at the close of The Beast 2 to demonstrate how the as such of Dasein “that distinguishes man from the animal is thus indeed what the violence of Walten makes possible” (Derrida Beast 2: 288, 289). This is where the historicality of man becomes possible, “the historicality reserved to Dasein and to Being, denied to the animal and to the other forms of life. There is historicality of man (and not of animal) only where the Gewalt of this Walten irrupts to make beings as such appear, in the middle of which man is gripped by violence” (Derrida Beast 2: 289). He asks us to consider “a single, final quotation from Heidegger […] as you watch the war on television, in Iraq, but also closer to us”: “(There is only one thing against which all violence-doing, violent action, violent activity, immediately shatters).” […] “Das ist der Tod (it is death)” (Derrida Beast 2: 290). Death is now, on the final page, identified as Derrida’s dominant question in his seminar, and it “remains entire: To whom is this power given or denied? Who is capable of death, and through death, of imposing failure on the super- or hyper-sovereignty of Walten?” (Derrida Beast 2: 290). Derrida draws on Freud to counter Heidegger’s distinction that whereas men die as such, animals merely perish, but he might have found support too in Woolf who not only wrote a famous biography of a dog, but, in one of her earliest published pieces, an obituary of a dog.

Yet, folded (invaginated, carried) into Derrida’s seminar is the possibility—“a discreet intrusion [à pas de loup]” (Derrida Beast 1: 2)—of a shared status of human with animal, and indeed with stone, which emerges in Derrida’s reading of an opening in Heidegger where he draws out of Walten the (Freudian) sense of a birthing drive (Trieben). Holding on to the point on Heidegger’s path where he says “toward this Being as a whole […]—it is that toward which we are driven (getreiben) in our nostalgia,” Derrida concludes that therefore the world “is where we are not at home.” This justifies our saying “that we are also without this world, or poor in world, like the stone and the animal.” Here Derrida intrudes a compelling but truncated reading of a poem by Paul Celan, “Grosse, Glühende Wölbung” (“Vast, Glowing Vault”) (1967), the last line of which serves as a haunting contrapuntal refrain throughout his seminar:

[The world has gone, I must carry you] […] This poem can be read as a poem of mourning or of birth (the final ‘ich muss dich tragen’ signaling either toward the dead one that, as one mourning, I carry or must carry in me, or toward the child to be born and still carried by its mother, or even toward the poem and the poet himself […]). (Derrida Beast 2: 104)
He begins a reading of the ram imagery in Celan’s poem that begs to be read alongside Crusoe’s goats. But to sum up, from Heidegger’s Welt and Walten, Derrida, with the forceps of Celan, induces a kind of whelping in “this unheard-of double proposition […] this performative lodged like a pearl in the oyster of a constative, like a still unborn child, to be born, to be carried to term in the uterus of the origin of the world as it is, there would be today the import of a declaration of love or of peace at the moment of a declaration of war” (Derrida Beast 2: 259). In the context of the Iraq war, interrupting in the Spring of 2003 when he was delivering these seminars, Derrida is devastating in his exegesis of Die Welt ist fort:

The armed word of politicians, priests and soldiers is more than ever incompetent, unable to measure up to the very thing it is speaking and deciding about, and that trembles in the name ‘world’, or even in saying good-bye to the world. And that what there is to bear, as the responsibility of the other, for the other, must be borne where the world itself is going away by going into absolute disaster of this armed word that I shall not even call psittacist, so as not to insult Poll, Robinson Crusoe’s parrot (psitakos), first victim of the humanist arrogance that thought it could give itself the right to speech, and therefore to the world as such. (Derrida Beast 2: 260)

Derrida, plumping for Poll, and dog-legging into Woolf’s essay only to elide her arch and highly germane observations on beasts, sovereignty, and gender, may not overtly have followed the step of the Woolf, the path of the oddly non-breeding, non-whelping dog, yet here he is, unwittingly, following her steps in the poignant, late essay, “Thoughts on Peace in an Air-Raid” (1940), where she unites reader and writer in the textual locus of a shared vulnerability that extends beyond the originating historical experience of the author’s enduring of German bombardment of England in WWII to the future horizons of successive contemporary readers. Woolf’s essay meditates—in the first instance, then, while German bombs drop on British civilian targets, but it also continues to meditate more recently and now, while NATO bombs, for example, drop on Libyan civilians, and unmanned, but man-directed, drones are unleashed over Afghanistan—on the “queer experience, lying in the dark and listening to the zoom of a hornet which may at any moment sting you to death.” (Judith Allen [113-118] has more to say on this.) Woolf warns of the gender politics inherent in this horrific aspect of modern warfare which has young men bombing unarmed women and children. “Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid,” then, espouses feminist, anti-fascist culture and writing, and defines the “mental fight” we should muster in times of war as a fierce, intellectual independence. Woolf rallies us to think “against the current, not with it.” Like Derrida, she points up the violent drives harnessed by the male warmongers (“ancient instincts, instincts fostered and cherished by education and tradition”), in tandem with maternal drives (“Could we switch off the maternal instinct at the command of a table full of politicians?”):

But if it were necessary, for the sake of humanity, for the peace of the world, that childbearing should be restricted, the maternal instinct subdued, women would attempt it. […] We must create more honorable activities for those who try to
conquer in themselves their fighting instinct, their subconscious Hitlerism. We must compensate the man for the loss of his gun. (E6 244)

Woolf's matriarchal imperative here compares interestingly with Celan's “[I must carry you].” To conclude: in rethinking the caesura between man and animal, and following in the steps of Woolf, Celan, Agamben, and Derrida, as much as down their paths not taken, we must continue to carry and rethink the words: world, welt, war, walten, whelp.

Notes

1. Woolf’s essay was published first in 1926 in the Nation & Athenaeum, and then in expanded form in 1932 for The Second Common Reader. It is this latter version that Derrida cites.
3. As when Crusoe “set my Dog to guard [his crops] in the night, tying him up to a Stake at the Gate, where he would stand and bark all night long” (Defoe 85).
4. See Heidegger’s “Seminar on World, Finitude, and Solitude” (Derrida Beast 2: 31). Derrida observes: “humans themselves are dominated, crushed under the law of this sovereign violence. Man is not its master, he is traversed by it […] dominated, seized, penetrated through and through by the sovereign violence of the Walten” (Derrida Beast 2: 39, 41).
5. For Heidegger “violence characterizes not only [man’s] acts, his action, but his existence, his Da-sein, the there of his being there […] he is violent in as much as he is exposed to the violence of Walten, of beings, and in as much as he is in a position to exercise this violence himself, to do violence” (Derrida Beast 2: 287, 288). Derrida’s closing remarks are ominous—that “the idealism that then dominates Western metaphysics through and through is a determination of violence. Ideology […] and idealism are not innocent, one must recognize their violence.”

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“The Law is on the Side of the Normal”:
Virginia Woolf as Crip Theorist

by Madelyn Detloff

Incomprehensibility has an enormous power over us in illness, more legitimately perhaps than the upright will allow. In health meaning has encroached upon sound. Our intelligence domineers over our senses. But in illness, with the police off duty, we creep beneath some obscure poems by Mallarmé or Donne, some phrase in Latin or Greek, and the words give out their scent and distil their flavor, and then, if at last we grasp the meaning, it is all richer for having come to us sensually first, by way of the palate and the nostrils, like some queer odour. (“On Being Ill” 19)

I want to take the opportunity presented by the conference theme of Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Woolf to think about Woolf from the perspective of critical disability studies, or what Robert McRuer has called “Crip Theory” in his 2006 book of that name. I do so in part because much has been written over the past several decades on Virginia Woolf’s apparent mental illness—situating her according to either a medical model of disability conforming to what Eve Sedgwick calls a “minoritizing” conception of identity, or a constructionist model that conforms to what Sedgwick would call a “universalizing” conception of identity (40). That is, those who believe that Woolf’s breakdowns were congenital, for example the result of untreated (or mistreated) bipolar disorder, as Thomas Caramagno does, tend to understand Woolf from the perspective of a medical model of disability, as part of a unique and relatively small minority of people who share an immutable physiological characteristic (Caramagno 2). Those who read Woolf’s breakdowns (including her suicide) as symptoms of traumatic abuse and dysfunctional family dynamics such as Louise DeSalvo does, imply that Woolf was just like everyone else, or would have been, if she were not literally driven mad by patriarchal gender norms and abuse. I don’t want to dwell on this critical polarity overlong, as I have written about it elsewhere in relation to depictions of Woolf’s mental illness, but it is worth reiterating Sedgwick’s caution that neither a universalizing position (as in “we’re all potentially queer” or “we’re all potentially disabled”) nor a minoritizing position (as in the assertion that the queer person or the disabled person is “born this way”) guarantees a beneficent outcome (Detloff 25; Sedgwick 40). Both poles of the binary might be leveraged to argue for accommodating queer or disabled people, and both sides can be mobilized in the service of the eugenicist dream of a world without queer or disabled people.

That eugenicist dream (or rather nightmare) is where I want to start my discussion, because by understanding the late-nineteenth-century advent of the eugenicist norm we see also the genesis of radical counterdiscourses that question the primacy of the norm—that is we see the shared genealogy of crip theory and queer theory, not as analogous epistemological movements (or knowledge projects), but rather as interwoven concerns that have, until recently, been conceived of as separate movements. I want to be clear here that
I am not claiming that being gay or lesbian or bi or trans is like being disabled or that being disabled is like being LGB or T, but that the characterization of deviation (as in falling on the outside edges of statistical standards of deviation) as abnormality, and the assumption that abnormality is a sign of physical and moral degeneration in need of correction or elimination, is common to both groups’ stigmatization and subsequent dehumanization.

In the 2003 *GLQ* issue that introduced the concept of “crip theory” to the wider academic public, disability scholar David Serlin contended that, “Like their counterparts in queer studies, scholars in disability studies should strive to lay bare the historical and cultural roots of such constitutive concepts as ‘normal’ and ‘healthy’ as they seek to destigmatize the conceptual differences implied by those terms” (153). Decades earlier, Woolf was undertaking that very process of laying bare historical and cultural roots in her work. Ultimately what I would like to suggest today then, is not simply that we can understand Woolf’s life better if we imagine her to have possessed both queer and crip sensibilities (although I think this is the case), but more importantly that we might recognize in her work a form of nascent crip theory that illuminates the violence and the social force of eugenicist norms that are still in many senses operative today.

**I. Worshipping Proportion**

In what is still one of the most cogent critiques of biopower (a Foucauldian conception of power as the regulation of life, rather than the right to command death)\(^3\) in fiction—linking claims about the health of the nation to masculine mental health, to heteronormativity, to war and colonialism, Woolf satirizes the Harley Street specialist’s worship of “divine proportion” in *Mrs. Dalloway*:

Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion— his, if they were men, Lady Bradshaw’s if they were women (she embroidered, knitted, spent four nights out of seven at home with her son), so that not only did his colleagues respect him, his subordinates fear him, but the friends and relations of his patients felt for him the keenest gratitude for insisting that these prophetic Christs and Christesses, who prophesied the end of the world, or the advent of God, should drink milk in bed, as Sir William ordered. (99)

Sir William’s fanaticism about proportion, although exaggerated, is in keeping with what disability theorist Lennard Davis calls the construction of normalcy in the nineteenth century. Davis argues that the “concept of the norm or average enters European culture, or at least the European Languages, only in the nineteenth century” and that uptake of this concept arises from the development of “that branch of knowledge known as statistics” (4). Practitioners of the new field of statistics such as Adolphe Quetelet and Sir Francis Galton heralded a discursive shift from emulation of the ideal man (gender exclusivity intended) to idealization of the average man. Davis argues that, “In formulating the *l’homme moyen*, Quetelet is also providing a justification of *les classes moyennes* (sic). With bourgeois
Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary

Woolf

hegemony comes scientific justification for moderation and middle-class ideology. The average man, the body of the man in the middle, becomes the exemplar of the middle way of life” (5). Davis further points out that the prominent nineteenth century statisticians were also, not coincidentally, eugenicists. Eugenicists such as Galton re-imagined the normal distribution that is part of any bell curve was as a kind of hierarchy, with the low tail of the curve considered undesirable degeneracy and the high tail of the curve representing Darwinian progress.

For Davis, this “new ideal of ranked order is powered by the imperative of the norm, and then supplemented by the notion of progress, human perfectibility, and the elimination of deviance to create a dominating hegemonic vision of what the human body should be” (8). The aim of eugenicists, including many Fabians known to Woolf, such as Beatrice and Sidney Webb (Davis 8), was to shift that median point in the direction of the top quartile and to eliminate or dramatically reduce the number of people who exhibit traits that fall into the bottom quartile.

How does this shift take place? Well, for thinkers in a milieu heavily influenced by Darwin, through sexual selection for socially “useful” traits like height and strength and intelligence and against socially “harmful” traits such as “feeble mindedness” or clubbed feet, or dwarfism. Here sexual normativity intersects with able bodied normativity insofar as proper desire (that is sexual desire that will lead to the desired eugenicist shift in the median on the bell curve) is desire for able-bodiedness. Desire for anything else is deemed at best wasteful and at worst degenerative. Persons considered cognitively disabled (that is, deemed “mental defectives”) were often involuntarily sterilized in Canada and the United States as well as in more notoriously eugenicist states such as Nazi Germany. This practice apparently went on in Alberta until 1972 and in many U.S. States until the 1960s and 1970s, to cite some of the more egregious examples in North America (Woodard 10; Diekema 22).
Homosexual men were also subjected to voluntary or involuntary castration as a supposed cure for their deviant sexual desire (Josephson). Alan Turing, a path-breaking computer scientist and celebrated British cryptographer, was chemically castrated in 1952 following his arrest for homosexual offenses. And let’s not forget that Virginia Woolf was told by her medical doctor (in consultation with Leonard) that she must not reproduce at a time when “healthy” women of her race and class were being told that it was their primary duty to reproduce (Lee 328-30). Biopower here works through the bell curve—valorizing the norm and then (re)producing it through violence and/or prohibition.

The habit of “worshipping divine proportion” through the idealization of norms brought into existence not only sexual minority identities—a process Foucault referred to when he suggested that “The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form” (43)—but also the characterization of disabled people as “personage[s],” “past[s],” “case histor[ies],” “childhood[s]” and “types.” These “deviant” types, whether deviating from sexual, physical, cognitive, or behavioral norms, bolster the construction of what Rosemarie Garland Thomson calls the “normate,” a figure she analyzes in terms of physical disability, and which crip theorists such as Abby L. Wilkerson have analyzed in relation to sexual and gender norms. The concept of the “normate,” Garland Thomson explains, is a “neologism [that] names the veiled subject position of cultural self, the figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the normate’s boundaries” (8). I admit to stretching a bit by including the quote from Woolf’s “On Being Ill”—“The law is on the side of the normal”—in the title of my paper, as in that context she is discussing fictional forms (20). In Mrs. Dalloway, however, the law is literally on the side of the normal; it gives Dr. Bradshaw the power to commit Septimus Warren Smith against his will (and against his wife’s will) to one of Bradshaw’s rest cure “homes”—“It was a question of law” (97).

II. “Sacrificed to the Family…old Grandpapa without any fingers”

While Mrs. Dalloway, through the figure of Septimus, exposes more spectacularly the violence of the norm, I want to turn now to Woolf’s later novel, The Years, to illustrate very briefly her process of “laying bare [the] cultural and historical roots” of normativity through her story of three generations of the Pargiter family. Very early in the 1880 portion of the narrative, we learn that the paterfamilias, Colonel Abel Pargiter (the pun on able may or may not be intended) lost two fingers in “the Mutiny,” presumably the 1857 Indian rebellion against the British East India Company, often referred to as the “Sepoy” mutiny. We first learn of Abel’s injury in relation to a sexual encounter he has with his mistress—“He drew her to him; he kissed her on the nape of the neck; and then the hand that had lost two fingers began to fumble rather lower down where the neck joins the shoulders” (9)—but more often than not his disability is associated with his role as the dispenser of money:

He put his hand into his trouser pocket and brought out a handful of silver. His children watched him as he tried to single out one sixpence from all the florins. He had lost two fingers of the right hand in the Mutiny, and the muscles had
shrunk so that the right hand resembled the claw of some aged bird. He shuffled and fumbled; but as he always ignored the injury, his children dared not help him. The shiny knobs of the mutilated fingers fascinated Rose. (13)

While Abel’s age, retirement, and wife’s illness leave him feeling gloomy and “out of it all” (5), his physical deformity is no bar to his access to places of privilege, such as his club, or social and economic standing. He is not only the paterfamilias of a large Victorian household at Abercorn Terrace (a “respectable” neighborhood), he is financially well-off, consoling himself at one point for being “richer” than his “distinguished” brother, Digby (125). In other words, although Abel is not “at the top of his tree,” he is a respectable, if predictable and curmudgeonly, bourgeois Victorian man.

Abel’s physical deformity, obtained during military duty, is a signifier of his masculine value, unlike Sara’s, which though acquired early when someone dropped her as a baby, somehow expresses her plainness and unsuitability for marriage, or Crosby’s “rheumat-ics,” which are a symptom of a life of servitude as a lower class person relegated to a life of serving the upper classes (122, 221). Hence Abel’s clawlike fingers seem to be always performing (fumblingly to be sure) hirsute masculine activities—paying for cabs, caressing his mistress, and, in Edward’s memory, appreciatively flourishing expensive glasses of port. These activities attest to his success, his mastery in an imperial and capitalist system.

In his history of disability and military culture, David Serlin notes that by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, men were scrutinized and measured for their body type, proper (heteronormative) sexually proclivities, and physical soundness. Based on these biometric screenings they were declared either fit or unfit “types” for military service. The fact that war is probably the most disabling of occupations is an ironic corollary to the insistence that military recruits meet high standards (we might say THE standards) for able-bodiedness. As Serlin explains, to be disabled during a battle is proof that one once was ideally able:

Disability acquired on the battlefield, however, was another matter altogether. For many veterans of the Civil War, the amputation stump, the artificial limb, or any other overt physical evidence of injury became shorthand for military service. In certain ways, disability became part of a uniform worn by both participants in and spectators of the brutalities of war. Medical photography, and portrait photography more broadly, helped transform the popular image of soldiering and military culture in general. The material evidence of physical wounds blurred with tacit forms of democratic participation and sacrifice. (159-60)

Sara, Crosby, and Nicholas, in contrast to the disfigured Abel, are depicted as unfit and extraneous to the generational throughline of the story. Nicholas, who “ought to be in prison” (297) because he is presumably a homosexual, loses his patronym and is known instead as the person they (the respectable English people) call “Brown” (315). The other characters, notably Eleanor and North, demonstrate their liberal “flexibility” (to cite McRuer) through their tolerance for him. He is a catalyst for their character development but not a person in his own right. Similarly, Martin exercises his beneficence through his compassionate, yet patronizing attitude towards Crosby. “I’m Crosby’s God,” he even
remarks, a bit disdainfully, to Sara (230). And Sara we first see described through the eyes of Abel:

She [Eugenie] held out her hand partly to coax the little girl, partly, Abel guessed, in order to conceal the very slight deformity that always made him uncomfortable. She had been dropped when she was a baby; one shoulder was slightly higher than the other; it made him feel squeamish; he could not bear the least deformity in a child. It did not affect her spirits, however. She skipped up to him, whirling round on her toe, and kissed him lightly on the cheek. Then she tugged at her sister’s frock, and they both rushed away into the back room laughing. (122)

Unlike Abel, Sara never gains access to the places of privilege and status. She can be her cousin Martin’s guest at a “chop house,” but she is not invited, as her sister Maggie is, to dine in a shiny ballroom next a “man in gold lace” (139). Nor does she have the class-based access to a home on the “respectable” side of town, perhaps due to the fact that she does not marry, whether by choice or because she is not deemed “marriageable” by her family because of her physical deformity.

III. “And now”?

But Sara’s story is in the middle portion of the text, not the conclusion. As a project that lays bare the cultural and historical roots of the “worship of proportion,” *The Years* does not end without giving us a critical opening to imagine other ways to make sense of our differences, or deviations from the norm. Tentatively, I will suggest that Peggy and North, the younger generation, represent the possibility of those other ways. North questions Eleanor’s “sacrifice,” as the eldest daughter, to a life of caring for the paterfamilias after her mother dies: “He looked at her. She had never married. Why not? he wondered. Sacrificed to the family, he supposed—old Grandpapa without any fingers” (372). And, Peggy, unmarried though she is, is not regarded as a tragically unmarried spinster. She does have a part in the reproductive throughline of the story, but as a doctor who helps to bring about the next generation by attending births; that is, by facilitating the births of other women’s children. This is an alternative means of impacting the future, and one that is perhaps less territorial and possessive than the normative alternative posed by Milly and Gibbs, whom we first meet as the average, but healthy undergraduate, unlike the exceptional, but queer Tony Ashton. In what we might call a critically crip turn, North describes the Gibbses as “a parody, a travesty, and excrescence that had overgrown the form within” (379). It might be too much to suggest that Woolf has turned the tables entirely on heteronormative, able-bodied culture in *The Years*. But she does at least offer it as an object of analysis, something to be scrutinized and problematized at least as much as the queers, the gimps, and the spinsters who populate the novel. The norm has grown freakish by the end of *The Years*, and this turn is a starting place for a new way of perceiving the richness of our difference.
Notes

1. My thanks for their perceptive comments on a draft of this essay go to Mary Jean Corbett, Katie N. Johnson, and Elisabeth Hodges.

2. In reference to “essentialist” or constructivist understandings of homosexual identity, Sedgwick argues similarly that “rather than embrace an idealist faith in the necessarily, immanently self-corrosive efficacy of the contradictions inherent to these definitional binarisms, I will suggest instead that contests for discursive power can be specified as competitions for the material or rhetorical leverage required to set the terms of, and to profit in some way from, the operations of such an incoherence of definition” (11).

3. Foucault describes the shift in prevalent power structures from sovereign power with the “right of death” to biopower, “power over life” in History of Sexuality v.1 pp. 136-143.

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...to feel the present sliding over the depths of the past, peace is necessary.

(A Sketch of the Past 99)

Introduction

In A Room of One’s Own, Virginia Woolf argues that in a world where property ownership conditions access to citizenship, if women are to exercise public representation through writing or by any other means, they need enough income to support themselves, use of an inviolable personal space, and participation in the creative processes of knowledge development. In “A Sketch of the Past” and “Hyde Park Gate” from Moments of Being, and in Three Guineas, she affirms the need for liberty from interpersonal and international aggression. The posthumous publication of Woolf’s private papers repositions her political concerns to invite reflection on childhood development and adult actualization as concomitant keys to social change. Her autobiographical writings reveal that Virginia and her sister, Vanessa, were sexually abused by their elder stepbrothers in youth. Consequently, Louise DeSalvo (1999) argues that Woolf’s legacy has precipitated new dimensions of analysis regarding her bouts of “madness” and the operations of interpersonal and social privilege and power.

In Canada, when service organizations begin to develop success in responding to the distinctive effects of child sexual abuse by providing healing spaces for peaceful reflection upon and creative engagements with difficult childhood experiences, they become vulnerable to “funding issues.” Drawing on Woolf’s work and our respective experiences with feminist organizations responding to the complex needs of people who were sexually abused as children, this paper presents, through dialogic exploration, some of the experiences, tensions, and reflections we have shared on a question that plagues us both: why does it seem so challenging to hold public space that supports healing for people who were sexually abused as children? We argue that multiple and competing narratives about the connections between child sexual abuse and dominating power inform this recurring scenario; Woolf’s non-fiction writing has helped to illuminate these conditions for us.

For the purposes of this discussion, we consider individual healing to consist in living a life that is no longer defined—in the first instance—by child sexual abuse. More a life process than the result of an intervention from any isolated professional practice, healing from child sexual abuse is facilitated by the processes of breaking personal and collective silences about the abuse, and strengthening the individual self and surrounding community through narrative and other modes of imagining more creative and constructive social relations. An embodied process that is interactive, incremental, and messy, healing from child sexual abuse takes place both in public spaces and private moments. Without access to both personal and public spaces in which received and limiting scripts about
child sexual abuse can be challenged, the person who has experienced it is vulnerable to imposed meanings that may constrain their capacities to heal. Owning vulnerabilities can be difficult in the West, especially when it means slowing down and being mindful of the links between personal and collective well-being.

Below, we share a series of emblematic memories about how child sexual abuse has surfaced in and shaped our respective processes of professional development, and how at crucial moments for each of us, Woolf’s writing illuminated a pathway forward, offering creative and theoretically sophisticated explanations for experiences that we were each puzzling through. We consider the power of public witness to the ways institutions and social practices enable abuses to go on in “our own backyards,” and bring contemporary theoretical perspectives to the effects of that silencing on our own embodied responses, both to the healing made available through the agencies we have known, and by their closures.

We find connections between the arguments Woolf presents in her non-fiction writings and the inability of the Canadian public to sustain healing centers for people who have experienced child sexual abuse. Throughout our collaboration we have each been struck and fascinated by the manner in which stories of our work and personal lives contain uncanny intersections, even in the years before we met. For example, each of us has a story about how one of Woolf’s texts has grounded our initial career paths and provided sustaining insights.

**Marie:** I was reading Woolf toward a Master’s Degree in literary studies while volunteering with a grassroots community-based service project supporting young people (ages 15 – 24) who were in housing crisis, owing to physical and sexual violence in their lives. CASCA (Citizens Against Sexual Child Abuse) provided 15 gender-segregated, multi-staged support spaces in Kingston, Ontario: rooms of their own for self-identified young people healing from child sexual abuse. The idea was to provide participating youth with adequate time and space to make constructive choices toward stronger life chances. In this context, I found reading “A Sketch of the Past” to be a revelation, my first encounter with Woolf’s account of sexual vulnerability in her youth. I felt a “shock of recognition” that Woolf’s reflections might be helpful to the young people in the housing project I was involved with, while serving to illuminate the difficult issues that child sexual abuse raises, in the context of post-secondary education.

**Karen:** A Room of One’s Own affirmed my own moments of being. The imagery enabled me to be deliberate about nurturing a “room of my own” and has continued to sustain me, particularly when faced with failed attention to the lived effects of interpersonal and social violence. Child sexual abuse has underscored every job I have held, from early childhood educator and probation officer to professor. I learned about the organization Marie mentioned when working as a crisis response worker in Kingston. Not too long after I discovered CASCA, it closed. There were no services like it around. More recently, I served as Director of Tamara’s House Services for Sexual Abuse Survivors, Inc., a feminist non-profit organization in Saskatoon for women who were sexually abused as children, which included culturally appropriate programming for those impacted by the colonial residential school system. Every woman in the residence had a room of her own, and the center itself became a “room of their own” in the community. My work there eventually led me to return to university to pursue a Ph.D. Three years after my departure, the agency was closed. Reports regarding the fiscal reasons for closure have been contentious, just as public engagements with memories of child sexual abuse are contentious (Haaken & Reavey, eds. 2010).
Theoretical perspectives on the operations of knowledge and power

Feminist theorists have assisted us in responding to the moments of being and non-being that characterize the appearance and disappearance of healing agencies for people who have experienced child abuse in Canada. Although we could chart many pathways through the issues we raise, we follow one that Woolf, herself, suggested, working for collective awareness about shared effects of the power to “hurt another person” (“Sketch” 71). Sue Campbell (2003) has coined the term “relational remembering” to define a practice whereby the limitations of human memory create opportunities for respectful mutuality in understanding the operations of power in the contexts of child sexual abuse. Her award-winning book on the subject demonstrates that because human memory is necessarily contextual and creative, it is inevitably shaped by what is considered “permissible” knowledge.

The harm/help narrative

Feminist analyses of sexual violence have underlined the ways in which sexual abuse is political, serving as a mechanism of social control that keeps women and other subordinated groups in their circumscribed places (Armstrong 1994, Jackson 1996). The sexually abused body is constituted as somehow dangerous or damaged in much of the literature on child sexual abuse. In therapy, the language for ‘recovery’ or ‘repair work’ implies that some part of the person who was sexually abused in childhood is broken or damaged and needs to be repaired. Constructing adults who were sexually abused as victimized, silenced, and controlled suggests they are without agency, contributing to what Lindsay O’Dell calls the harm story, “a universal story in which all those affected by child sexual abuse are damaged and positioned as vulnerable throughout life” (140). The experience of child sexual abuse is not a pathological illness; it is a social effect, often construed as personal. Defining the targeted individual as the problem deflects attention from the fact that children and youth continue to be sexually abused every day, in contexts that trace the contours of social and discursive power and subordination. As in practices of slavery, colonization, and contemporary sex tourism, sexual abuse of children remains a public “secret.” It is still possible to overhear claims that such forms of domination may be “good” for those targeted. Organizations that provide concrete spaces affirming the existence of child sexual abuse enable healing by disrupting the harm story and, in some ways, the help story that goes with it, by signaling public acceptance of mutuality and accountability for child sexual abuse.

The narrative of help that attaches to healing agencies is not without complexities. Accounts emerging from residential schools in Indigenous and Maritime communities demonstrate that a claim of “help” may produce harm. Clerics causing problems in settler communities or urban centers were sent to more remote areas with limited public processes of censure. Grossly uneven resource distribution continues to reinforce isolation, targeting the most vulnerable and off-shoring abusive practices. Today, as the already scarce agencies that gather knowledge arising from the diverse lives of the abused are closed, we ask: what are the stories that are told about closures, what are the narratives that are withheld from public view, and who benefits?

It is useful to consider whether agencies like CASCA and Tamara’s House are responding to histories of abuse in ways that are genuinely and inclusively helpful. Is it pos-
sible that they contribute somehow to broader narratives that construe those affected as damaged goods? Or, with closure of the organizations, could there be a different narrative, one that constitutes those who run such agencies as somehow flawed? Whatever the stories circulating about CASCA and/or Tamara’s House, we believe that criteria for evaluating any approach to healing must include the perspectives of those most affected. The help narratives that shaped the emergence of residential schools did not do that. They functioned to suppress Indigenous and newcomer narratives and life ways. The healing centers we recall affirmed the voices of those most affected, recognizing the dangers of replicating structural patterns of oppression and violence, even though they were not always immune.

**Double-cross reversal**

Magda Gere Lewis (1993) has identified a mechanism she calls double-cross-reversal, “the privilege of the dominant to talk at great length about that which is not and to stay silent about that which is” so that subordinated groups face coercion, denial, constraint and “protections” that limit actualization. Lewis suggests that for “socially subordinate groups, this reversal means that: possibility is defined through denial; freedom is reinterpreted through constraint; violence is justified as protection; and in schools, contrary to the belief that they are places where knowledge is shared, knowledge withheld articulates the curriculum.” The closures of the agencies we have been involved with could be understood in terms of double-cross reversal, whereby the dominant public remains silent about lived experiences of abuse and yet is ceaselessly fascinated by the specter of the damaged victim. CASCA and Tamara’s House provided spaces for recognizing that child sexual abuse is both exceptional and unexceptional, part of the being and non-being that Woolf so deftly articulated in her autobiographical writings.

For Woolf, moments of non-being are like perceptual cotton wool arising in the mind, in part from the obligations that bind our time and possibilities to conventions that keep us habituated and unaware of the complexities of our unfolding, situated, mortal, fallible, miraculous lives. She describes moments of being, on the other hand, as either deeply satisfying or profoundly shocking. They are always about new ways of knowing and experiencing the world, of recognizing scripted or received patterns of being that act underneath and inform events, demanding better, more inclusive and relational narratives.

The power that emerges out of holding more than one set of narratives at a time, even if they seem to conflict, are supported by well-planned and articulated healing practices. As Ann Cvetkovich (2003) argues, sites for remembering and engaging such stories summon into being new publics, which hold out the possibility of enlarging available spaces through which to challenge, critique, and collaborate across scattered hegemonies (Inderpal & Grewal 1994). When such stories move into public space they may become “difficult” knowledge. But, as Jacqui Alexander argues in *Pedagogies of Crossing* (2006), whether we face them or not, effects of the past persist and influence the social worlds we share. Woolf’s works and our own stories and ideas recognize human vulnerabilities as relational, crossing boundaries of personal and public knowledge. Denial and ignorance direct attention away from conditions supporting the abuse and abusers; Woolf did not make this mistake.
Multiple, sometimes conflicting narratives

Woolf illustrates the power of examining multiple explanatory narratives when she recalls her unusual and lasting fear of mirrors in “A Sketch of the Past” and, by extension, “Hyde Park Gate.” Public and semi-public narratives constructed her stepbrothers as socially successful, even though they abused their poor, bereaved, and much younger stepsisters in private. Woolf offers a wide range of plausible explanations for her mirror phobia, drawing on gender norms, family narratives, embodied shame, social histories of difference, and dream connections. Among all of these received and speculative stories, it is the account of Gerald’s exploring hands (69) that repositions the others to reveal how easily abuse is hidden from public comprehension.

When Woolf asks, in response to the memory of Gerald’s unwelcome touch, “what is the name for so dumb and mixed a feeling?” she marks the absence of accurate language with which to expose multiple complicities with abuse. The space afforded by her writing practice enables this gesture toward the lacunae she notes in social discourses. Healing centers make similar symbolic interventions, emphasizing gaps in awareness about the political functions of interpersonal violence and challenging the social order to account for its roles in reproducing it. So many of the young people who came to CASCA and the women who arrived at Tamara’s House felt that it was the existence of the agencies themselves and the spaces they afforded for contemplating renewed futures that helped them reconsider who they were and how the community valued them. We each have stories that indicate how far reaching the impact of holding such space was.

**Marie:** Within a month of opening in southern Ontario, youth from both Canadian coasts learned about CASCA through the grapevine, and inquired about spaces in our 15-bed facility.  
**Karen:** At Tamara’s House we received calls and visits from across Canada, the U.S. and from as far away as New Zealand. I heard frequently, “I wish we had a healing center like this where I come from.”  
**Marie:** Clearly, there was a deep need for such space. And yet, that need was always being challenged.  
**Karen:** Potential residents were, at times, moved to tears when I explained that Tamara’s House was funded by people and organizations locally and across Canada. At other times, there was condescension. From some in the community, I heard comments like, “What a waste of money, it doesn’t need to be that nice.” Yet, the response from the women was moving: “If it is important enough to people who don’t even know me, for us to have nice things, then maybe I am worth it.” In a world where most impacted children are abused by people they know and may well trust, here was a sign that despite the violence they had endured their own capacity for well-being was being entrusted back to them by strangers.  
**Marie:** With CASCA, the story is similar. Offers to provide pro-bono trades services and to donate furniture and artwork poured in. The spaces were beautifully appointed. Not only did residents receive the message that they were valued; in a world that needs better ways to name so “dumb and mixed” a feeling, holding healing space permitted members of the public to express caring concern for the well-being of residents.
In the cases we are familiar with, both those who needed the services and the affected communities wanted the organizations to remain, but they were closed, regardless. Our shared narrative is about public healing spaces that have vanished, and what that means in the lives, not only of people healing from child sexual abuse, but for all of our collective vulnerabilities to aggression and violence. Owning up to the absent presences of painful pasts can be tough for those abused, for abusers, and for those not directly involved but implicated (like the old ladies from Kensington and Belgravia who so admired the Duckworth brothers). Not owning up to the legacies of child sexual abuse diminishes everyone.

“Incest is best”

Just as reading Woolf was a pivotal influence in our respective careers, the more we talked about our analogous experiences, the more we found that our lives have been weaving a geographic and developmental dance across Canada, encountering various publics, some we feel a continuing need to challenge. For example, we both have stories from the Maritimes involving encounters with discursive power about sexual abuse in personal, interpersonal, and public spaces.

Marie: I will never forget an incident that occurred about a decade ago in a crowded coffee shop in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, where I was awaiting a shuttle bus to the Halifax airport. Just as I stepped out the door, I overheard a middle-aged man guffaw to his similarly beer-bellied buddies: “Incest is best!” Although I have since imagined myriad possible responses, at that moment I was dumbstruck. Apparently, so was everyone else in the room. As the passenger van whizzed past the snow-laden trees along that rural highway, I felt angry at that belligerent man for being so oblivious to the effects of his words on those around him and ashamed of myself because I couldn’t immediately summon a retort. In what crazy mixed-up universe is the sexual assault of children within one’s own or someone else’s family measurable on any scale of better or best? Although all colonialist countries have been raised on the foundations of economies that used child sexual abuse to mark the bodies of the most subalterned, how could the everyday site of a college-town café still condone this kind of verbal violence?

Karen: Marie’s story about middle-aged men back-slapping over the statement, “incest is best,” transports me to my thirteen-year-old self, standing on a street corner with a girlfriend in my hometown in New Brunswick, who stated laughingly, “incest is best.” I felt sick to my stomach then, not understanding what incest meant, but thinking that it wasn’t funny.

The Mount Cashel Boys’ School scandals emerging in Saint John’s, Newfoundland, in the late 1980s form a context for these memories. Do these seemingly discrete events occurring decades apart reflect a regional cultural moment, a discursive battle marking the pervasiveness of that history, or maybe obscuring it under a habitual phrase? Why did the man in the Tim Horton’s restaurant feel he could assert himself in such a hurtful way? What might anyone in the room who had experienced child sexual abuse be feeling? Was he, himself, hiding a painful history?

Such stories are emblematic of many others we could share, where abuses are enabled by the ways people speak about or deny them in public and in private. However, we want to emphasize how invaluable it was to meet and to have so many of our impressions
validated in talking through our parallel professional recollections. For each of us, the closure of the agencies we had served was a painful and isolating memory; when we left our respective agencies to pursue related advanced research, we trusted that they would continue to thrive. It was a kind of coming home to be in the company of another who understood the stakes, a sign of how important such healing spaces are. We imagine that something similar was going on for Woolf when she shared her autobiographical reflections with the Memoir Club, for empathic readers of her work, and for those who made use of the healing centers we have known.

**Agency closures**

**Marie:** I was caught off-guard when I received the call about CASCA’s closure, while living in New York. When I arrived at the public hearing, I learned that the board, which had evolved considerably since my time, had decided to close the organization because they “could not find” replacement board members. (Nobody had approached me as a founding board member to ask if I would serve.) Agency funding would be diverted, we were told, leaving those most affected and invested without recourse. The town-hall meeting had been called to inform the community of the decision to rationalize a shift toward general “homeless” spaces; presto, the particular model for gender-sensitive, youth-centered housing support was reduced to a referral call-in center.

**Karen:** Three years after stepping down as the Director of Tamara’s House, while residing in another province, I was attending a family funeral when I received a call from one of the staff, informing me that Tamara’s House was scheduled to close immediately. With no notice given to staff and no public consultation, there was a loud outcry in the community from service users, staff, other community-based services, and mental health professionals. Nevertheless, the agency was closed without delay.

**Marie:** That happened with CASCA too. One person who abides in my memory is a young woman who resided in one of the houses; she was trying to convince the people at the front of the town-hall that she and others involved in the project valued the work of the organization and wanted and needed it to continue. Like me, she had come to make a case for finding another way forward. Like me, she learned that the decision was made before the public meeting was held.

What has since become clear to us is that this appearance and disappearance of public service agencies is about more than predictable “flavor-of-the-month” electioneering. It is about how the processes of public remembering and forgetting influence the potentials of human lives and collectivities. Depoliticized, individuated, and sensationalized media representations only contribute to public issue fatigue in ways that are complicit with one story or perspective taking over others in hierarchical cultural models. We suspect public investments in healing centers wane in processes of complicity with other practices of domination.

It is in this frame of competing narratives that we would like to consider the politics that inform the emergence and closure of healing centers responding to child sexual abuse. Healing requires space that includes distance from, as well as proximity to others in an atmosphere of safety and recognition, fostering opportunities to become mindful of one’s embodied self in social relation. Closures imply a community’s way of saying “we” can no longer handle this knowledge. Absence of healing space promotes public and personal silences about the prevalence of child sexual abuse.
Karen: It cost me my gall bladder. I was hired to open a residential service for adult women who were sexually abused in childhood, also funded to empower healing among women who had been impacted by the colonial Residential School legacy. There were no models or best practices to draw from because no agency quite like it existed. The excitement was dramatic, the rewards of the work were many, and the stress was outrageous. A few years into the position, I was hospitalized for gall bladder surgery, as if that was the price to be paid for the privilege of doing such important work. This occurred around the time that I responded to a call from a man who challenged the statistics on child sexual abuse, arguing that results from studies by well-respected male researchers had been fabricated by women to make men look bad. The gall of that man!

Marie: My gall bladder went too, and in similar circumstances. A friend who knew all about my involvement as a founding board member of CASCA said it was a metaphor for "getting the gall out." Part of what was galling for us both, as seen with the loud man in the Tim Horton's and the one on the phone to Tamara's House, had to do with the kinds of disrespectful judgments people make regarding those who have experienced child sexual abuse and their allies. When does it become possible for a person who has endured child sexual abuse or for their supporters to speak? How do we respect that, as Woolf's non-fiction writing shows, stories change over time as new evidence or life experience sheds new light? What do we do in the face of multiple and conflicting narratives about abuse, some of which ground professional status?

Professional complicities

Karen: Consider this example. A mental health colleague touring the busy drop-in center at Tamara’s House remarks: “There are a lot of damaged women in there.” Her disturbing language illustrates one of several narratives that co-existed with the two agencies. Like Woolf, many of the people who made use of the services had mental health diagnoses. However, the practice in both centers was to encounter each person as someone with strengths and resiliencies. Both organizations recognized that individual diagnoses reflect broader social conditions more difficult to pinpoint.

Marie: One of the ironies of CASCA’s history was that the downtown house that served as its headquarters was located across the street from a church where the choirmaster was eventually charged with molesting members of the youth chorus. Of course, we did not know when we selected that site, that there was an abuser in OUR neighborhood. When I think about typical “not-in-my-backyard” responses to group housing for people abused as children, I remember the case of that choirmaster. The price of not wanting to know is great. The presence of a healing agency means that, even if silencing steals our tongues for a moment, or causes someone to speak in terms that it would be more respectful to avoid, the counter message remains materialized in the form of the center itself. The circulation of so many storied silences bumps up against the walls of the healing center, and the personally experienced becomes publically and politically knowable.

Karen: This public issue is always in some way personal. I attended the sentencing for a young woman’s father, who had been found guilty of sexually abusing her as a child, along with her sister and another child in the community. When I saw her father, I recognized him as the man...
who had been my next-door neighbor for the previous eight years. My daughter was the age of the children he abused the entire time we were neighbors.

The women who came to Tamara’s House indicated that the act of going in to the agency was both dangerous and liberating. While others might tell different stories in connection to the closures we recall, ours reflect what happens when individuals are called upon to hold ground against stigma and misinterpretation, isolated from caring community connections. Publicly funded healing centers make possible a room of one’s own in a community of people who have some knowledge about the impacts of child sexual abuse, and represent socially visible commitments to shared well-being.

Discussion

We question whether the existence of CASCA and Tamara’s House became problematic and to whom. The agencies rendered visible some of the most invisible forms of violation in childhood. Was there something about the culture of those organizations that posed a threat? Both were operated on a collaborative model of expertise sharing; those who had been sexually abused were positioned as in charge of their healing. Each of the centers held space for more than one embodied narrative – CASCA made space for gender differences, Tamara’s house for both Indigenous and settler women who had been sexually abused as children. This vital, if rudimentary recognition that child sexual abuse lands differently in differently positioned lives was, for us, part of the healing capacity supported by the spaces, demonstrating that more than one narrative could be accommodated, more than one pathway to healing envisioned.

While both of the agencies served a limited number of individuals, the publics they engaged and the knowledge they developed supported the pursuit of moments of being, both for those using the spaces and for those with whom they lived in relation, including professionals and anonymous members of the public. As our own stories of silencing show, complicities are unavoidable, even for allies. When faced with a dominating narrative, not everyone has a snappy comeback, or the support that would enable them to make their challenge stick. That takes collective political will. We have no doubt that if such a project were undertaken today, the diverse communities represented and the evolving processes by which child sexual abuse is mobilized would render the provision of services even more complex.

Conclusion

The years since Woolf’s work was first published have brought both compassion and controversy in response to child sexual abuse and its interpretations. Given that intentional and systematic delivery of hurt persists, Woolf maintains that having the power to explain the dynamics at play became a catalyst for her creative career. In A Room of One’s Own, she suggests that it becomes possible to rise above aggression, rage, and bitterness when one has a safe and peaceful place in which to become generous and generative. One can safely tell stories of narrative congruence and divergence in supportive community, while addressing the mechanics that produce double-cross reversals. In step with Woolf, we would suggest that where sexual abuse has diminished the creative actualization of any
person or group, to work for mutual healing at the levels of the personal and the social remains a worthy public goal.

Works Cited


The Years is a book about patterns of repetition in human lives and in the natural world in which artificial and metaphorical flowers as well as their living exemplars act as vivid elements in an intricate fugue of reiterated motifs. Predominately a city novel, The Years is also one of Woolf’s most floral fictions, with twenty-four varieties of flower named, almost as many as Orlando (25) and Jacob’s Room (35), and more actual flowers mentioned (91) than any book except Mrs. Dalloway (102). Perhaps because of the urban setting, the possibilities of the pastoral seem to recede rather precipitously in The Years; gardens appear only infrequently, continuing to serve as places of refuge and sites for romantic meetings, but often pushed to a remote periphery or existing only in a dimly remembered past. Flowers in The Years function on many familiar levels: as elements of the natural cycle of seasons whose rhythm shapes the novel, as emblems of girlhood, as reminders of and connections to traditions of the past, and as markers of temporal transitions. More than in any previous novel, however, a large proportion of flowers are artificial, metaphorical, or literary artifacts in poetry or song, their unnaturalness making it easier to create unexpected thematic alignments. Those actual, living flowers that do remain are often dislocated or decapitated, suggesting that the traditional story of female development is being radically de-naturalized.

Sunflowers are mentioned only three times in The Years, yet these references to the terracotta plaques stamped on the doors of Eleanor’s low-income houses serve symbolically to stitch together several major themes of the novel, the contradictory symbolic implications of the sunflower as both an emblem of the Goddess and as a type of excessively devoted loyalty serving to delineate alternative female roles, while a particularly fascinating visual analogy of the sunflower with the figure of a rayed dot drawn by Eleanor provides new insight into the centripetal structure of the novel as a whole.

Sunflowers first appear in the autumnal 1891 section of The Years, when Eleanor visits her low-income houses in Peter St. Her particular houses are distinguished from the others by their green sills and the terra-cotta “plaque[s] with a sunflower stamped…over the door” (91). Eleanor herself offers the beginning of an interpretation for the significance of the sunflowers: “That symbol of her girlish sentiment amused her grimly. She had meant it to signify flowers, fields in the heart of London” (TY95). But the plaque is cracked, seeming to suggest the fragility of her utopian dream of uniting urban and rural. The sardonic quality of Eleanor’s reference to her “girlish sentiments” suggests a certain historic gap, and indeed, sunflowers were typical emblems of the Aesthetic Movement and of Woolf’s mother’s generation. They were especially associated with Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetes—for instance, the program for Gilbert and Sullivan’s 1881 satire of the aesthetic Movement, Patience, is decorated with sunflowers. Closer to home, Woolf’s aunt, Julia Margaret Cameron, composed a mythological photographic portrait entitled “Sunflower.”

Some context for Woolf’s personal attitude towards sunflowers can be gleaned from references to them in her diary and letters. Aside from passing comments on the condition
of the sunflowers at Asham (D1 53; L2 193) and an episode at Monk’s House where a severe rash on Leonard’s arm was diagnosed as having been caused by planting sunflowers (D1 301), Woolf mostly uses the sunflower (in concert with bees) to designate particularly absorbing moments of delight. In April 1918, Roger Fry, intoxicated over Cezanne’s painting of six apples, “was like a bee on a sunflower” (L2 230). Seven years later she characterizes the happiness of Vanessa and Duncan painting on a hot September day in similar terms: “I never saw two people humming with heat and happiness like sunflowers on a hot day more than those two” (L3 209). And in September 1932 she described her own reaction to “the old habitual beauty of England” remarking, “I can fasten on a beautiful day, as a bee fixes itself on a sunflower” (D4 124).

Another reference to sunflowers, in her 1930 essay, “On Being Ill,” suggests the sunflower’s additional status as a symbol of independence and autonomy: musing on flowers, “these, the stillest, the most self-sufficient of all things,” Woolf contrasts the “heavy sunflower, who proudly acknowledges the sun at midday” with all the other floppy blooms which “incline their heads to the breeze” (E5 199). This image of the proud sunflower is echoed in a diminished key in a 1940 reminiscence of noted feminist Ray Strachey: “something tart about her; & as if some of the petals of what she hoped, as a girl, to be so yellow a sunflower…as if these petals had withered & she cd. no longer be confident; was indeed disappointed, a little wounded, embittered” (D5 304).

The terracotta sunflowers in The Years link Eleanor to a complex of mythological and literary allusions, which adds another, more psychological layer of meaning to these associations of the sunflower with old-fashioned utopias, painterly delight, and the heavy burden of upright autonomy. Jane Marcus makes a strong case that Eleanor has a number of associations with the sun that mark her as a figure of the Goddess: her name is a version of Helen, from “Helios, the sun,” and she is repeatedly associated with red and gold imagery (“Gotterdammerung” 40, 36, 49). Marcus also notes that the name Abercorn Terrace (abier, meaning dead but unburied + corn) further suggests Eleanor’s connection with Demeter and cyclical rituals of death and rebirth (40). Demeter’s descent into Hades to rescue her daughter is hinted at in The Years when, concerned with Rose’s reaction to the menace of the exhibitionist, Eleanor feels that she “must descend, must carry her burden” and imagines herself carrying an “earthenware pitcher on her head” (TY 41)—the earthenware pitcher foreshadowing the sigil of the terracotta sunflower plaque which appears later (Marcus, “Pargiters” 91, 95).

Other mythological associations, however, adumbrate the Goddess references and show a more negative side to the sunflower. Ovid explains the metamorphosis of the nymph Clytie, who so adored Apollo, the sun god, that when he cast her aside in favor of Leukothoe, a Persian Princess, she made sure that Leukothe’s father learned of the illicit affair, inciting him to kill his wayward daughter; after the death of his beloved, Apollo was so angry that he refused to have anything to do with Clytie, who turned into a sunflower, ever-following her lover’s progress across the sky. Clytie was a popular subject for turn-of-the-century artists, including Lord Leighton and G.F. Watts, whose first full-size public statue was a bust of Clytie.4 The story of Clytie coupled with its heliotropic growing habit caused the sunflower to be a signifier of constancy and devotion in the Victorian language of flowers.5 A long line of poets have dramatized the flower’s loyal habit from Blake to Shelley (in “Scenes from the Magico Prodigioso from the Spanish of Calderon”) and Robert
Browning (“Rudel To The Lady of Tripoli” in *Men and Women* [1842]) (Ward 348-9). The darker side of such self-abnegation is perhaps best expressed by the Victorian poet Dora Greenwell, a champion of education for young girls and female suffrage much admired by Christina Rossetti. Greenwell’s 1848 poem presents the flower’s daily movement as a metaphor for both sexual desire and slavery:

Till the slow daylight pale,
A willing slave,
fast bound to one above,
I wait; he seems to speed, and change, and fail;

I know he will not move. I lift my golden orb
To his, unsmitten when the roses die,
And in my broad and burning disk absorb
the splendours of his eye.
His eye is like a clear
keen flame that searches through me: I must droop
upon my stalk, I cannot reach his sphere;
To mine he cannot stoop. (Qtd. by Ward 350-1)

Demeter and Clytie seem to suggest the spectrum of options that women in *The Years* have in their relations to the Heliotic men in the novel: the Clyties—Milly, Delia, and Kitty—orient their lives to follow the desires of their men; the Demeters—Rose and Sara, and eventually Eleanor—win through to some kind of autonomy.7 Perhaps Eleanor’s sunflower is cracked because she is eventually able to break the mold of her family servitude.

Another more pictorial than archetypal manifestation of the sunflower imagery in the novel is the curious figure of a rayed blot repeatedly drawn by Eleanor. A kind of dark complement to the sun, Eleanor’s graphic marks appear in first section as the dots she makes on the paper while adding up the family accounts (TY 20)—shades of Vanessa’s weekly torture session with Leslie Stephen—but eventually the marks expand as she becomes progressively more able to express her anger. The first actual blot we see in the novel is a counter-example associated with Kitty Malone. It is a symbol of her inability to enter her father’s scholarly world in Oxford, for when she accidentally spreads ink “over five generations of Oxford men, obliterating hours of her Father’s exquisite penmanship,” he ironically remarks to her “Nature did not intend you to be a scholar” as he blots up her error (76). Earlier, he had used the same blotting paper as a medium for pressing flowers (71), recalling Peter Walsh’s comment in *Mrs. Dalloway* about the shifting of the “whole pyramidal accumulation” of society’s hierarchies which in his youth had pressed down upon women “like those flowers Clarissa’s Aunt Helena used to press between sheets of grey blotting-paper” (MD 158).

Unlike Kitty, whose spills are wiped up and who is pressed down / repressed and not allowed to spread her wings or petals, Eleanor’s blots are expressive, like the angry doodies in Chapter 2 of *A Room of One’s Own* that spread into cartwheels and circles (AROO 32). The first blot Eleanor sketches is in 1891, the same chapter where the terracotta sunflowers appear. Sitting at her writing table, once again doing the family accounts, she
contemplates the “solid object” of her brother Martin’s bristling walrus pen wiper and draws “on her blotting paper...a dot with strokes raying out round it” (TY 86). Susan Dick describes this mark as “an image not only of the self at the center of the world, but also...an image of the sun whose cycles mark...the complex process of our life in time” (73). Pointing out that this figure is very like the doodle drawn by Ralph Denham in Night and Day, “blots fringed with flames,” which is meant to resemble Katherine’s head and to “to represent—perhaps the entire universe” (ND 487), Hermione Lee further interprets the blot as “suggesting Eleanor’s intuition of a possible alternative to the Victorian world” (190).

The reappearance of Eleanor’s rayed dot at a suffrage meeting in the 1910 section more fully articulates the doodle’s position as a sign of rebellion against the status quo. Bored with hearing the same arguments repeated by the same set of players, Eleanor begins “blackening the strokes on her blotting paper” and “digging a little hole” in it as if trying to burrow her way out of the tedium (TY 167). Continuing to muse upon the visual parallels between sunflowers and ink blots (Ray Strachey certainly sat through many a tedious suffrage meeting) and wondering how early in the writing process sunflowers and blots began to appear and coalesce, I turned back to Leaska’s edition of The Pargiters and discovered an inspiring confirmation that my intuitive linkage of the figures made sense. The colophon doodles heading up the successive sections of The Pargiters are a series of extended blots and doodles which chart a course parallel to Eleanor’s ink spots in the novel, evolving from a simple asterisk formed of three intersecting lines heading the Second Essay (TP 28) into more complex figures, eventually resembling a tousled dandelion (or “clock”), until the final, Sixth Chapter, which is presided over by a clearly drawn six-petalled flower (TP 150). (See Fig 1: Colophon blots)

The centripetal form of these illustrations suggests yet another analogy: in many ways they can be seen as an illustration of the structure of the novel, similar to the drawing of the two rooms united by a hallway Woolf sketched in describing the structure of To the Lighthouse—a surmise further supported by her January 1933 diary entry characterizing The Years as “a series of great balloons, linked by straight narrow passages of narrative” (D4 142). Although Joanna Lipking says that “The Years is a book full of symmetries that is at war with shape” (142), one of the shapes that she does discern in the novel is the central position of the city in the text. London is quite literally the midpoint of The Years. The introductory meteorological observations tend to converge—like the rays of Eleanor’s drawing or the petals of a flower—on the city center. In 1880, the country farmers apprehensive of a storm give way to Londoners opening their umbrellas. In 1891, the autumn wind blows over England before gusting in London; blowing out across France to the Mediterranean, it chills in the North, moves south to Devonshire, and then from the “spires and domes of the university cities” it returns to the Law Courts and Kensington Gardens (TY 85). In 1907, the country roads lead to London; in 1908 the March wind scours the National Gallery, Bond Street and the Army Navy
Stores (138). The spring of 1901 begins in the country and spreads to London’s Parks (152). In 1913, the winter snow, first falling all over England, drifts down to coat London’s “monuments, palaces, and statues with a thick vestment of snow” (203). The twilight of Present Day seems suspended, but the narrative moves from country fields to the red brick villas of the suburbs, to flowers in cottage gardens, to the faces of people on the pavement. The only exceptions to this centripetal (center-petal) motion occurs in 1911 where the opening weather report follows the sun from France to Parliament Square and into the great railway stations but ends with the trains heading out to the country, imitating Eleanor’s departure for her annual summer visit to her sister in the country.10

Looking for pictures to illustrate the PowerPoint that accompanied the oral version of this paper, I came across one last confirmatory image that pulls together the sunflowers with rayed dots and the geographic centrality of London to The Years. Some of you may remember that I have suggested that the various walks in Mrs. Dalloway, when mapped out and superimposed on top of each other suggest the image of a flower in a vase, resting on the river. (See Fig 2: Dalloway Walks)

Imagine my delight when I discovered that the very first map of the postal districts of London was drawn in a shape clearly resembling that of a flower, cracked by the course of
the River Thames. (See Fig 3: Flower Map). While this map was originally published in 1857,\textsuperscript{11} twenty-five years before Virginia Stephen’s birth, the image is so striking only one glimpse of it would be enough to forever stamp the sigil of London as a flower into any impressionable mind. The exact center of this flower is St. Paul’s, the spot Lipking identifies as the literal center of the novel.\textsuperscript{12}

![Fig. 3](image)

The sunflower and the blot appear linked one more time in the novel, in the Present Day section. In a moment of introspection at Delia’s party, Eleanor thinks back on “the long strip of life” that lies behind her and, remembering the “sunflower with a crack in it,” wonders if “there’s ‘I’ at the middle of it…a knot; a centre; and again she [sees] herself sitting at her table drawing on the blotting paper, digging little holes from which the spokes radiated” (TY348). This last reiteration confirms the alignment of blot and sunflower and their defining centratlity as images not only of Eleanor’s identity but also the novel’s search for some pattern of stability to suture the years together.
Notes

1. Grace Radin notes what she calls “the reverberative structure” of the novel (xxii). Radin also notes that “almost all of the repetitions were not present in the original draft” (xxii). Although I do not have time to demonstrate it in this paper, many of the repetitive uses of flower motifs were also added later.

2. A number of studies of spatial relations in The Years have emphasized the novel’s deconstruction of spatial oppositions such as indoors/outdoors and public/private. (For a nice review of these perspectives see Angel Jimenez’s thesis, available through the Scholar Commons.) But there has been little study of the interaction between country and city. The fact that Eleanor visits her houses on her “Grove” days further emphasizes this connection.

3. The National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C lists the date for this photograph as 1866-70. The image can be viewed at: http://www.nga.gov/press/exh/2874/index.shtml

4. G.F. Watts was, of course, closely associated with Woolf’s mother’s generation. A friend of Julia Margaret Cameron, he painted a famous portrait of Leslie Stephen and is the object of caricature in Virginia Woolf’s comic play, Freshwater. For a picture of the bust of Clytie and a discussion of its symbolism, see: http://www.victorianweb.org/sculpture/watts/moore.html

5. Kate Greenaway defines the meaning of the dwarf sunflower as “Adoration” while the tall variety is associated with “Haughtiness”—a characteristic doubly reading (39).

6. A similar interpretation is also offered by J.J. Grandville’s 1847 illustration to The Court of Flora, a popular book on flower symbolism, which figures the sunflower as an African slave kneeling in supplication.

7. In this scheme, Maggie is a kind of balance point in a happy egalitarian marriage. See Squier, p. 140.

8. The bristling walrus is only one of a number of casual references to rayed objects in the novel. At Abercorn Terrace, on the same page where the “walrus with a brush in its back” first appears, the knives and forks are described as “rayed out round the table” (TY 33). And much later Maggie sews a party dress of green silk “with blue rays on it” (TY 161).

9. Radin also notes that “the passages describing the weather and setting the scene that begin each chapter… were not added to the novel until the final months before publication” (xxii).

10. Aligned to the centripetal motion of the weather reports is the centrifugal image of a wheel or fan of raying light. The novel opens by describing the cyclical passage of the years as “wheeling like the rays of a searchlight” (TY 4). The same image is picked up twice more in 1917 where the introductory section moves from the darkness of rural ponds to the city where “a searchlight rayed round the sky” (264), and Eleanor’s pleasure at Maggie’s happy marriage is echoed by “a broad fan of light, like the sail of a windmill” sweeping across the night sky (284).


12. Lipking notes that the physical center of the book is in the 1914 section, the scene at St. Paul’s the center of London when Martin meets Sara and takes her to chophouse.

Works Cited


“ONE MUST BE SCIENTIFIC”: NATURAL HISTORY AND ECOLOGY IN MRS. DALLOWAY

by Sarah Dunlap

Mrs. Dalloway models an ecological understanding of human life and the non-human world, thus offering a corrective to harmful and outmoded scientific perspectives. The kind of science Woolf critiques is represented not only by the cold and imperialistic attitudes of Drs. Holmes and Bradshaw, but also by the attitudes of a Victorian botanist: Miss Helena Parry, Clarissa Dalloway’s aunt. Troubling, damaging, inadequate approaches to understanding the natural world correspond with similar failures to understand, appreciate, or connect with the human world in a positive way. Opposing and surpassing these constrained and destructive versions of science are visionary understandings of human interconnection with the organic world, which are experienced primarily by Septimus Smith, and to a lesser degree by Clarissa Dalloway, and which point to the radical possibilities of scientific inquiry.

“She would paint, she would write,” Clarissa thinks of young Sally Seton, but the painter and writer in the novel is Miss Parry, with her watercolors and her little book. Miss Parry is a complex though virtually unstudied figure,\(^1\) a lover of the natural world who nevertheless exploits it, uprooting rare orchids and flattening them between pages. In Burma, she participates in Britain’s imperialist abuse of colonized landscapes and people; at home, she is both a victim and an enforcer of her society’s suppression of female agency. At Bourton, Clarissa remembers, her aunt “never liked discussion of anything” (32), while Sally challenged conventions at every turn. “Sally went out, picked hollyhocks, dahlias—all sorts of flowers that had never been seen together—cut their heads off, and made them swim on the top of water in bowls;” Aunt Helena “thought it wicked to treat flowers like that” (33). This seemingly hypocritical judgment from an uprooter of orchids is understandable if we infer that Miss Parry’s botanical pursuits adhere to her society’s rules of feminine behavior. Collecting botanical specimens is quite a different thing from decorating the dining table. It is unclear whether it is a greater sin against convention for Sally to behead the flowers or to have them associate with other species with whom they “had never been seen” before.\(^2\)

Botany was one of the few scientific pursuits considered appropriate for educated young ladies when Helena Parry was a girl in the mid-nineteenth century, and was seen as “a science particularly suited to the feminine and recommended as an activity that was morally improving” (King 16). From an ecological perspective, however, Miss Parry’s actions are much more destructive than Sally’s; she displaces and destroys entire plants, while Sally only removes the ephemeral blossoms, leaving roots and stems intact. A hollyhock with its head cut off continues to grow. Miss Parry is confined by a culture and a world view that values appearance over healthy growth; watercolors and pressed flowers are more prized and praised than orchids growing wild in the mountains, and it is more important for young ladies to be well-behaved than happy. This focus on appearance is entirely in keeping with the ocularcentric taxonomy that dominated the practice of natural history during the Victorian era.
Recall Woolf’s words in “A Sketch of the Past”: “Society in those days was a very competent machine. It was convinced that girls must be changed into married women. It had no doubts, no mercy; no understanding of any other wish; of any other gift” (135). Helena Parry evades marriage, but does not become either the artist or the scientist that perhaps she could have been if born some decades later. Instead, she becomes a prudish maiden aunt enforcing, in her old age, the same restrictive rules of Victorian social behavior that shaped her girlhood. Peter Walsh thinks of the Victorian world of his youth as a “whole pyramidal accumulation,” an “immovable” force which had pressed on his generation and “weighed them down, the women especially, like those flowers Clarissa’s Aunt Helena used to press between sheets of grey blotting-paper” (158). Her approaches to science and society are equally oppressive; she categorizes and immobilizes women and plants alike. And of course the women in *Mrs. Dalloway* are frequently represented as flowers—Clarissa is described as a lily, Elizabeth a hyacinth, and so on—while the actual flowers that appear throughout the book are almost all decorative, domesticated, and commodified.

While, as Christina Alt notes, Miss Parry’s “attendance at Clarissa’s party suggests the survival of Victorian influences into the present” (84), her near-immobility and partial blindness suggest that that influence is on the wane. She appears at the party as colorless and desiccated as an ancient pressed flower. Her reminiscences of Burma in the sixties and seventies, and her eagerness to talk about her “little book,” published over fifty years before, give an impression of her pathetic irrelevance in the modern age. “She could not resist recalling what Charles Darwin had said about her little book on the orchids of Burma... No doubt it was forgotten now, her book on the orchids of Burma, but it went into three editions before 1870, she told Peter” (175). Darwin’s own 1877 book on orchids was tremendously influential, providing detailed evidence for the theory of natural selection posed in *The Origin of Species* and laying the groundwork for the study of coevolution (Ghiselin xi). The publication of Miss Parry’s book in the 1860s preceeds it, and we can surmise that hers was most likely a thoroughly conventional Victorian treatment of a subject popular among botanists. Darwin’s groundbreaking exploration of the same subject would have hastened the irrelevance of prior publications like Miss Parry’s.

Indeed, prior to seeing her at the party, Peter has assumed that Miss Parry is already dead. Remembering hearing from Clarissa that her aunt had lost an eye, he thinks, “It seemed so fitting—one of nature’s masterpieces—that old Miss Parry should turn to glass. She would die like some bird in a frost gripping her perch” and stand on the horizon as a marker of a past age (158). The comparison figures Miss Parry as an artifact of an earlier era, preserved like a taxidermy parrot or a pressed orchid—a specimen of a now-outmoded taxonomic practice. It is ironic that this vision of the botanist as a petrified object on display, isolated and distanced from her world, is referred to as “one of nature’s masterpieces.” Too, the reference to Miss Parry’s unseeing eye and the image of her as a marker on the horizon—that is, a visual reference—reflect the ocularcentric perspective from which she and her contemporaries viewed the botanical world, and their resulting lack of perspective.

Miss Parry’s irrelevance as it exemplifies Victorianism is exaggerated in comparison to her model. She appears to be loosely based on Marianne North, a Victorian naturalist and botanical artist who like Miss Parry travelled around the world, was acquainted with
Darwin, and never married, and with whom Woolf was familiar (Haller 174). North did not conform to the conventions of botanical illustration; notably, she painted individual plants in context, rooted, among others, in their natural habitats, instead of the standard “disembodied, single specimen” alone on a white page (Sheffield 113-114). In depicting the natural world as an interconnected whole, she encouraged botanists, hobbyists, and visitors to the North Gallery in Kew Gardens to see nature and human interactions with the nonhuman world in a new way (118-119). She was also very aware of the environmental devastation wrought by the imperial project, and in her journals she commented with anger and frustration on European destruction of old-growth forests and sport hunting of native wildlife in the colonies (Sheffield 130, 132). Unlike Clarissa’s aunt, she remained active in the social and scientific world in old age, apparently a considerably more admirable and influential figure than sad old Miss Parry.

More like Marianne North in spirit, if not in detail, is Septimus Smith, whose view of science and the natural world is dramatically unlike the one represented by Helena Parry. In his first scene, Septimus makes “[a] marvellous discovery indeed—that the human voice in certain atmospheric conditions (for one must be scientific, above all scientific) can quicken trees into life!” (22). This is the first of many parenthetical invocations of science on his part; they appear almost as a refrain in Septimus’ thoughts. However, his perspective appears notably unscientific, at least as science is usually defined.

In the same scene, Septimus experiences a sense of union with the surrounding nonhuman world of Regent’s Park that anticipates Woolf’s later use of a similarly ecological interconnection between characters and world in The Waves. He thinks that “leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches” (22). That plants are alive is, of course, not news from a biological perspective, but it’s apparent that Septimus is not thinking as a botanist. Instead, he is focusing on the connection between the trees and himself: in the midst of his despair, profoundly alienated from his community and his wife, the connection he feels with the trees helps to ground him and affirm that like them, he too is alive. Disconnected from people, he is able to feel a sense of belonging only in nonhuman nature. His emotional response to the trees is far greater than his engagement with Rezia in the same scene. He moves as the leaves and sparrows move, inextricably linked to them by millions of invisible fibres. For Septimus, the social context he has lost is replaced, if only temporarily, with a sense of ecological context, an embeddedness in his environment which seems to offer hope of recovery. He shares with Clarissa an implicitly ecological vision of human integration with the nonhuman world, and they express it using similar images: Septimus is connected by millions of fibres to the leaves of the trees, Clarissa is spread like a mist between the people and places she has known.

So what do we make of “one must be scientific”? Amy Smith has suggested that the “commitment to the scientific approach” reflected in these parenthetical thoughts is a sign that Septimus has internalized the rationalist discourse of modernity too successfully, becoming impersonal and mechanistic, losing his essential humanity along with his ability to feel. A scientific perspective means a “modern situation of alienation from nature,” fundamentally at odds with the “liberating irrationality” that characterizes Septimus’s Dionys-
sian union with the natural and nonhuman (Smith 17). His is a “madness of reason, and of modernity’s order,” an unresolvable conflict between a need for scientific epistemology and elements of human experience that cannot be reconciled within such a framework (18). Somewhat similarly, Sally Hudock sees Septimus as “torn between his requirement of a scientific explanation for his awareness of beauty and his unmediated enjoyment of it” (245). She reads his parenthetical thoughts of scientific perspective as reflective of “his socialization as a rational Western male” and at odds with his perceptions of trees, birds, and himself as somehow united with them.

It’s true that these thoughts, occurring as they do within parentheses, can easily be read as intrusive, and that an insistence on scientific perspective seems more characteristic of Holmes or Bradshaw than of their victim. However, I want to suggest a different reading. I see these parenthetical interventions as a defense against the doctors’ controlling, imperialistic version of science, a defense of the idea of science itself as more than they imagine it to be. Instead, Septimus has a vision of science that is not necessarily always and only rational, a science that embraces the idea that nature stretches beyond the limits not only of human perception but even of human conception. His parenthetical thoughts are a rejection of the idea that science and revelation are irreconcilable. Rather than a condemnation of science altogether, Septimus’s radical insights suggest hope for a brighter future and a better science. He looks at the world around him—his object of study—with far greater attentiveness than the doctors apply to theirs—himself. His is a scientific pursuit open to extreme possibilities.

Septimus’s perspective poses a challenge to Miss Parry’s ocularcentric science by repeatedly claiming the visible as invisible and vice versa. Looking at the trees, he sees not only leaves and branches but beauty and truth, intangible and subjective things outside the realm of science. He sees music, he sees through bodies, he sees the ghost of his dead officer, he sees a dog becoming a man; both the things he sees and his interpretations of them are unexplainable by the rational science of the time. However, the (im)possibilities opened up by advances in science, such as x-rays, suggest that science may reach farther than previously thought. Septimus is a visionary, looking towards a future in which men can communicate with trees and there is no crime, only love.

Michael Whitworth has noted that Septimus’s perception that “the flesh was melted off the world” (66) seems to reflect the new technology of the x-ray, which made it possible to see through bodies and which Virginia Stephen had seen demonstrated in 1897 (154, 151). Too, Septimus’s invocation of evolution suggests a familiarity with current science, an understanding of the ways in which long-held beliefs about the world had been and would continue to be shaken by scientific discovery and insight. Dogs becoming men, while not an accurate representation of evolutionary science, is certainly an intelligible image within that discourse, and Septimus’s horrified reaction is not dissimilar to the shock expressed by people then and now in response to the idea that human beings are not, after all, fundamentally different from and superior to nonhuman animals. It fits, too, with his later reflection that “human beings have neither kindness, nor faith, nor charity beyond what serves to increase the pleasure of the moment. They hunt in packs. Their packs scour the desert and vanish screaming into the wilderness. They desert the fallen” (87). Imagining human beings as predatory animals without compassion or altruism, Septimus’s thoughts reflect a modern anxiety about the nature of the human animal that
was widespread following the revelations of Darwinian evolutionary theory (Rohman 2). His delusions reflect both the fear and the hope of modern science’s possibilities.

Ultimately, Septimus’ approach to the world is radically scientific: based on careful observation, carefully recorded evidence, and an earnest desire to see the world as it really is, it is also characteristic of Woolf herself, who describes the characters she draws, the places she describes, her own experiences and memories, with the precision of a naturalist, observing not to control or colonize or categorize, but to see beneath the surface, to understand. This is a perspective far different from that of Miss Parry. Septimus’ visions, like Elizabeth Dalloway’s dreams of becoming a farmer or doctor, suggest the possibility of a more egalitarian science and more positive relationships between humans and nonhuman nature in the world to come.

Notes

1. Miss Parry has received some scholarly attention recently, most notably in Bonnie Kime Scott’s new book In the Hollow of the Wave: Virginia Woolf and Modernist Uses of Nature (2012).
2. While most hollyhocks are of Asian origin, they have grown in England since the 1500s and become naturalized. Dahlias are a more recent exotic import native to Mexico, first introduced to Europe in the 1790s (Sorenson 122).
3. Christina Alt notes in her recent book that “This description of self suggests a radical interrogation of the boundaries of identity and a sense of self as made up in part of one’s interrelationships and environment, an ecological rather than a taxonomic conception of self” (182).

Works Cited

CLARISSA’S GLACIAL SKEPTICISM:
JOHN TYNDALL AND “DEEP TIME” IN MRS. DALLOWAY

by Catherine W. Hollis

When Peter Walsh leaves Regent’s Park, anguished anew about Clarissa’s rejection so many years in the past, his thought—“Clarissa was as cold as an icicle”—is met almost immediately with the apparition of an old woman (80). Whether we hear the beggar woman’s song in Mrs. Dalloway as the voice of the economically dispossessed or, more romantically, see her as a prehistoric goddess figure, there is no doubt that she, or rather her voice, is associated metaphorically with water and earth, an “ancient spring” and chthonic song bubbling up from “a mere hole in the Earth” (81). Like a melting glacier, the old woman’s voice transforms Clarissa’s icicle coldness, abruptly shifting the temporal scheme of “The Hours” from the human and the immediate—this day in London, these human lives—to the geologic and the vast, where “millions of years” have passed since she walked with her lover in “some primeval May” (82). As Gillian Beer, Bonnie Scott, and others have noted, this sudden telescoping from the historic to the prehistoric is Victorian in its intense preoccupation with the Earth before humanity and characteristic of Woolf’s interest in the science of Darwin. As much as evolutionary theory, however, nineteenth-century advancements in glaciology and geology also radically shook the Victorians’ sense of the age of the Earth and humans’ place on it. The Victorians, in Robert MacFarlane’s terms, “had to come to terms with the concept that humanity lived in an epoch bracketed by ages of ice” (121). In Mrs. Dalloway, the old woman’s song gestures towards this icy pre- and post-history of humans on the planet, both the “hoar and silver frost” on the flowers of that ancient May day and the unknown future, “when the pageant of the universe would be over” and the Earth “become a mere cinder of ice.” As fluid, damp, and primordial as the old woman’s Earth song may seem, it is bounded at its far reaches by ice.

If “to walk…a glacier is to walk backwards in time” (MacFarlane 132), then Peter’s sudden vision of the Earth’s origins fractures Mrs. Dalloway’s time signatures into the human and the geologic. As the Earth bears the traces of a primeval ice age, so too do the human actors in this novel bear the lingering traces of emotional trauma. Throughout the novel, Peter, Clarissa, and Septimus are haunted by their pasts, their memories recycling the traumatic emotions associated with loss of love and sudden violent death, in the case of both Septimus’s friend Evans and Clarissa’s sister Sylvia. These traumas, as the psychological metaphor would have it, have become sealed over, inert or frozen; like being trapped in a glacial crevasse.1 We can decode Woolf’s use of water and ice as a signifier for psychic trauma by turning to the science of glaciology as it relates to Clarissa’s “skepticism.”

While the old woman’s song in Mrs. Dalloway points the way towards Woolf’s developing interest in telling “the story of the world from the beginning”—an approach to narrative given its fullest expression in “the pageant of history” performed in Between the Acts—it is yet another testament to Woolf’s inheritance of the Victorian sciences, not only the more familiar Darwinian life sciences, but also the Earth sciences of geology and gla-
When, a few pages before the apparition of the old woman, Peter Walsh considers Clarissa’s “skepticism” and her “atheist’s religion of doing good for the sake of goodness,” he grounds this philosophy in her reading of the scientists “Huxley and Tyndall”:

She was one of the most thorough-going sceptics he had ever met, and possibly [...] she said to herself, As we are a doomed race, chained to a sinking ship (her favourite reading as a girl was Huxley and Tyndall, and they were fond of these nautical metaphors), as the whole thing is a bad joke, let us, at any rate, do our part; mitigate the sufferings of our fellow-prisoners (Huxley again); decorate the dungeon with flowers and air-cushions; be as decent as we possibly can. (77)

Both Clarissa (and a young Virginia Stephen) would have been familiar with the biologist Thomas Huxley and the physicist John Tyndall as Victorian proponents of secularism, supporters of Darwin, and members of the influential X Club, a social club organized around a “devotion to science, pure and free, untrammeled by religious dogmas” (Jensen 63). Founded in 1864, just five years after Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, the X Club was comprised of 9 scientists, including Huxley and Tyndall, who strove to make scientific discourse and debate part of the broader intellectual culture, and by so doing to strengthen the separation of science and religion. They were true multi-disciplinarians in an era just previous to the specialization and professionalization of the sciences: Tyndall’s position as a popular lecturer at the Royal Institution had him delivering talks on a wide variety of scientific topics to general audiences, and he titled a collection of essays based on these lectures *Fragments of Science for Unscientific People*.

Both Huxley and Tyndall were acquaintances of the Stephen family. Like Leslie Stephen, Tyndall was an accomplished and respected mountaineer, attempting the Matterhorn doggedly until he finally made the seventh recorded ascent of it in 1868. Unlike Stephen, Tyndall justified his climbing as a scientific pursuit, weighing his pack down with the equipment of glacial observation: theodolites, barometers, and the like. The history of Stephen’s personal relationship with Tyndall is basically the history of a flip comment become kerfuffle become legend: Leslie Stephen is infamous for having so insulted Tyndall at an Alpine Club meeting in 1862 that Tyndall resigned from the Club. What seems to have happened was that Tyndall, then a Vice-President of the Club, gave an after-dinner talk about the science of glaciers to which Stephen, a committee member, offered a glib response. In later years, Stephen explained his “youthful imprudence” this way: “I asserted that true Alpine travelers loved the mountains for their own sake, and considered scientific intruders with their barometers and their theorizing to be a simple nuisance” (*Some Early Impressions* 189). Although it may seem a tempest in a tea pot, this story was recited in the most recent 2006 history of the Alpine Club, and Leslie Stephen felt it necessary to refute the story as late as 1903, in the autobiographical papers later published as *Some Early Impressions*. There he mentions visiting Tyndall at his home, at Hindhead in Haslemere while with the Sunday Tramps, and also mentions at least two holiday trips to Hindhead House in 1896 and 1902, after both Tyndall’s and Julia Stephen’s death. These family trips to Hindhead were undertaken ostensibly in order to help Tyndall’s widow write his biography, but also seem a kind way to offer a holiday in the “Switzerland of England” to the grieving Stephen family.
While both Gillian Beer and Ann Banfield speculate that Virginia Woolf read Tyndall, neither offers hard evidence concerning which of Tyndall’s books Woolf might have read. If Clarissa Parry was indeed born in 1871 (having just “broken into” her 52nd year in 1923), she would share a birthday with Tyndall’s *Fragments of Science for Unscientific People*, which I hoped I would find in the Library of Virginia and Leonard Woolf at Washington State University. Instead I found two books by John Tyndall in the Monk’s House Library, both previously owned by Leslie Stephen. They were Tyndall’s 1860 *The Glaciers of the Alps*—a science text focused on his observations of glacial movement and erosion—and his 1871 *Hours of Exercise in the Alps*, which came out the same year as the first edition of Leslie Stephen’s own *The Playground of Europe* and similarly documents a series of Alpine climbing excursions. Merely having the books in her library doesn’t prove that Woolf read them, of course, but it suggest at least a starting place for evaluating his presence in her work.

Tyndall worked primarily as a physicist, and as Gillian Beer has suggested, his interest in the wave-like structure of light, sound, heat and water provides metaphoric parallels for Virginia Woolf’s own interest in the wave-like structure of identity over time. Through his studies of radiation, Tyndall was the first to prove the existence of what we now call the “Greenhouse Effect,” so his work is still very relevant to climate science today (in fact, Britain’s “Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research” is named after him). Tyndall’s interest in wave-like molecular formations extended from physics to the Earth sciences of geology and glaciology: an early observation of “slaty cleavage” in North Wales led Tyndall and Huxley both to the glaciers of the Alps, where in 1855 Tyndall first observed wave-like forms on the surface of Mont Blanc’s massive glacier, the “Mer du Glace”: he described the glacier as having “the appearance of a sea…stiffened into rest”—marked by ridges “resembling waves in shape” (42).

Rivers of ice and frozen waves suggest an off-kilter Woolfian symbolism, a freezing of the rhythms of daily human life. And yet it was clear to the Victorians that while glaciers appeared static, they were actually mobile, and could be observed to move inches in any human day. John Tyndall’s contribution to the science of glacier mobility is important to note anecdotally; the ruffled feathers between Tyndall and Stephen at the Alpine Club pale in comparison to Tyndall’s battle with John Forbes, a Scottish glaciologist, over the science of glacial movement. Their argument spanned 20 years, was marked by *ad hominem* attacks, and remarked on by the popular press: while Forbes promoted the so-called viscosity theory, the idea that glacial ice was plastic, existing in a state somewhere between solid and liquid, Tyndall argued that glaciers move because they constantly melt and refreeze, allowing for slippage. Indeed, history has proven Tyndall to be correct: the ice at the very bottom of a glacier is under tremendous pressure, which drops its melting point to the extent that it offers a slick surface for the top layers to slip down. Thus even the frozen waves of a glacier are subject to change and the measure of time, but time measured in epochs rather than hours; Earth-time rather than human time. The temporal symbolism of the moving glacier returns us at last to the old woman in *Mrs. Dalloway*, who by “singing of love—love which has lasted a million years” (81) places the two time registers against one another.

In the rest of this paper, I want to argue for the recuperative potential for humans of thinking in terms of Earth-time, particularly for individuals managing emotional trauma, like Clarissa and Septimus. Clarissa’s “coldness,” I’d argue, is a symptomatic
manifestation of the trauma of witnessing her sister’s accidental death, which functions as a buried sub-plot paralleling Evans’s death for Septimus. In the published text of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the only reference to Sylvia Parry’s sudden death is made by Peter, not Clarissa, and occurs in the same passage where he considers her skepticism: “That phase came directly after Sylvia’s death—that horrible affair. To see your own sister killed by a falling tree...before your very eyes” (77-78). In 1979, Mark Spilka noted “Clarissa’s [apparent] failure to mourn so deep a loss”; Sylvia’s death is marginalized, sealed off by *Mrs. Dalloway* into Peter’s aside (326). The figure of Sylvia appears briefly in the early story “Mrs. Dalloway’s Party” as Sylvia Hunt, who is remembered flippantly but suggestively by Clarissa in terms of ancient history (“when Sylvia died, hundreds of years ago” [27]). References to Sylvia in the British Museum MS of *Mrs. Dalloway* are also minimal: Clarissa “remembers Sylvia & Fred & Sally Seton” (264) and intriguingly compares Sylvia and Sally: “But then this question of falling in love—of women. She always compared herself not with her own sister who was too much like herself in those ways, but with someone utterly different, with Sally” (42). This connection between Sylvia, Sally, and the question of falling in love with women alludes to the lost adolescent world of female friendship and desire, a world foreclosed on when Clarissa enters the patriarchal adult world as Mrs. Dalloway. In the finished novel, Clarissa, throughout the hours of her day, amidst all her thoughts of Bourton, does not consciously think of her sister: and yet is this a sign of having processed the death or having repressed it? Woolf’s own revision process, which erases any mention of Sylvia by Clarissa herself, would appear to signify the repression, even as Peter’s memory of it marks its lingering presence. If Septimus’s shell-shock is more obvious, then Clarissa’s is subtle, socially sanctioned, her trauma sealed over by ice, or isolation: we see its presence in Peter’s characterization of her as an “icicle,” in her withdrawal to the attic bedroom, and in that contraction of her “cold spirit,” emblematized by the narrow white bed (31).

Woolf would go on to use the glacial crevasse as a symbol for death in the 1930s, possibly beginning when she received the news of the sudden death of an acquaintance, Victor O’Connor, who had been tutor to Vita Sackville-West’s children. O’Connor and his fiancée Mary Irving had been climbing in the Alps when a fall led to their deaths, their bodies unrecoverable, lost deep within the crevasses of the glaciers. The symbolism of young lovers preserved in ice prompts Woolf to imagine the scene: “there are the two bodies forever. I suppose some ice drips, or shifts: the light is blue, green; or wholly black; nothing stirs around them. Frozen, near together, in their tweeds and hobnailed boots, there they lie” (D3 314). This image of youthful love, frozen at its peak moment, conveys the central paradox about glaciers, and perhaps also about frozen affect. While the image appears static, “nothing stirs around them,” the ice is always in fact moving. Some ice drips or shifts in Woolf’s imagination, a sign of how glacial change occurs: slowly. In 30 or 50 or 100 years, the young lovers will be spit out by the glacier on the valley floor, sea-changed, ice-changed, by their passage through the glacier. Change happens, but so slowly as to be barely measurable on a human scale.

Like evolutionary biology, glaciology introduced the Victorians to the idea of *deep time*, the conception that the Earth is millennia old, far outstripping any human history. Tyndall’s enemy J.D. Forbes referred to glaciers as “rivers of time”: “a stream of time whose dates far transcend the memory of living man” (MacFarlane 132). When Woolf imagines
her human lovers preserved in ice, when she evokes the “age of tusk and mammoth” (81) in the old woman’s song, she is taking an imaginative leap from “The Hours” that mark human existence to the epochs that mark the Earth’s persistence. I would argue that Clarissa Dalloway’s skepticism—a response to her sister’s death, influenced by the reading of Tyndall and Huxley—is a glacial skepticism: an attempt to manage emotional trauma by placing human drama, even tragedy, up against the notion of deep, geological time. There’s a lovely quote in Leslie Stephen’s “Schreckhorn” essay from The Playground of Europe that unites skepticism and geology. From the summit, he looks out at the panorama of mountains and valleys, just marking the curvature of the Earth: “one felt as if some immortal being, with no particular duties upon his hands, might be calmly sitting upon those desolate rocks and watching the little shadowy wrinkles of the plain, that were really mountain ranges, rise and fall through slow geological epochs” (83). The summit allows the human a god’s eye view of deep time, but we note here that Stephen’s “immortal being” seems a little at loose ends. This is an agnostic’s vision. The earth is perfectly capable of change without one, as it is capable of existing without human beings. Such a vision of the Earth without us is a balm perhaps for those suffering from “brute human nature”—individual human drama minimized by a global perspective.

To recapitulate my argument: Clarissa’s frozen, or repressed, grief generates a skepticism informed by Victorian earth science that downplays the human era in favor of the planetary epoch. But this is a coping strategy, not a resolution to the problem of human grief. If we’ve learned anything from John Tyndall today, it is that glacial ice, while appearing to be static, is constantly melting and freezing. “Fear no more the heat o’ the sun” indeed: while we can hardly wish for the world’s glaciers to continue melting in response to the “Tyndall effect” of greenhouse radiation, we might note the one place where Clarissa’s deep freeze seems to melt. And that of course is in her contemplation of “something warm,” sexuality, that “rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together” (31). Perhaps there’s another model of grief offered us in the very liquid energy of the Old Woman’s song, who in remembering her lost love expresses an emotion that “streams away in rivulets” and “soaks through the ages,” “fertilizing” the Earth. Were Clarissa to emerge from her deep freeze, she might sound a little like this: ee um fah um so.

Note

Martha C. Nussbaum, following Proust, uses the metaphor of geological upheaval as an analogy for the disruptive potential of feelings in her theory of the emotional life.

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In “Bad Religion: The Irrational in *Mrs. Dalloway*,” Amy Smith notes that, “[i]n describing Septimus, Woolf makes multiple references to archaic religious figures, including Dionysus” (17), and refers to Nietzsche’s characterization of the Dionysian to argue, “not only is Septimus a Dionysian figure, he is also a response to [the] modern situation of alienation from nature” (17). Though she convincingly relates Septimus and Dionysus to her examination of the irrational in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Smith stops short of discussing the relationship between Dionysian and Apollonian elements in the novel. Yet, in Nietzsche’s formulation, the Dionysian is primarily important because of how it relates to the Apollonian, and throughout *Mrs. Dalloway*, Dionysian and Apollonian elements are continually juxtaposed. It is necessary to understand the tension between Apollonian illusion and Dionysian truth in *Mrs. Dalloway* because it partially explains the novel’s focus on characters as different as Clarissa, whose social sphere is in danger of becoming wholly Apollonian, and Septimus, whose unmediated insight into the Dionysian proves fatal. Further, the struggle to balance Apollonian and Dionysian elements relates to one of the novel’s principal social projects: if the society depicted in *Mrs. Dalloway* does not find a way to incorporate Dionysian truths into the Apollonian structures that create the illusions of meaning that make life seem to be worth living, it will not only risk continuing to alienate those, such as Peter, with a disposition towards the Dionysian, but will also fail the soldiers who are returning home with profound insight into horrific Dionysian truths. In short, by comparing the two strands of *Mrs. Dalloway* in light of Nietzsche’s conception of Apollonian illusion and Dionysian truth, I will argue that the novel frames parallel struggles to balance Apollonian and Dionysian elements and highlights the importance of achieving such a balance—Clarissa’s Apollonian sphere verges on vacuity without Dionysian truths, and Septimus’s Dionysian truths can only lead to death without Apollonian illusion.

To examine Apollonian and Dionysian elements in *Mrs. Dalloway*, it is necessary to examine these two terms in some detail. In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1876), Nietzsche utilizes two Greek gods, Apollo and Dionysus, as the inspiration for these principles. Apollo is variously characterized as “the master musician who delights Olympus as he plays on his golden lyre; the lord too of the silver bow […] the Healer, as well, who first taught men the healing art. […] [H]e is the God of Light, in whom is no darkness at all, and so he is the God of Truth” (Hamilton 29). Dionysus, on the other hand, is viewed as “a personification of the vine and of the exhilaration produced by the juice of the grape. […] Dionysus was believed to have died a violent death, but to have been brought to life again; his sufferings, death, and resurrection were enacted in his sacred rights” (Frazer 396-7). Within Nietzsche’s framework, the Dionysian represents the profound existential meaninglessness that comes from the recognition that one is a miniscule part of reality. In short, “[t]he Dionysian principle […] presents reality as a tumultuous flux in which individuality is overwhelmed by the dynamics of a living whole” (Magnus and Higgins 22). While the Dionysian can provide joy, it can also make life seem horrific by exposing
the insignificance of one’s life. As Nietzsche explains, to recognize Dionysian truth is “to look into the terrors of the individual existence” (104). Yet, it is dangerous to face such truths, for “action requires the veils of illusion [...]. True knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth, outweighs any motive for action” (Nietzsche 60). For action to be possible, one requires a veil to obscure Dionysian truths, and this is the role of the Apollonian, which “conceivable of the individual as sufficiently separate from the rest of reality to be able to contemplate it dispassionately” (Magnus and Higgins 22). However, as such dispassionate contemplation only becomes possible when barriers are erected to allow one to view reality as though separate from it, Nietzsche often highlights illusory elements of the Apollonian, even comparing it to dreaming: “In our dreams we delight in the immediate understanding of figures […]. But even when this dream reality is most intense, we still have, glimmering through it, the sensation that it is mere appearance” (34). No matter how powerful the Apollonian may be, the Dionysian has a tendency to make its presence known; once this happens, the Apollonian fails, and seems to be “mere appearance.” In short, though Apollo is the god of truth, the Apollonian is, at best, necessary illusion masquerading as objective truth, and at worst, pointless or harmful illusion.

Nietzsche insists that life requires a balance of Apollonian and Dionysian. However, Rudiger Safranski points out a significant difficulty with finding the optimal balance of the two:

From the vantage point of everyday consciousness, the Dionysian is horrifying. By the same token, the Dionysian perspective regards everyday reality as horrifying. Conscious life moves between both outlooks […]. One is simultaneously transported by the Dionysian, with which life must retain contact to avoid becoming desolate, and dependent on the protective devices of civilization to avoid being sacrificed to the disintegrating power of the Dionysian. (80)

This problem is particularly important because it enables an examination of the bifurcated structure of Mrs. Dalloway: the party depicted in the Clarissa strand represents an abundance of Apollonian illusion; the struggle to survive depicted in the Septimus strand represents an abundance of Dionysian truth. For either strand of Mrs. Dalloway to offer hope, it must suggest the possibility of striking a healthy balance between Apollonian illusion and Dionysian truth.

While it is clear that Septimus’s condition cannot be entirely explained by Nietzsche’s model, there are reasons to associate Septimus with Dionysian truth. Alice van Buren Kelley suggests that Septimus suffers from “a total realization of vision, vision that reveals the unity of man and world” (99). But it is not necessarily the case that Septimus’s “continual experiencing of total unity, [and] lack of definable, separate selfhood […] are incompatible with life in the factual world” (van Buren Kelley 100). Rather, Septimus’s WWI experiences force a reality upon him that others would rather ignore. It is for this reason that Rezia, Septimus’s wife, is unable to understand his continued suffering; as Terri Apter explains, “Lucrezia protests that everyone has friends who were killed in the war; Septimus should therefore not be so upset by Evans’s death” (69). For Septimus, however, facing death has caused a fundamental change in perspective. Though he goes “to France to save an England which consist[s] almost entirely of Shakespeare’s plays and Miss Isabel Pole
in a green dress walking in a square” (94)—that is, to protect an Apollonian order—he returns unable to view the Apollonian as entirely real or satisfactory. This change is evident in his understanding of literature following the war: “That boy’s business of the intoxication of language […] had shrivelled utterly. How Shakespeare loathed humanity […]!” This was now revealed to Septimus; the message hidden in the beauty of words. […]. Dante the same. Aeschylus (translated) the same” (97). Whereas Septimus had been obsessed with beauty, beauty now seems to be mere illusion, and Septimus can only see the bleak, misanthropic elements of these works. In short, he can perceive the Dionysian truths, but the overtly Apollonian elements strike him as mere “boy’s business.” Further, Septimus often characterizes himself in Dionysian terms—namely, he suffers endlessly and is caught in a cycle of death and resurrection (Smith 17). Yet, he frequently views it as his purpose to create new Apollonian structures: “the greatest of mankind, Septimus, lately taken from life to death, the Lord who had come to renew society, who lay like a coverlet, a snow blanket smitten only by the sun, for ever unwasted, suffering forever, the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer” (27). While Septimus’s messages suggest an Apollonian project, it is significant that he sees them as the foundations of a new religion, destined to renew society. This implies that, following the war, the old Apollonian systems stop working for Septimus, and he hopes to create a system that can account for his suffering. That he believes such a system is necessary says a great deal about how inadequate Septimus considers his society’s existing Apollonian structures to be.

Ultimately, Septimus is too entrenched in the Dionysian to take solace in the Apollonian illusions forced upon him. This is clear in the description of Septimus’s relationship with Holmes: “the brute with the red nostrils had won. But even Holmes himself could not touch this last relic straying on the edge of the world, this outcast, who gazed back at the inhabited regions” (101-2). Septimus does not merely stand outside looking in, but sees himself as a hero for resisting a view of reality that is not compatible with his own. When he kills himself, it becomes clear that, for Septimus, the Dionysian is so absolute that anything is preferable to the imposition of someone else’s Apollonian illusions: “Holmes would burst open the door. Holmes would say ‘In a funk, eh?’ […] But no; not Holmes; not Bradshaw. […] But he would wait till the very last moment. He did not want to die” (163-4). Tellingly, what Septimus finds unbearable is not life, but those who want to force their views of the world upon him. Septimus is simply too immersed in Dionysian reality to be able to adhere to someone else’s Apollonian order.

However, Septimus’s decision to embrace the Dionysian does not affect him alone, and his imbalance of Dionysian truth and Apollonian illusion seems to pass from Septimus to Rezia. Her attempts to find help for Septimus cause Rezia to feel as though she is subject to horrors similar to those experienced by her husband: “Dr. Holmes might say there was nothing the matter. Far rather would she that he were dead! […] [S]ky and tree, children playing, dragging carts, blowing whistles, falling down; all were terrible. And he would not kill himself; and she could tell no one” (24-5). Rezia feels alone in a terrible world because “she is so much a part of him that his nightmare becomes hers; she wishes him dead because his vision is infectious” (Apter 70). Septimus’s excess of Dionysian truth seems to pass, like a disease, to Rezia, because her relationship with Septimus forces her to see through the veil of civilization into the Dionysian. In addition, Dr. Holmes’s inability
to help, or even to recognize the problem, has compounded Rezia’s crisis by giving her reason to question the ability of civilization to contain such truths.

But unlike Septimus, Rezia still finds civilisation desirable. When Septimus dies, Rezia takes solace in Apollonian order:

The clock was striking—one, two, three: how sensible the sound was; compared with all this thumping and whispering; like Septimus himself. She was falling asleep. But the clock went on striking […] and Mrs. Filmer waving her apron […] seemed part of that garden; or a flag. […] Men killed in battle were thus saluted, and Septimus had been through the War. (164-5)

The clock strikes seem perfectly sensible, and Rezia begins falling asleep, entering the world of dream illusion that Nietzsche often uses as a metaphor for the Apollonian. Furthermore, when reminded of a flag, Rezia contemplates the value of military service, and Septimus’s death seems to have meaning. In short, now that she is no longer forced to watch Septimus suffer, Rezia is able to turn away from Dionysian truth and take solace in Apollonian illusion. Though Septimus would, ultimately, rather do anything than return to an Apollonian sphere, Rezia is happy to do so.

Just as the Septimus strand of Mrs. Dalloway is characterized by an excess of Dionysian elements, the Clarissa strand is characterized by an excess of Apollonian elements. Yet, Clarissa is not, herself, excessively Apollonian. Indeed, it is her profound sense of the Dionysian meaningless of “this thing she call[s] life” (133) that prompts her to take steps to unify others in an Apollonian refuge of her own creation: “she felt quite continuously a sense of their existence; and she felt what a waste; and she felt what a pity; and she felt if only they could be brought together; so she did it” (133-4). Of course, from a Nietzschean perspective, the value of Clarissa’s action, uniting people whose lives are individually meaningless in the hope that this will make their lives seem meaningful, is indeterminate. Indeed, the group may even be harmful if it obliterates every trace of the meaninglessness that made the group desirable in the first place. Yet, Clarissa’s reasons for creating the group suggest that her parties have potential, for she hosts them because she is conscious of the fact that bringing people together, even in an artificial and arbitrary setting, may provide meaningful solace from life’s general meaninglessness.

Nonetheless, if the purpose of Clarissa’s parties is to create an Apollonian veil that makes it possible to survive Dionysian truths, then her parties seem to be failures, simply because the people who ordinarily attend do not share Clarissa’s insight into the Dionysian. Clarissa’s parties, which are collections of “the pompous, the frivolous, the narrow-minded and the moribund” (Showalter xlv), seem to be frequented by highly Apollonian individuals. Consider, for instance, Hugh Whitbread; van Buren Kelley captures the extent to which Hugh is characterized by surface, not substance, when she insists that he “is the perfect embodiment of society in its purely factual aspects, going through the motions of life mechanically, hardly aware of himself and totally unaware of the vital existence of others” (93). Or consider Sir William Bradshaw, another distinctly Apollonian attendee. Even Clarissa, who recognizes the potential importance of his work, does not trust Bradshaw: “Why did the sight of him, talking to Richard, curl her up? He looked what he was, a great doctor. […] Yet—what she felt was, one wouldn’t like Sir William to
see one unhappy” (200). Richard agrees with Clarissa, and states that he does not “like his taste [...] his smell” (201). There is something frightening about “divine proportion, Sir William’s goddess” (109), and its sister, conversion (109-10). After all, Bradshaw’s world is so determined by what can be divided into points convenient for classification that “[o] utside [his] offices [...] the chimes of the clock shred and slice, divide and subdivide, nibble away at the June day to uphold authority and the advantages of a sense of proportion” (Apter 51). Quite simply, Bradshaw attempts to push the Apollonian beyond synthesis with the Dionysian, and insists others accept his Apollonian artifice as reality.

Elaine Showalter argues that the ending of *Mrs. Dalloway* does not promise significant change: “For Clarissa, the thought of Septimus’s death is a reminder of the intensity and joy of life. If her identification with Septimus is perhaps sentimental, nonetheless it is part of her realization of her own limits and possibilities” (xlv). Yet, Peter Walsh’s return hints at the possibility of an important change for both Clarissa and Peter. Alice van Buren Kelley insists that Peter “is so unflaggingly devoted to truth that he cannot bring himself to accept the compromise that life in an insincere society offers him” (95). This description of Peter works quite well with Clarissa’s understanding of him, which emphasizes his ability to perceive Dionysian truths: “however beautiful the day might be, and the trees and the grass, [...] Peter never saw a thing of all that. [...] It was the state of the world that interested him; Wagner, Pope’s poetry, people’s characters eternally, and the defects of her own soul” (7). However, because Peter’s absence from England has deprived him of the Apollonian comforts of English civilization for so long, Peter is also able to appreciate how effectively these comforts can provide solace: “[T]here were moments when civilisation, even of this sort, seemed dear to him as a personal possession [...]. Ridiculous enough, still there it is” (60). It is important to note the similarity between “there it is” and the final line of the novel, “For there she was” (213), because this highlights the extent to which reuniting with Clarissa—and, as a consequence, her other guests—provides Peter with access to a refuge from Dionysian reality that may be effective, if artificial. However, Peter’s return to England and his presence at Clarissa’s party offer not only to improve Peter’s life, but also to add legitimacy to Clarissa’s: with Peter’s return, the purpose of Clarissa’s party may be fulfilled, insofar as one of the attendees truly needs the comforts it offers.

**Works Cited**


Art, Influence, Embodiment
“TIME HAS WHIZZED BACK AN INCH OR TWO ON ITS REEL”: RELATING VIRGINIA WOOLF AND EMILY CARR THROUGH VINTAGE POSTCARDS, LILY BRISCOE, MRS. MCNAB, AND THE CINEMATIC TIME OF TO THE LIGHTHOUSE.

by Leslie Kathleen Hankins

Two icons rise before us: Virginia Woolf and Emily Carr. How can we relate such a formidable duo? Relating is such a slippery concept: relating (how to bring things together), or relating (how to tell about it)...any way you consider it, relating is a muddle, a tease, a torment. And time tangles it up, and space often means you simply can’t get there from here. What do we do when we attempt to relate? Fill in the blanks? Build bridges? Mind the gap? Or leap over it? Build up a “whole structure of imagination” (TTL 176)? As ever, Woolf’s words may guide us—or lead us astray:

It was a question, she remembered, how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left. (TTL 56)
…if only they could be brought together; so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create, but to whom?

An offering for the sake of offering, perhaps. (MD 119)

Generations of scholars have set the stage for bringing Woolf and Carr into a complex, at times a bit fantastical, relationship. Most recently, within modernist studies, Diane Gillespie brought attention to Emily Carr and her writing on art in a section “The Gender of Modern/ist Painting” in Bonnie Kime Scott’s Gender in Modernism. David Tovey, Marion Dell, and Marion Whybrow place Woolf and/or Carr in relation to communities of artists in St Ives. Masumi Usui in a brief, but compelling, essay, connects Carr and Woolf. My mission is to bring alive the creative process of relating the two icons. Might such a relating teach us to ask new questions and to startling the known into the new? How should I begin? “One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with…fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round [those two women] with” (TTL 201).

Scholarship & A Sketch of Facts Past

Scholarship, as the perfect hostess, demands, as part of the protocol of introduction, that we seek facts, actual connections, and, hopefully, evidence to connect Virginia Woolf and Emily Carr. Thus, I dug and dove into archives, scholarship, and timelines: The British Museum, the British Library, biographies, archives, holdings of The Royal Museum of British Columbia—and into caches and caches of vintage postcards gathered from shops and antique markets in St Ives. I pored over David Tovey’s studies of St Ives artist communities, Stella Duckworth’s St Ives diaries, Virginia Stephen’s Cornwall diary, Emily Carr’s notes and letters, and other treasures.
So, I begin: the first fact: Emily Carr studied painting in St Ives, Cornwall for eight months in 1901-2, from late summer to mid-spring. This opens up an entire St Ives realm of inquiry, which has been both fruitful and frustrating. Consider the facts:

Virginia Stephen spent summers in St Ives from 1882 to 1894.
Emily Carr was in St Ives late summer 1901-2.
Virginia Stephen came back to St Ives with her siblings in August 1905.
Virginia Stephen/Woolf came back to St Ives various other times before 1927, when she published To the Lighthouse.

So near and yet so far! Desperately, I want to intervene in this vexing, syncopated timeline, to place Emily Carr and Virginia Woolf in St Ives at the same time or at least to demonstrate how traces of their lives may have overlapped. And what of the sites of St Ives? What about the Stephen family summer home, Talland House, Emily Carr’s rented room, the downalong of the town, the shingle and wavescapes, and the treescapes of Tregenna Woods? Relating the syncopated times and relating the triangulated spaces set up my challenging quest to bring together Emily Carr and Virginia Woolf.

Reading Beyond and Between the Facts: Gossip

How could we negotiate the gaps in space and time? Perhaps one could fill in the blanks with gossip and stories, with hearsay, with suppositions. As I argued two years ago at the Woolf conference, the strong connections between the Stephens and communities of artists in St Ives suggest the possibility of Emily Carr as a model for Lily Briscoe. It is quite possible that Virginia Stephen may have learned about the strong-willed painting student when she and her siblings re-visited St Ives in 1905, or through their ongoing contact with St. Ives artists such as Julius Olsson and Edward Simmons. Virginia Stephen’s Cornwall Diary of 1905 provides one suggestive portal in time: “Today we set apart as a day of pilgrimage to certain old St Ives people, who in spite of the passage of eleven years, still cherish some faithful memory of us….” (PA 286).

Woolf describes how the pilgrimage resurrects memory:

All kinds of trivial half forgotten memories revived & we did our share of question, & anecdote; we asserted that there was no place like St Ives & that we had never forgotten its washer woman. Indeed, we were not guilty of insincerity; her portrait had been lying unexposed in some dim recess of our brains, & at the first sight of her face the old picture became clear again, & with it a multitude of slighter impressions which seem to cluster round it. I could see her once more tramping up the drive with her basket of clean clothes, leaning away from her burden, & ready to put it down & talk good humouredly if we stopped her. (287)

As Gossip “poured forth her memories” (285) we can only guess the details. But, it doesn’t seem too far-fetched to compose a few imaginative structures. At this juncture,
I, the restless searcher, did some digging in the St Ives Trust Archive Study Centre and the local museum to follow up on some leads about our iconic duo. When in St Ives, Emily Carr roomed with Mr. and Mrs. Curnow in a house that backed up to the sea; they had a curio shop. According to Marion Dell and Marion Whybrow, “Virginia remembered Alice Curnow who hauled huge baskets of laundry to and from the house” (30-31). Curnow is, of course, a common name, but St Ives was a small town then, and as the Stephens discovered when they visited, gossip about the lives of visitors was a major source of entertainment. Another potential source of gossip, spinning forth yet another fragile web of interconnection, may be imagined as springing from Emily Carr’s months in St Ives, when, with Hilda Fearon, Carr would hire local fisherfolk and children to sketch in evenings and bad weather days. Carr’s St Ives sketchbook reveals hundreds of local subjects, as well as caricatures of her fellow artists. Gossip is a two-way street; no doubt the locals gathered gossip about Carr in these sessions as well; Carr and her antics as a tree-hugging rebel in Julius Olsson’s marine painting school certainly deserved to become the stuff of local legend. In addition, Carr composed a droll graphic book about her time as a student of Julius Olsson, a book composed of doggerel poetry and hilarious watercolors; held at the Royal Museum of British Columbia, and available on the Virtual Gallery, it demonstrates how rich that student community was in gossip and camaraderie.

Therefore, I dare to suggest that Woolf may gesture in *To the Lighthouse* towards networks of gossip about one of St Ives’ women painters, that rebellious Emily Carr, who preferred trees to seas, and who sketched the locals. Who knows? Perhaps the locals told Emily Carr stories about the Stephens who used to live in Talland House. Call it gossip or call it oral history or research; by whatever name, it is appropriate that gossip may unite our two icons.

**Aesthetic Time Travel**

At this stage of my gossip-gathering or research, I became intrigued by a passage in a letter Vanessa Bell penned to Virginia Woolf describing her first reading of *To the Lighthouse*: “I daresay you’ll think all I’ve said nonsense. You can put it down to the imbecile ravings of a painter on paper. By the way surely Lily Briscoe must have been rather a good painter—before her time perhaps, but with great gifts really? No we didn’t laugh at the bits about painting—” (May 11, 1927 *L3* 573). Bell’s comments placing Lily Briscoe as “before her time” led me to re-consider the vexing chronological disconnections of *To the Lighthouse* in terms, not only of biography, but also of aesthetics. Of the temporal transplants in the setting of the novel, one could argue that Woolf projects onto her painter, Lily Briscoe, aesthetic struggles and insights from years up to 1927. Thus, Lily on the lawn may channel not only Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell, and Clive Bell’s *Art*, among others—but also aesthetic concepts Woolf had encountered closer to 1927, including her engagement with cinema aesthetics so vital to her 1925-7 years. That insight is a step that might free us from one conceptual straitjacket, but we have much more work to do.
New Strategies: Something Bigger than Fact

There is something bigger than fact; the underlying spirit, all it stands for.…
(Carr, Nov 13, 1927 H&T 24)

I must confess that we are about as far as facts, gossip, aesthetic time travel, and educated guesses can take us. Not bad, but not far enough. I think we have to seek some new strategies. So, with a tantalizing few facts and boundless freedom of imagination, where shall we venture as a moving-camera-like, wedge-shaped core of darkness that can go anywhere? “Time Passes” is a fascinating tunnel in time to visit. Let’s go. I propose transporting Lily Briscoe, avatars of Virginia Woolf and Emily Carr, Augustus Carmichael, Mrs. McNab, and members of Woolf’s audience for her A Room of One’s Own lectures, “destined to become schoolmistresses in shoals” (D3 201), a worn copy of Woolf’s “The Cinema” and its drafts, and setting sail for “Time Passes”—from Canada. Fantasies of the future past. Here we go!

Technology, Fantasy, and Portals to the Past: “Turn up August 1890”

At times I can go back to St Ives more completely than I can this morning. [...] Now if this is so, is it not possible—I often wonder—that things we have felt with great intensity have an existence independent of our minds; are in fact still in existence? And, if so, will it not be possible, in time, that some device will be invented by which we can tap them? I see it—the past—as an avenue lying behind; a long ribbon of scenes, emotions. There at the end of the avenue still, are the garden and the nursery. Instead of remembering here a scene and there a sound, I shall fit a plug into the wall; and listen in to the past. I shall turn up August 1890. I feel that strong emotion must leave its trace; and it is only a question of discovering how we can get ourselves again attached to it. (MOB 67)

Woolf certainly had a quirky, creative way of imagining technologies of the future. In “Evening Over Sussex” she designs houses to be cleaned with puffs of air; and here she considers how someday we should be able “to fit a plug into the wall” and “turn up August 1890” (MOB 67). Woolf uses similar flights of technology in fiction as early as “Kew Gardens,” in which an eccentric character advocates a dial-up daffodil technology for connecting with the spirit world. Such creative play dovetails with her 1926 argument that some “residue of visual emotion…may still await the cinema” (E4 594); most compelling to me—no doubt because it flaunts the cinema connection—is the temporal image introduced in The Waves by the character, Bernard: “Time has whizzed back an inch or two on its reel” (TW 82). How that illuminates Woolf’s conceptual play with time in cinematic terms! Can reel time provide us with a way to conceptualize the daunting time passages in “Time Passes” and Woolf’s trespasses against time in To the Lighthouse? Does To the Lighthouse point to a cinematic superimposition of competing timelines, a move that challenges the tyranny of chronological time while creating new opportunities for connection across time? And, if so, how can Woolf’s innovative technology help us to relate Woolf and Carr?
One way, I venture, to relate them would be by turning up 1890 and 1901 with the aid of a cache of vintage postcards from St Ives. Much like early topical films or newsreels, postcards as cultural artifacts embody the temporal complexity of a vexing timeline; the date of the photograph, the date (known or unknown) of its reproduction, the date of the postmark, the date of receipt all confound a temporal and spatial specificity. So, let us turn up August 1890. We will start with two postcards and the photograph from which they were made, by Gibson & Sons.
Here is the entire glorious 1890 view from Tregenna Wood across to St Ives, including Porthminster Bay, showing the whole of the vista of Talland House and its greenhouses, before the ugly intrusion of the oatmeal colored hotel that Julia Stephen said spoiled the view. These postcards—I must tell you—were a breakthrough for me; I gasped aloud in the St Ives vintage market when it dawned on me that the lovely landmark on the left—yes, that one—is none other than the Talland House of the Stephens's childhood before it was obscured by overdevelopment (starting in 1892-3).

Illustration 4: Turn up 1901 “High on the hill I had discovered Tregenna Wood—haunting, ivy-draped, solemn Tregenna” (Cart, Growing Pains 213).
Now, turn up 1901.

In my postcard cache, I found one shifting 180 degrees, showing Tregenna Castle and Wood in an airy wood frame. Emily Carr frequented Tregenna Wood while she was a student in Julius Olsson’s marine painting school and living in downalong St Ives. As she writes in her autobiography, Growing Pains, “High on the hill I had discovered Tregenna Wood—haunting, ivy-draped, solemn Tregenna” (213). The trek up to Tregenna from the town (carrying her easel, paints, and so on) would take her past Talland House (much the same route as the washerwoman from town to Talland) and on to the welcoming trees.

Ah, but here I daresay we must leave our avatars of Emily Carr and Virginia Woolf for a time plugged in to these enchanted landscapes, where emotions leave their trace, courtesy of postcard portals to the past. For, really we must back up a bit, to guide those Woolfians who may not be familiar with Emily Carr. How can we introduce her? Perhaps the best way—because you are Woolf people—is to imagine Lily Briscoe plus Ethel Smyth—wrestling with aesthetics as Lily on the lawn does in To the Lighthouse, but with the bravado, sensitivity and chip on the shoulder of Ethel—and throw in the sheer work force of Mrs. McNab—and some of the powerhouse presence of, say, Jane Marcus. Carr was gruff, daring and formidable, and shy and sensitive. Chose to be a spinster. Chose dogs. Sought God. Loved trees. Her art and religion (and they were often entwined) were her prime passions, “that spirit in her, the essential thing” (TTL 52).

Relating: “Let me imagine…”

And now for another leap! Let’s relate Emily Carr to Woolf’s Lily Briscoe. How perfect. Each chose painting and spinsterhood over the dilution of marriage. There are a few minor problems, in addition to the usual problems of relating: alas, one is fictional, one historical. Ah, challenges! But, what does our friend the biographer of Orlando tell us when confronted with “the least information to go upon”? “We have done our best to piece out a meagre summary from the charred fragments that remain; but often it has been necessary to speculate, to surmise, and even to make use of the imagination” (O 88). Or, as the quasi-fictional narrator of A Room of One’s Own puts it, “Fiction here is likely to contain more truth than fact. Therefore I propose, making use of all the liberties and licences of a novelist…” (AROO 4)—or, even better, “Let me imagine, since facts are so hard to come by…” (AROO 46). So, we must imagine. But what shall we imagine? Woolf and Carr might protest that we should not dwell on the person or mere fact, for it is the work that matters, and surely Lily would concur: “She remembered, all of a sudden as if she had found a treasure, that she had her work” (TTL 87). Work is the key. All three seem to have read Clive Bell’s Art; Lily and Emily think about how to tackle their painting in similar terms; they think about moving the tree. So we will begin with work, with painting. I will bring in Emily Carr, to introduce herself, painter to painter, to Lily Briscoe, using Carr’s early sketch of her autobiography, published in Opposite Contraries, and excerpted here:4

I was born in Victoria, B.C., in 1871. On leaving high school, I went to San Francisco as a student at the Mark Hopkins School of Art and spent three years
there. I returned to Victoria and taught children’s classes and saved up for a trip to Europe.

I attended the Westminster School of Art in London. But after the free, wild life of the West, London wilted the very life out of me, so I went down to Cornwall and studied in the open...then returned to Canada and started all again, working and saving, this time with Paris in view.

In 1911 I went to Paris with a letter of introduction to a modern painter of Scotch birth, Harry Gibb. This man opened my eyes to the joyousness of the new school. By his advice, I became a student at the Académie Colarossi, Paris. I could not stand the airlessness of the life rooms for long, the doctors stating, as they had done in London, that “there was something about these big cities that these Canadians from their big spaces couldn’t stand, it was liking putting a pine tree in a pot.” So I left Paris and joined outdoor classes under Mr. Gibb, who was then in Brittany. When my money was spent I returned to Canada, but they hated and ridiculed my work. My first exhibition here they dishonoured my work, putting it behind things, under shelves, or on the ceiling. My friends begged me to go back to my old way of painting, but I had tasted the joys of a bigger way. It would have been impossible had I wanted to, which I did not. Whenever I could afford it I went up North, among the Indians and the woods, and forgot all about everything in the joy of those lonely, wonderful places. I decided to try and make as good a representative collection of those old villages and wonderful totem poles as I could, for the love of the people and the love of the places and the love of the art; whether anybody liked them or not I did not care a bean.

I painted them to please myself in my own way, but I also stuck rigidly to the facts because I knew I was painting history. The war came (1914). I had a living to make. Of course, nobody wanted to buy my pictures. I’d never tried to paint to please them anyway, so I did horrible things like taking boarders to make a living, and the very little time I had for painting I tried to paint in the despised, adorable joyous modern way. (203-205)

Carr’s autobiographical sketch breaks off before her transformative 1927 year, her breakthrough exhibition and introduction to the Canadian Group of Seven, especially Lawren Harris, who encouraged and inspired her—and about whose paintings she exclaimed: “Oh, God, what have I seen? Where have I been? Something has spoken to the very soul of me, wonderful, mighty, not of this world. Chords way down in my being have been touched. Dumb notes have struck chords of wonderful tone. Something has called out of somewhere. Something in me is trying to answer” (Nov 17, 1927 H&T 25-6). Carr’s astonishing kinetic, vivid, tumultuous treescape paintings incarnate her answers. At Saskatoon, we shared a slide show of iconic Carr paintings, including: Indian Church (1929); Old Time Coastal Village (1929-30); Big Raven (1931); Vanquished (1930); The Mountain (1933); A Rushing Sea of Undergrowth (1935); Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky (1935); Blue Sky (1936); Sombreness Sunlit (1939-40); Above the Trees (1939) (see Vancouver Art Gallery and the Emily Carr Virtual Gallery).
Fictional Truths: Truth Lying in Wait for You

Now that Emily Carr has been introduced to Lily Briscoe, why not invent a means by which they might share their thoughts about aesthetics? To take advantage of the temporal play inherent in the postcard genre, their aesthetic musings appear here on imaginary postcards:

Selected Fantasy Postcard exchanges Lily and Emily

Postcard I.
EMILY: The old longing will come. Oh, if there was only a really kindred spirit to share it with, that we might keep each other warm in spirit, keep step and tramp uphill together. (April 6, 1933 H&T 156)

LILY: But that any other eyes should see the residue of her thirty-three years, the deposit of each day’s living mixed with something more secret than she had ever spoken or shown in the course of all those years was an agony. At the same time it was immensely exciting. (TTL 55)

Postcard II.
EMILY: Rhythm and space, space and rhythm, how can I learn more about these? Well, old girl, you’ll have to get down and dig. (Nov 19, 1927 H&T 28)

LILY: Heaven be praised for it, the problem of space remained, she thought, taking up her brush again. It glared at her. The whole mass of the picture was poised upon that weight. (TTL 174)

EMILY: Mr. Harris gave me the names of four books he thought would help me in the struggle…Of the four I was only able to get two, Art by Clive Bell and Tertium Organum by Peter Ouspensky. (Dec 14, 1927 H&T 40)

Postcard III.
EMILY: There is something bigger than fact; the underlying spirit, all it stands for, the mood, the vastness, the wildness, the Western breath of go-to-the-devil-if-you-don’t-like-it, the eternal big spaciousness of it. Oh the West! I’m of it and I love it. (Nov 13, 1927 H&T 24)

LILY: Then beneath the colour there was the shape. She could see it all so clearly, so commandingly, when she looked: it was when she took her brush in hand that the whole thing changed. (TTL 22)

EMILY: A picture does not want to be a design no matter how lovely. A picture is an expressed thought for the soul. A design is a pleasing arrangement of form and colour for the eye. (Jan 28, 1931 H&T 50)
“Time has whizzed back an inch or two on its reel”  153

Postcard IV.
EMILY: Do not forget life, artist. A picture is not a collection of portrayed objects nor is it a certain effect of light and shade nor is it a souvenir of a place nor a sentimental reminder, nor is it a show of colour nor a magnificence of form, nor yet is it anything seeable or sayable. It is a glimpse of God interpreted by the soul. It is life to some degree expressed. (Sept 9, 1933 *H&T* 90)

LILY: She could have wept. It was bad, it was bad, it was infinitely bad! She could have done it differently of course; the colour could have been thinned and faded; the shapes etherealized; that was how Paunceforte would have seen it. But then she did not see it like that. (*TTL* 51)

EMILY: Be careful that you do not write or paint anything that is not your own, that you don’t know in your own soul. You will have to experiment and try things out for yourself, and you will not be sure of what you are doing. That’s all right; you are feeling your way into the thing. (April 12, 1934 *H&T* 159)

LILY: Such she often felt herself—struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to say: “But this is what I see; this is what I see.” (*TTL* 23)

Postcard V.
LILY: It was in that moment’s flight between the picture and her canvas that the demons set on her who often brought her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child. (*TTL* 22-23)

EMILY: I think perhaps it’s this way in art. The spirit of the thing calls to your soul. First it hails it in passing and your soul pauses and shouts back, “Coming.” But the soul dwells in your innermost being and it has a lot of courts and rooms and things to pass through, doors and furniture and clutter to go around and through, and she has to pass through and round all this impedimenta before she can get out in the open and catch up and sometimes she can’t go on at all but is all snarled up in obstructions. (April 16, 1934 *H&T* 162)

Postcard VI.
LILY: It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again. (*TTL* 211)

EMILY: On the whitewashed underside of the roof shingles of my attic room I painted two immense totemic Indian Eagles. Their outstretched wings covered the entire ceiling. They were brave birds, powerful of beak and talon….Sleeping beneath these two strong birds, the stout western maple beneath my window; is it wonder that I should have strong dreams that folded me very close? (qtd. in Breuer and Dodd 17)
Postcard VII.

EMILY: It is possible to form some warm friendships with people one has never seen, only written to and heard from. Some people can become beloved friends, calling back through ages to you through written words, and you can sort of talk back too (November 26, 1935 *H&I* 281).

LILY: That one could walk away down that long gallery not alone any more but arm in arm with somebody—the strangest feeling in the world, and the most exhilarating— (*TTL* 57)

And so, quotation after quotation, we can imagine Briscoe and Carr heading off down the lawn together to discuss trees and paintings and Clive Bell and rhythm and the life of a painter…

Here, however, we are baulked.

**Fantasy and the Reality Check**

*Illustration 5: Char in Fiction? Mrs. McNab, director?*
“Time has whizzed back an inch or two on its reel”  155

Though I maintain that facts are vastly overrated as a source of truth, even fantasy has its failings; here I am faced with a difficulty which it is better perhaps to confess than to gloss over (O 49). Alas, we must not evade obstacles we would encounter bringing Carr and Woolf together. How would they see each other, through their own lenses? Even if through some magical temporal slip we could have them come together, whizz-bang, on the driveway up to Talland House or in a train carriage, how would they meet? Class and Englishness would have separated them. Alas, I fear the introduction between Emily Carr, the colonial, with a chip on her shoulder about the stuffy English, and Virginia Woolf from the intellectual aristocracy, with her irksome biases about Canada and America, would not have been a social success. Emily Carr recorded that she was not included in invitations to the high grand houses above the town—say Thomas Millie Dow's Talland House where—incidentally—facts tell us the Stephen siblings were invited to tea during their 1905 visit to St. Ives. Even if time and magic cooperated, perhaps Emily Carr, trudging to Tregenna Wood, would have ignored Talland House and chatted with Alice Curnow lugging the laundry up the steep hills, or hired her to sketch.

Perhaps We Should Re-visit History

It was not easy or snug this world she had known for close on seventy years. (TTL 134)

Emily Carr, historians tell us, in the years 1913-1935 was making a desperate effort to create time and space and funding for her painting by building and running a house for tenants and boarders, back in Victoria, B.C. It was a difficult, lonely, arduous day job, and her journal is filled with her struggles. Can we infuse our fantasies with that historical and cultural reality? Perhaps we can deepen our sense of Carr if we imagine her sending postcards to Lily Briscoe (keeping house for her father off the Brompton Road), and perhaps, to Mrs. McNab, caretaking for Talland House:

EMILY: September 16, 1933. It’s frightfully difficult being a “good” landlady. [...] if you say anything at all, you are a “beastly cranky old landlady.”...I wish, oh I do wish, someone really nice and companionable would come, a friend person. Thank the Lord for dogs, white rats and monkeys. They, at least, are stable. (H&T 94)

EMILY: April 8, 1935. How tired can one get and not die! When the exhibition closed yesterday I longed to get to painting. First, however, the flat the exhibition was in had to be got ready for a tenant. The kitchen was peeling. I bolted out of bed this morning right on to the stepladder with a knife and those walls had to be scraped inch by inch. I did not give myself time to think. I said, “Put your whole zest into that, old girl. It’s necessary, so make it worth while. When it is all clean maybe you can paint.” Life is such a continual struggle inside. The desire to hurl yourself entirely into paint, line up in another world where apartment houses, family relations, gardens, tenants, friends, clothes, food do not exist...
Everything in life seems to contradict something else. If I was a real artist I’d let everything else go, but I can’t and don’t and so I’m not. (Opposite Contraries 101)

EMILY: April 11, 1935. Four healthy adults have sat in that flat and heard and seen me labour like a char….

There is another battle constantly waging inside me. Artist and domestic. Trying to be honest to both wears one sharp. The last six months have been almost all plain domestic. My soul is thirsty. (Opposite Contraries 102)

EMILY: November 16th 1935. Sometimes my whole soul cries out in revolt at this beastly house, at the slaving and pinching to keep up…It crushes the life out of me, this weight of horrid things waiting to be done….And then maybe I go into the beautiful studio and see some sketches about and feel my skin bursting with things I want to say, with things the place said to me that I want to express and dive into, to live—and there’s that filthy furnace to clean out and wood to chop and sweeping and dusting and scrubbing and gardening.

…Now go out, old girl, and split bark and empty ashes and rake and mend the fence. Yet, should I? Or should I climb higher, shut my eyes to these things and paint? Rise above the material? No—I think you’ve got to climb through these things to the other. (H&T 279-280)

In these poignant passages Emily Carr gets us out of the patriarchal family home, out of the leaning tower, and even out of a room of one’s own. She offers us what the artist feels after spending a day working like Mrs. McNab, for Carr remained an artist through those years; she painted the huge mural of eagles inside the attic ceiling, and sleeping there would feel their power supporting her.10

Char in Fiction

A connection—or collision—between Emily Carr and “Time Passes” ignites at the site or sight of Mrs. McNab. With Emily Carr’s struggles fresh in mind, phrases from the description of the charwoman strike us anew:

…lurched…leered—witless, she knew it…leering sideways at her swinging figure…the toothless, bonneted, care-taking woman […] with her sidelong leer which slipped and turned aside even from her own face, and her own sorrows,…Visions of joy there must have been at the wash-tub, […]. The mystic, the visionary, walking the beach on a fine night, stirring a puddle, looking at a stone, asking themselves “What am I,” “What is this?” had suddenly an answer vouchsafed them: (they could not say what it was) so that they were warm in the frost and had comfort in the desert. But Mrs. McNab continued to drink and gossip as before. (TTL 134-5)
I could not help wincing; read from the perspective of Emily Carr’s experience, Woolf’s portrayal of Mrs. McNab seems brutal and dismissive. The juxtaposition makes me realize the “shoddy old fetters” (AROO 82) of the intellectual aristocracy on our feet, in our unexamined assumptions. A passage from A Room of One’s Own leaps to my uneasy mind: “Again if one is a woman, one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilization, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical” (96). But for me this time it is not about gender (as it was for Woolf). It is rather akin to the splitting off I feel when in “Character in Fiction” Woolf notes that “on or about December 1910 human character changed” (421) and then supports her claim by noting that “in life one can see the change, if I may use a homely illustration, in the character of one’s cook” (422). “One’s cook.” Oh my. I don’t have a cook. Do you? With wry amusement, I notice that, in my notes, I have begun to abbreviate “Character in Fiction” as “Char in Fiction.” Stop and think. What can we do with that “alien and critical” point of view, those moments when Woolf’s “we” does not include “us” or “me”? How can such shocks wake us up and make us think anew? What else might we be missing, we ask? Such wake-up calls, such blows from behind the cotton wool of our cultural assumptions, though at first jolting, refresh our minds and hone our critical skills. We can learn things from reading in collision with Woolf.

What does it teach me? Reading these “Time Passes” passages after reading Carr’s journals and witnessing her work on canvas and as landlady, I find myself startled open to re-envision Mrs. McNab as an artist rather than a caricature of the cartoon Char. Mary Lou Emery finds that the references to Lily’s paintings and the servants’ bedrooms “might allude, then, to a possible future in which servants and women painters will form an alternative artistic community” (230). Emery ends her article asking “What social relationships, what kind of womanhood, what kind of beauty would Mrs. McNab’s knowing ‘mumblings’ disclose were she to tell the story and decide its meaning?” (233). I would add, what medium would her vision take?

A Change of Direction

I would venture the movies. The aesthetic dilemma and dynamics of Mrs. McNab projecting in the empty house become richer when we place them in the context of 1925-27, years when Woolf was engaged with the cinema and its possibilities. “Time Passes” is intensely cinematic; “All is hubble-bubble, swarm and chaos”—a phrase Woolf uses in 1926 to describe film. “The Cinema” imagines the creative possibilities of film to disrupt space as well as time: “the past could be unrolled, distances annihilated” (E4 595). Little airs like moving cameras steal about the house; with those airs, we glide through moving pictures. And, of course, Mrs. McNab projects home movies of past scenes in the patriarchal picture palace. With allusions to the music hall, and a plethora of images of light and projection, the cinematic quality of “Time Passes” is pervasive. And, I would argue, a conceptual key to the shifting timelines in To the Lighthouse is provided by “The Cinema”: Woolf explores the temporal disconnect that occurs when a spectator screens the past via film, noting how disconcerting that is and what odd emotions it elicits. This retro-spectacle, viewing the past from the present, continues to intrigue her; To the Lighthouse shows the creative and conceptual possibilities this
opened up for her fiction. Taking inspiration from film, Woolf disrupts time in *To the Lighthouse* and *projects* the past in a stunning way, replicating for her reader the startling experience of screening the past that intrigues and baffles the spectator in “The Cinema” essay. “Witless, she knew it,” Mrs. McNab may remind us of the “accidental” cinematic tadpole in “The Cinema”: “For a moment it seemed to embody some monstrous diseased imagination of the lunatic’s brain” (350). Is Mrs. McNab the leering lurching camerawoman of the future, the appropriate director figure for the art Woolf dismissed at first as ‘stupid’?

Illustrations 6 and 7: Mrs. McNab, director, projects movies of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay onto Talland House: “She could see her now, stooping over her flowers; and faint and flickering, like a yellow beam or the circle at the end of a telescope, a lady in a grey cloak, stooping over her flowers” (*TTL* 140).
As we consider the passages presenting Mrs. McNab’s film clips of the Ramsays, those quirky telescope-like home movies projected flickering across the walls during the “Time Passes” section, we may recall the telescopic circle of light, a cinematic image Woolf shared with Vita Sackville-West. In *Twelve Days*, published by Hogarth Press, Vita describes her memories of her trek using this cinematic image: “I look back as through a telescope, and see, in the little bright circle of the glass, moving flocks and ruined cities” (10). In “Time Passes, “ Mrs. McNab is the one who directs the magic cinematic telescope that beams images from back in time:

She could see her, as she came up the drive with the washing, stooping over her flowers (the garden was a pitiful sight now, all run to riot, and rabbits scuttling at you out of the beds)—she could see her with one of the children by her in that grey cloak. 

[...] Yes, she could see Mrs. Ramsay as she came up the drive with the washing. 

“Good-evening, Mrs. McNab,” she would say.

[...]

“Good-evening, Mrs. McNab,” she said, and told cook to keep a plate of milk soup for her—quite thought she wanted it, carrying that heavy basket all the way up from town. She could see her now, stooping over her flowers; and faint and flickering, like a yellow beam or the circle at the end of a telescope, a lady in a grey cloak, stooping over her flowers, went wandering over the bedroom wall, up the dressing-table, across the wash-stand, as Mrs. McNab hobbled and ambled, dusting, straightening. (140)12

What power could now prevent the fertility, the insensibility of nature? Mrs. McNab’s dream of a lady, of a child, or a plate of milk soup? It had wavered over the walls like a spot of sunlight and vanished. *(TTL* 142)

Once more, as she felt the tea warm in her, the telescope fitted itself to Mrs. McNab’s eyes, and in a ring of light she saw the old gentleman, lean as a rake, wagging his head, as she came up with the washing, talking to himself, she supposed, on the lawn. He never noticed her. *(TTL* 143-144)

The temporal telescope is one odd cinematic image in this passage; the looking glass is another that both stimulates and vexes. Mrs. McNab “gaped in the glass” with “her sidelong leer which slipped and turned aside even from her own face” (135); her visions of joy at the washtub “which must have been” are not shown to us. Likewise, the most poignant movie is one that plays to the empty house:

What people had shed and left—a pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in wardrobes—those alone kept the human shape and in the emptiness indicated how once they were filled and animated; how once hands were busy with hooks and buttons; how once the looking-glass had held a face;
had held a world hollowed out in which a figure turned, a hand flashed, the door opened, in came children rushing and tumbling; and went out again. (TTL 133)

Animatographs were, of course, an early term for films; as Mrs. McNab directs animated emptiness that dances across the walls of the patriarchal family home, we may notice that her animatographs are limited to the Ramsays. Her own private visions at the washtub are not projected. Yet, we can imagine! Who knows what is projected or painted on the ceiling of her attic? For attics are not only storage places; they can be places to restore us, as Carr demonstrates (30). Just as Lily dismisses her paintings, Mrs. McNab’s movies may not matter; they flit over the surfaces and are pointedly powerless to shift the paradigm. Yet, if we recall what Lily claims, channeling Augustus Carmichael in the final part of the novel, such visions, impotent as they seem, do matter:

That would have been his answer, presumably—how “you” and “I” and “she” pass and vanish; nothing stays; all changes; but not words, not paint. Yet it would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be rolled up and flung under a sofa; yet even so, even of a picture like that, it was true. One might say, even of this scrawl, not of that actual picture, perhaps, but of what it attempted, that it “remained for ever.” (182-3)

If visions do endure, we should not be so quick to dismiss McNab as director.

**Plug In**

If Woolf’s statement about strong emotion leaving its trace is true, the attic has a lot to tell us if we plug in. When Mrs. McNab comes again, along with Judith Shakespeare and Mary Carmichael—and perhaps she has come in us, in schoolmistresses in shoals, in professors, common readers or struggling artists with a day job—let’s lend her a hand, and help capture her vision. Turn up the Attic, 1913-2012. And, I would argue, the attic and basement are only some of the unexplored spaces to envision; many await us in the twenty-first century. Let us bring Emily Carr’s “Fresh Seeing” to the times of our daily lives and the sites of our day jobs. In the classroom, designing a syllabus, attending a committee meeting, walking the dog, giving a lecture, washing dishes, scrubbing the tub, mentoring, musing, workshopping essays, grading papers, surviving faculty meetings…

We, the International Virginia Woolf Society, formed ourselves as a society for asking questions. Through the decades, reading and rereading Woolf’s works, excavating in archives, putting this in relation to that, we trespass onto new turf, stumble into treasures, share visions with Mrs. McNab and, even, write back to Woolf. Let us together celebrate the art of it—this multi-disciplinary academic enterprise which we Char or Chair. Woolf argued in “Oxford Street Tide” that one cannot expect, would not want in fact to become, iconic, monolithic, known:

We do not build for our descendants, who may live up in the clouds or down in the earth, but for ourselves and our own needs. We knock down and rebuild
as we expect to be knocked down and rebuilt. It is an impulse that makes for creation and fertility. Discovery is stimulated and invention on the alert. (24)

With all our questionings and explorations, we continue to remake Woolf studies; now, perhaps, we encounter a post-iconic Woolf as we continue to bring up the “So What?” and “Now what?” questions. “Time has whizzed back an inch or two on its reel,” but it also whizzes forward. Let’s continue to have—and relate—our visions.14

Postcards: Write Back

What new questions, will we raise? What new ways of relating? Write back. In your scholarship or…a postcard to the International Virginia Woolf Society.

Notes

1. For Emily Carr’s St Ives Sketchbook, see: http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/EmilyCarr/en/search/index.php
3. Despite the ubiquitous phrase, “Wish you were here,” neither the sender nor the receiver of a postcard is “here” in the picture; postcards play with space and time just as films do. Somewhat of an exception, as Maggie Humm shows us in her talk, are those postcards made from pictures taken of and by the sender and developed as a postcard. But the usual postcard is a picture of a site encouraging the receiver to imagine the sender in the site, or expressing the wish that the receiver could join the sender in the site. Hence, the site invites fantasy even as it posits actuality.
6. See: http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/emily_carr and search for Olsson Student sketchbook
7. See paintings: Brittany Landscape (1910-11) and Autumn in France (1910-11).
8. See painting: Skidegate (1912).
11. I find Woolf’s portrayal of Mrs. McNab in the holograph draft, edited by Susan Dick, more nuanced and positive than the published version, which crafts a harsher caricature. Why? One possible explanation (but it is not a generous one) may be surmised from Frank Swinnerton’s article in Good Housekeeping in 1938, “Charladies,” in which he argues that chars serve as the general butt for writers. Woolf and Swinnerton were always at odds (he accuses her of elitism and she dismisses him as a “robin” or a Grub Street hack), but his take on the char’s fate in fiction would make an interesting companion piece with “Time Passes.” He asserts, “The charlady, at heart, resembles ourselves. She prefers to be treated, within reason, as if she were human. Is she to blame for that?” (171) and “Poor woman, she has no redress! All that those of us who respect her can do is to make whenever possible a plea that she should be considered as an individual, and not abandoned without protest to the twin infamies of slavery and ridicule” (172-3). In a letter of 10 November 1929, transcribed by Stephen Barkway, we have more evidence of Woolf’s odd take on the char; she both ridicules and identifies with a char in a letter to the aristocrat, Christabel McLaren. As Barkway notes, Woolf signs off the letter: “Your afflicted but faithful old family servant that has moved in the best circles & only goes charring to oblige—Virginia” (39).
12. These passages echo—even in phrasing—the passage from Virginia Stephen's Cornwall Diary quoted earlier, which explores links between memory and photography, though of course as moving pictures they suggest cinema. The ambiguity of the she/her referents raises interesting questions, too, about who is directing.

13. Frank Swinnerton opines, “But nobody will ever know the private history of a char. They keep nearly all their secrets to themselves” (“Charladies” in Tokefield 165).

14. Q&A after the plenary introduced me to Kate Braid’s book, Inward to the Bones: Georgia O'Keeffe’s Journey with Emily Carr (2nd edition, 2010). One speaker suggested Nina Hamnett as a possible model for Lily. André Gérard wrote me a rich note offering a compelling argument for Sylvia Gosse as a model.

List of Illustrations

1. Postcard. No postmark. “Nellie” written in the place of the stamp and “Mildred” written in the address area. n.d.
6. Collage of Mrs. McNab’s projected film clips of Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay on the façade of Talland House.
7. Same as in n. 6.

Works Cited and Consulted


Between the Acts, I would like to argue, is formally one of Woolf’s most forward-thinking texts; the novel as a whole and La Trobe’s play in particular constitute Woolf’s manifesto for the role the autonomous work of art plays in dreadful times. It seems ironic, then, that I need to go back in history to highlight this novel’s innovations, first to the infamous year 1910, and then even further to the Greeks. Woolf’s essay “Character in Fiction” marked 1910 as a year of profound change; many Woolf scholars agree that the choice of date is at least partly a reference to Roger Fry’s exhibition “Manet and the Post-Impressionists” at the Grafton Galleries. In turn, Fry’s influential formalist aesthetics can be seen as the opening gesture toward a theory of autonomous art. Hans Georg Gadamer and Theodor Adorno, two of the century’s most important theorists of the autonomy of art, also view 1910 as a significant moment. In “The Relevance of the Beautiful,” Gadamer describes the “Cubist break with tradition, which led to the total elimination of any reference to an external object of the process of artistic creation,” arguing that epistemological crises like those which attended modernity inevitably question the “truth” of art, and in turn, question the forms that truth has taken, producing formal revolutions like those we can see in Cezanne’s paintings, Picasso’s collages, or Woolf’s novels. Adorno observes that while in 1910 “the place of art became uncertain” its “autonomy remains irrevocable” (Aesthetic Theory 1). Gadamer and Adorno came to see the autonomy of art as a species of paradoxically engaged disengagement. For Adorno “Art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art. By crystallizing in itself as something unique to itself, rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as ‘socially useful,’ it criticizes society by merely existing “ (225-6). The autonomous work of art achieves its autonomy by means of its form. As Denis Donoghue writes in Speaking of Beauty

Form is counter-statement…Society makes statements and sends forth instructions, edicts, laws, definitions of reality. Literature makes counterstatements…. It makes these counter-statements not discursively but formally: as particular forms to be apprehended, achievements of invention and style, the right words in the right order, proprieties of cadence and invention. That is why it cannot be reduced to the journalism of themes or the commonplaces of social practice. Works of literature are forms of composition rather than forms of designation. (114)

Enter the Greeks, stage left. As early as her 1925 essay, “On Not Knowing Greek,” Woolf writes about contingent aesthetics of drama performed out of doors. A certain larger-than-life boldness is needed; for his Elektra, Sophocles “chose a design which, if it failed, would show its failure in gashes and ruin”; a design that echoes the bold formal
gestures necessitated by Miss La Trobe’s vision of a vast historic panorama and the limits of a summer afternoon (E4 41). Such “gashes” are evident in her omission of a scene in “Where there’s a will there’s a way,” or in the gap of 200 years between that mock-restoration comedy and her version of the Victorians. In her essay on the Greeks, Woolf also explains how the brevity of his plays required Euripides “to place together two apparently unrelated statements and trust to you [the audience] to pull them together” just as La Trobe frequently asks her audience to interpret her juxtaposition, say, of a Victorian policeman and a lovers’ discussion about becoming missionaries, and to consider the common cultural denominator (E4 44). Woolf’s comment on Greek theater also considers the importance of a chorus to “give [the audience] their relation to the play as a whole”; similarly, Miss La Trobe’s chorus, when they can be heard, gives the audience a sense of the everyday lives that provide a context for the scenes the pageant highlights (E4 43). It is perhaps no surprise, then, that one of the members of La Trobe’s audience wonders if “those voices from the bushes” were “Oracles” and whether Miss La Trobe was “referring to the Greeks” (BTA 178).

In a more recent work on both the Greeks and the autonomy of art, Fiction Agonistes, Gregory Jusdanis argues that autonomy is facilitated by parabasis, that moment in Athenian Old Comedy when “members of the chorus step off the stage, remove their masks and costumes, to address the audience on matters of social, cultural, and political import” (71). While this occurred literally in Greek drama, Jusdanis argues that in twentieth- and twenty-first-century texts, the parabatic moment is facilitated by formal choices like those inherent in Miss La Trobe’s fragmented and idiosyncratic play. Struggling to articulate this difficult concept, “the autonomy of art,” Jusdanis resorts to metaphors, at least one of which echoes Woolf’s image, in A Room of One’s Own, of fiction as a spider’s web:

> Often I imagine it as a fence, dividing a field from an invented one, being part of each, yet also standing on its own. The fence signifies both the separation and the conjuncture of one patch with the other…. Other times I think of a spider web, fashioned between branches of two trees. While connected to them, it keeps its own shape. The web has its own integrity but would collapse without the support of the limbs…Autonomy signifies an entity’s dependence on the environment rather than its isolation. (56)

Jusdanis will argue, as do Adorno, Gadamer, and Donoghue, that the parabatic moment is manifested in the form of a work that, while articulating the work’s relationship to a particular historical moment, also creates the possibility of its independence.

Formalist aesthetics would have been on Woolf’s mind as she wrote Between the Acts, given that its composition overlapped her work on Roger Fry’s biography. As well, her questions about the role that autonomous art could play in a Europe on the edge of a nightmare are revealed in her diaries. During this period, the well-informed Woolfs could hear Hitler’s voice—sometimes “mere violent rant,” other times “a savage howl”—on the radio (D5 169), prompting her to think of her work on Fry’s biography as a response to Hitler and Fascism that affirms her belief in art as a response to political events. As early as September of 1938, when events in Europe suggested that “Hitler meant to slide sideways into war,” Woolf wrote in her journal that “To oppose this with Roger my only private
position. Well thats [sic] an absurd little match to strike” (170). In September of 1939, shortly after Hitler had taken Danzig, Woolf wrote that “this is bosh & stuffing compared with the reality of...writing, & re-writing one sentence of Roger. So this experiment proves the reality of the mind” (233). Three days later, having felt demoralized, horrified, and rebellious, she reflects “And the only contribution one can make—This little pitter patter of ideas is my whiff of shot in the cause of freedom” (235). Writing Roger Fry, a kind of meditation upon the man who both understood and advocated the formal qualities of art, qualities that guaranteed art’s autonomy, and upon the man whose lectures represented “the best way of checking Nazism” as she wrote in a letter to Benedict Nicholson (L6 414), might seem like a small gesture in the face of the events leading up to the war. Nevertheless, these comments suggest she believed that such a gesture was perhaps one of the most significant she could make because the autonomy of art, boldly put, guarantees the critical independence and freedom of both the artist and the reader. “Thinking is my fighting,” she wrote on May 15, 1940 (D5 285).

On the other hand, in her more private moments Woolf felt that conditions made it impossible for artists to do their best work. In June of 1940, in an uncollected letter to Mrs. Fisher, who edited the “Women’s Forum” for which “Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid” was written, Woolf writes that “conditions in England are such that I have to face the fact that all writing may become impossible” (E6 247). Echoing Alex Zwerdling, Karen Schneider argues that the rise of European fascism undermined Woolf’s “faith in the efficacy of art to effect social transformation,” but essays like “The Leaning Tower” also have their hopeful moments, many of which depend upon a community of readers just as La Trobe’s play depends upon its audience. In “The Leaning Tower,” Woolf celebrates the public library that allows anyone who wishes to read; in turn those readers will “preserve and create,” but only if they have struggled independently “to understand literature” (277). Quoting Leslie Stephen’s edict for both walkers and thinkers, that if one finds a “board up with ‘Trespassers will be prosecuted,’ trespass at once,” Woolf advises the members of the Workers Educational Association to

trespass at once. Literature is no one’s private ground; literature is common ground. It is not cut up into nations; there are no wars there. Let us trespass freely and fearlessly and find our own way for ourselves. It is thus that English literature will survive this war and cross the gulf [between the current historical moment and a time after the inevitable war]—if commoners and outsiders like ourselves make that country our own country, if we teach ourselves how to read and how to write, how to preserve and how to create. (278)

Woolf believed in readers, believed in their ability to influence the writer in a process of cultural osmosis she described in one of her final essays as “private people...pressing their weight of unexpressed emotion upon the writer’s consciousness” (“Anon,” E6 598). Readers’ insightful and incisive critiques improved literature; their praise and continued attention generated the tradition to which writers turned to understand the many books that would help influence and shape their own.

Yet her belief in readers was not unalloyed. In June and July of 1940 she would use the phrase “no echo” to describe her sense that the social context supporting the writer was
failing to provide a critical and creative mirror (see D5 293, 299, 304, 305, 357). After the retreat from Dunkirk, after she and Leonard had their conversation about committing suicide in the garage, she writes that “the writing ‘I’, [sic; comma in orig.] has vanished. No audience. No echo. That’s part of one’s death. Not altogether serious, for I correct Roger: send finally I hope tomorrow: & could finish P.H. But it is a fact—this disappearance of an echo” (293). A couple of weeks later, with Roger Fry finished, the lack of an echo remains, but the sense of threat is more intense: “No echo comes back. I have no surroundings. I have so little sense of a public that I forget about Roger coming or not coming out. Those familiar circumvolutions—those standards—which have for so many years given back and echo & so thickened my identity are all wide and wild as the desert now” (299). This insistent metaphor suggests a model for the partnership between writer and reader: each echoes the other. The public and the reader press the weight of their consciousness upon the writer; in turn, if the writer captures this experience and consciousness in a way that is expressive and meaningful, the reader sends reassuring echoes back to the writer. It is a process alluded to in the echo between La Trobe’s vision of her next play and the final scene of the novel. It is a process that speaks to the importance of parabasis, to the artist’s ability to speak to her audience, citizen to citizen, to make “counterstatements.” It is also a process that demands the free and critical reaction of the audience if art is to continue to maintain the effectiveness of its autonomy.

If Virginia Woolf had said to herself ‘How can I reflect the role art must play at this difficult historical moment? And how can I do all this in a way that is autonomous, leaving the audience its freedom while prompting them to think for themselves?’ she could not have found a more fitting, apposite form or project than Between the Acts. The novel, in spite of her misgivings, reflects the glimmers of hope she had expressed in her letters and diaries. At the same time, her sense that the influences of art are being compromised is reflected in Miss La Trobe’s feeling of failure, though the novel itself suggests that her sense of failure does not reveal the full impact of her pageant. David McWhirter comments that Woolf is looking for “a form that apprehends wholeness without imposing ideological closure” (791); similarly Michele Pridmore-Brown remarks that “where Nazis and Italian Fascists tried to create the nation as a work of art in which one perspective prevailed, she [Woolf] argues for a form of work that is open-ended and provisional” (419). Melba Cuddy-Keane notes that Woolf undermines authorities in a number of ways; La Trobe clearly doesn’t have complete control of her art, and Streathfield’s “lecture” on the meaning of the pageant is “ridiculous” (278, 277). These observations on the unstable, open-ended form of Between the Acts gesture toward my argument that both the novel and the play within it are autonomous works of art that explore what art can accomplish under the pressure of history and illustrate how art can engage its audience in the act of reflection through formal strategies that are parabatic.

Her incorporation of a play within a novel gives Woolf an opportunity to practice parabasis in several ways. First, she can explore the parabatic moment through the pageant’s various methods, formal and literal, of addressing the audience, just as the Greeks did with the chorus. La Trobe’s chorus speaks to Woolf’s historiography, to her sense, often expressed in her essays, that our historical knowledge of everyday life is fragmentary, that its preservation often depends on something as unpredictable as the direction the wind is blowing. “Digging and delving (they sang), hedging and ditching, we pass…Summer
and winter, autumn and spring return...All passes but we, all changes...but we remain forever the same...(the breeze blew gaps between their words) [...] the Queen and the Watch Tower fall...for Agamemnon has ridden away...Clytemnestra is nothing but...” The words died away. Only a few great names—Babylon, Nineveh, Clytemnestra, Agamemnon, Troy—floated across the open space” (125; ellipses in original). The chorus suggests that in spite of enormous historical changes something of the human and its labor remains constant.

Second, Miss La Trobe’s representative historical figures—Queen Elizabeth, Reason, Budge the publican dressed as a Victorian policeman—also address the audience parabolically, representing what we might call “the spirit of the age.” But the limitations of this figure and the pretense the figure presupposes become clearer as the play goes on. At the end of the first act of “Where there’s a Will There’s a Way,” Bart exclaims “Reason, begad! Reason!” much to Miss La Trobe’s delight, as if to acknowledge her sense that there’s little relationship between a large idea, like the age of reason, and the literature that is concerned with issues of identity and personal desire which are historically and socially shaped as well as transgressive. As the policeman, Budge reveals the panoptic elements of Victorian society, prompting quite an uncomfortable visceral reaction from Mrs. Lynn Jones, who felt that “a sneer had been aimed at her father; therefore at herself.” Less defensively, Etty Springett muses on the complexity of the age: “Yet children did draw trucks in mines; there was the basement; yet Papa read Walter Scott aloud after dinner... How difficult to come to any conclusion. She wishes they would hurry on with the next scene. She liked to leave a theatre knowing exactly what was meant” (147). It is precisely this kind of de-stabilization and engagement that autonomous art hopes to create in audiences, prompting them to reflect on and query the literary representation of an historical moment.

Third, the minimal budget La Trobe has for the pageant undermines any attempt at realism and highlights the fact that the pageant is made up, not an unproblematic representation of the way the historical past actually was; in turn, spectators and readers might reflect that all art and much of history is artifice. Whether it is the swabs to scour saucepans that make up Queen Elizabeth’s cape (76), or the roughly painted wall that represents civilization (163), these elements of clear artifice establish her pageant’s autonomy with their self-reflexive questioning of any effort at representation. In a similar vein, each of the pageant’s actors is identified not merely by their role in the pageant, but by their place in the village—Hilda, the carpenter’s daughter, Budge the publican, Eliza Clark licensed to sell tobacco—to problematize the relationship between art and life, even to identify the fence of Jusdanis’s suggestive metaphor, and to illustrate how art is in effect a matter of citizens speaking to citizens.

Fourth, La Trobe’s very Greek delight in being able to produce the play outdoors reveals the extent to which she welcomes contingent events—a bawling calf, the brief shower, the airplanes overhead—as part of her purpose. Among other things, this is an acknowledgement of the fact that the interpretation of any autonomous work of art partakes of contingency, much of it provided by historical moments and social milieux. Perhaps Miss La Trobe’s most dangerous “experiment” is her use of “10 mins. of present time,” which acknowledges the role of social milieu and time to reflect on interpretation (161). After the brief fortuitous shower, at least some members of the audience will not be taken in by the vision of the League of Nations.
La Trobe’s most parabatic moment may occur when the actors replace the “fourth wall” with mirrors so the audience sees themselves (167). Intriguingly, they are outraged at suddenly being implicated in the autonomous work of art, although it is pointless without their engagement. While some members of the audience are willing to have the anonymous and clerical interpretations fobbed off on them, a goodly number leave with questions they want to talk to their friends about, the advantage of a pageant being that it brings them together for just such a purpose (143); indeed the conversations after the play are dominated with questions, and though some of these are about the virtues of crepe soles, others come closer to the point: “He said she meant we all act. Yes, but whose play? Ah, that’s the question! And if we’re left asking questions, isn’t it a failure, as a play? I must say I like to feel sure if I go to the theatre, that I’ve grasped the meaning…Or was that, perhaps what she meant?” (179-80; ellipses in original). Later someone comments on the unfortunate timing of the aeroplanes interrupting, “Unless of course she meant that very thing” (180). That evening over dinner at Pointz Hall Lucy starts the conversation: “‘What did it mean?’ and added: ‘The peasants; the kings; the fool and’ (she swallowed) ‘ourselves?’ They all looked at the play; Isa Giles and Mr Oliver. Each of course saw something different” (191-2).

Regardless of Miss La Trobe’s belief that her pageant has failed, she has managed to create an autonomous work of art that effects Jusdanis’s parabasis. The characters’ movements back and forth between the clearly made-up world of the pageant and their everyday lives “breach… art’s borders, creating the aesthetic clearance that Aristophanes perfected in the parabasis” (Jusdanis 94). The play within a novel both articulates and bridges a gap between the work of art and its social context; the play thus functions as a “metaphor for artistic engagement, a way of understanding art as keeper and violator of illusions” (Jusdanis 99) that Woolf thought necessary in this historical moment. La Trobe’s autonomous pageant guarantees the critical independence of creator and writer in a moment when Nazi Germany is sending forth totalitarian “edicts” (to use Burke’s word) that are not being similarly questioned by artists’ free counterstatements.

Note

Jane Goldman argues convincingly that Woolf’s choice of this date is a reference to the Suffrage Movement (109), while Frances Spalding examines the wider political resonance of that date (139).

Works Cited

WORK AS SALVATION: EUREKA’S *ANGEL IN THE HOUSE*,
A DIRECTOR’S EXPERIENCE

*by Charlie Peters*

The process of staging theater can be described as “solving the problem of the play” or answering the question: how are we going to take this story from the page and translate it into time and space for an audience? In the case of Eureka’s *Angel in the House*, the solution - if there is such a thing in a subjective discipline like drama – lay in uncovering the complexities of the piece, which were rooted in its history and the author’s intent. Indeed, both the thematic intentions and the historical details of the piece provided many tools by which to engage with the work. The key themes which emerged from the process of researching and rehearsing the play as its director, then interviewing its author in support of an archival project, were a cluster of issues including the fraught nature of community, the personal cost of the creative journey, and the redemptive value of artistic work.

When I was first presented with the script of *Angel in the House* by Eureka I didn’t know how to engage with its structure and form. Instead of a cause-and-effect plotline, the play relied on a unique combination of montage, association, and implication. I would later find that my thoughts had been expressed years earlier by director and dramaturge David Ganon who told Eureka bluntly, “this is not a play” (Eureka). Upon reading the script again, however, I began to get a stronger sense of how its atypical structure might actually be effective theatrically. As I began digging through reams of biography and commentary surrounding the play’s central characters, the structure of the play became clearer and so too did the play’s value. I realized that Eureka’s analysis and interpretation of the characters’ lives and artistic work created not just an enigmatic text, but a play that honestly and bluntly explored the nature of artistic community at the same time that it celebrated the labor of the artist. By the end of my journey as director of the play’s second full production, I found myself in the living room of Eureka’s New York apartment expressing my appreciation of her accomplishment and defending the merits of the play to its creator.

*Angel in the House* is a play whose story of coming to be is as unique as its plot. Detailing over 60 years in the lives of painters Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, members of the influential and controversial Bloomsbury Group, the story follows the pair from their beginnings as emerging artists struggling to sort out their personal and artistic desires, continues through family struggles and beyond two world wars, only ending with the death of Bell in 1961. The play’s own creation story begins in New York City during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s and moves across the continent to the city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada for an unexpected remount in the summer of 2012 as part of the 22nd Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf.

In the summer of 2011 I was approached by Professor Ann Martin, lead organizer of Interdisciplinary / Multidisciplinary Woolf. The conference emphasized an understanding of Woolf in as many contexts and through the lenses of as many disciplines as possible. As such, she wanted to include a play to reflect this interdisciplinary scope. She envisioned a production that would be thematically connected to the conference and would also
encourage unique research/performance relationships; the play brought together many generations of the University of Saskatchewan's Department of Drama including faculty (Professor Pamela Haig Bartley who played Vanessa Bell), alumni (Bob Wicks who played Duncan Grant and Angela Christie who served as Stage Manager) and current students (including myself as director, Laura Andreas as Assistant Stage Manager, Jeremy Smith as Set and Projections Designer, Jenna Maren as Costume and Properties Designer, and Adam Naismith as Lighting and Sound Designer). Professor Marie Lovrod, Head of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Saskatchewan and part of the conference organizing team, had suggested *Angel in the House*, having seen its first production 20 years before and having met its author when she and Eureka had both been conducting research at the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. The play found a new home in Saskatoon, a city of roughly 250,000 people in the heart of the Canadian prairie—and I found myself engaging with a text that poses significant challenges for a director.

My initial ambivalence to the play stemmed largely from its rejection of traditional dramatic structure. In no way did Eureka's biographical piece—spanning some 50 years, moving across Europe between lines of dialogue, and switching freely between direct address and seemingly naturalistic storytelling—conform to Aristotle's rules of plotting or any other conventional structure I had encountered. And yet, as I delved deeper into the piece I came to appreciate that this was quite fitting. Why, I asked myself, would a play about two artists, constantly innovating without regard for established ideas or artistic conventions, conform to my predetermined ideas about dramatic structuring? Indeed, it is highly appropriate that the play, like Woolf's novels or the artwork of Bell and Grant, should strive only to be faithful unto itself.

My continuing interest in the play was roused by its exploration of sexuality and atypical marital arrangements, and its status as an adaptation of another artistic medium. Having just adapted several poems on the subject of death into a performance piece, *A Play About Death*, I was interested in the interplay between Eureka's source texts—the art of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, as well as the biographical material she drew upon in the writing process—and the resulting play script. I was also interested in the play as an exploration of the Bloomsbury Group. Indeed, I was star struck by the cast of characters—not just those presented onstage, but also those to whom Bell and Grant refer: Virginia Woolf, Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, and Clive Bell. These were all names I had encountered during my studies but, ironically, the play's central characters, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, were not.

Having been approached about the project in the summer of 2011, I had almost a full year to prepare before the June 5th, 2012 opening night. I read many biographies of Bell and Grant, and much analysis of their lives and art. This research led directly to many of our design choices. We felt that the art was such an important part of the story, that it should occupy a place of paramount importance. As such, the set was kept simple, but featured a giant canvas screen center-stage onto which was projected over 30 paintings by Bell and Grant (as well as Caravaggio and others) during the course of the one-hour play. We also decided to embrace the non-realist structure of the script in the lighting design, which was modeled off of the extreme angles used in still life painting. I felt, as we began rehearsals, that our choices would bring to life the absolute submersion into art that characterized the lives of these world-changing figures.
Pleased with our design choices related to the art, I entered the rehearsal process interested in exploring with the actors how it was that Bell and Grant made their eclectic and unique household at Charleston function. As we rehearsed, however, it became clear that for the actors, the key to the play was not how the household and relationship functioned but rather how their dysfunctional nature reflected the struggle of the characters with their era, their gender roles, and the demands of their art. Though it was not our intention from the onset, in later rehearsals our exploration of the piece came to focus on the ways in which the characters hurt and were hurt by one another. Moments of accord between Vanessa and Duncan seemed to present themselves naturally in our rehearsals and required relatively little finessing. But finding the balance between how these two could hurt one another—as they clearly did—and still function as a couple was hard to strike. We went back and forth many times, repeatedly re-evaluating decisions as to how to interpret certain lines, certain moments in the play. In dozens of places throughout the script, Eureka seemed to present us with multiple, equally interesting options: is this line, this silence, this action intended to hurt, or is it unintentionally cruel? Almost always it was Bob Wicks as Duncan who found himself hurting Haig Barley’s Vanessa.

In the first rehearsal, Wicks identified his thematic interest in the play’s emphasis on the price one pays to achieve artistic greatness. In the context of Angel in the House, he was referring to the sacrifices Vanessa makes that allow Duncan the freedom to concentrate on his painting—something Pam identified early and which formed the core of her understanding of the characters’ relationship. As Eureka presents the pair, Vanessa takes responsibility for running the household. Even Duncan’s time spent as a farm laborer is arranged by Vanessa to enable him to avoid conscription, and the scenes imply that he continues to rely on her for his material needs like food. He is not un-loving of Vanessa, their daughter Angelica, or anyone else; he is, however, blind to Vanessa’s labor and the toll it takes. Haig Bartley had to strike a fine balance between Vanessa’s role as artist and her role as the sacrificial caregiver who loves at the expense of her art. All of this mirrored the desire Eureka expressed when interviewed: to answer the question “what was the price… for [the inhabitants of Charleston] and for everyone who surrounded them?” (Eureka).

The title of Angel in the House is a reference to an eponymous 1800s poem by Coventry Patmore outlining what would become the Victorian ideal of a woman: “her ignorance… enhance[s] / her beauty [in the eyes of men] with pathetic force…man must be pleased; / but him to please is woman’s pleasure” (Patmore 83). Virginia Woolf wrote that the self-sacrificing, self-effacing Angel “bothered me and wasted my time and tormented me so that at last I killed her” (141). Woolf’s argument is that, in the same way that a woman writer must have money and a room of one’s own, to be an artist—one must be free of the restraints of social expectations in order to thrive. Though this was the case at Charleston, where artists retreated to form their own unique community away from the world, and though Vanessa Bell’s relationship with Grant suggests her rejection of Victorian sexual norms, her work in the house was clearly in tension with her work in her studio.

It seems fitting, then, that the conflict between the characters, more than their lasting accord, would form the basis of our work in developing the production. Beyond the simple fact that drama is the product of characters in conflict, the play’s very genesis lies in feelings of pain, loss, and aggrieved love for both its subjects and for its author. I did not appreciate until long after the production had ended, how much the balance between love and anger,
pain and desire that is depicted in the play reflected the circumstances of the work’s creation. Where the household at Charleston held together despite the turbulent times and even more turbulent living arrangements of its various members, Eureka described the dressing rooms of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company—a New York troupe with which Eureka worked for decades as actor and director—in much the same terms, providing a fascinating insight into the contexts out of which she wrote the play.

In June of 2012 I traveled to New York City to interview Eureka and other members of the original production’s creative team as part of a research fellowship from the University of Saskatchewan’s Interdisciplinary Centre for Culture and Creativity. I had corresponded with Eureka during my preparation for directing the play and during the rehearsal process but we had never met. Nevertheless, she was gracious enough to welcome me into her apartment, feeding me cookies and sparkling water, and speaking to me for hours about the writing and first production of *Angel in the House*. Over the course of 7 days in New York we met many times, in her apartment, in some of her favorite restaurants, and at The Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, a special collection which houses many letters and other Bloomsbury paraphernalia where Eureka spent months researching Bell, Grant, Woolf and their circle first for pleasure, and later specifically as research to fuel the play. In addition to offering her own thoughts, Eureka arranged for me to meet with her husband, Jim Freeman, the original production’s producer; David Ganon, the play’s original director and dramaturge; and Paula Zangler, the set designer for the original production.

After meeting Eureka I began to see the significance of the play’s characters and setting in a different light, as the autobiographical elements of the text suggested powerful parallels between Vanessa and Eureka, artists who attempted to create amidst gendered, sexed, and social pressures. During conversations I found that Charleston and the Bloomsbury group was a source of academic and personal fascination for Eureka, but also that her research was a refuge from the turbulence of life in New York City in the early 1990s. Eureka had been a prominent member of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company for many years by the time the AIDS crisis hit. The Ridiculous, a theater company whose membership was largely queer, found itself at the heart of a rapidly unfolding epidemic. First to die was the company’s founder/director/playwright-in-residence, Charles Ludlam. Many of the company’s core members followed. “These people were, as far as I was concerned, irreplaceable,” Eureka explained. It was a time of “absolute terror” (Eureka) in which funerals took place weekly and each memorial service was intended to upstage the last in a morbid competition. For Eureka, Vanessa Bell’s anxiety about and experience of losing friends and loved ones to war resonated deeply. From this parallel experience sprung some of the most passionate sections of the early parts of *Angel in the House*. When the character of Vanessa speaks of “shell shock, bayonet charges, and mustard gas” (Eureka), the playwright must surely have been imagining the horrifically debilitating effects of AIDS on some of her nearest and dearest.

There was, however, a less-apparent source of sufferings with which Eureka had to struggle quite beyond the horror of AIDS sweeping through her community. As a straight woman in a community made up largely of gay men, she found herself marginalized because of her sexual orientation. In the early days of the crisis, the perception within the company as within the broader culture was that AIDS would affect only gay men. She was thus seen as immune. The words “gay cancer” brought a grimace to Eureka’s face as
she spoke them over 20 years after they were first used. Ironically, her lack of vulnerability to the epidemic became a source of great pain. She found herself caught between two impulses: “I was stuck between trying to be the mommy…and [being] the enemy. I was the enemy for a lot of [the gay members of the Ridiculous] because I was not at risk. They knew it. They were jealous of it. They were angry, you know? I mean they were enraged. There was so much rage” (Eureka). This anger made it hard for Eureka to continue acting with the company. On many occasions she pondered leaving, for her own sanity and for the well-being of the other members of Ridiculous for whom she seemed to be a constant reminder of their plight. One of the most effective methods of coping that she developed during this time was to bury herself in writing: “I wanted to be distracted while in the theatre,” she explained. Indeed, though she was mocked by her cast-mates, much of her time off stage was spent huddled in the dressing room working on what would become *Angel in the House*.

Eureka’s Vanessa Bell struggles with Duncan’s sexuality. She has no moral objection as many of her Victorian contemporaries would have; rather, she struggles because his attraction to men (and other women) dooms her to having her heart broken again and again. At a climactic moment in the *Angel in the House* Vanessa insists, “you can’t love them [all]… not really.” She has then to endure his earnest, pleading reply: “but I do.” She takes little comfort from Duncan’s attempt to reassure her that “it doesn’t affect the way I feel for you or Angelica,” their daughter together. The parallel with Eureka’s life is clear. She had been a long-time ally of the gay community, a straight woman surrounded by gay men and women. With the AIDS crisis, the very people who had been her first and best friends when she moved to New York City had become distant and hostile towards her.

I was fascinated by Eureka’s identification with Bell. It seemed to me fitting that, in much the same way Woolf had become an icon in the gay movement, Bell—the less prominent sister—should be a source of solace for a woman who found herself shunned from that same movement, a movement with which she had proudly stood for many years. However, that very neglect was itself a source of inspiration for Eureka. Eureka had been a passionate Woolf enthusiast, and as she read the letters contained in the Berg collection she became increasingly aware of the then-neglected role Bell had played in Woolf’s life. Eureka explained that she wanted to honor the woman who had done so much to protect and nurture Virginia Woolf—and all the Bloomsberries—and yet had not, compared to those she had enabled, been equally honored. My own research had concurred with Eureka’s perspective: though the home Bell made at Charleston was the unofficial center of the Bloomsbury Group, it was Virginia’s reputation that had become central.

As well as a research space, the Berg became a refuge for Eureka. Its permission-only admittance policy and reverend silence, interrupted only by the scratching of pencils and the shuffling of old papers, must have been a welcome antithesis to the cacophony of the Ridiculous’ chaotic dressing rooms. Upon returning to the collection for the first time since writing the play, she declared to me “I forgot how much fun this was,” sighing and laughing as she examined some letters of Angelica Garnett which had been recently acquired, and thus were not part of her initial research.

Her love of research became something of a problem, however, when, in the words of Ganon, the first draft “was not a play” (Eureka) but a research report on Bell. Her director advised Eureka to decide whether she wanted to write a biography or a work of drama. What she accomplished, of course, was both. I believe it would have been impossible for
a conventional play to emerge from the creative process Eureka employed. There were too many forces influencing the work for it to be a straightforward exploration. The play that resulted from her work was chaotic and meandering, but so too were the lives of its subjects and the life of its creators.

The play does not contain a throughline in the conventional sense; rather, Eureka describes it as a series of monologues and “vignettes.” This unique structure is appropriate, I would argue, since it embodies Vanessa Bell’s multiple and not always connected sense of identity and creation. Angel in the House does not establish a cause-and-effect plot; rather, moments of significance are joined through proximity: two events that are not directly connected are presented one after the other with no pause in the action and, through their juxtaposition, they enable the audience to make inferences and discoveries about the characters for themselves. Indeed, the play prioritizes character—and to a lesser extent theme—over plot, and remains fascinatingly open-ended as a result. It was only after becoming aware of the complexities on which Eureka was drawing that I was enabled to fully appreciate the complexities of the resulting script.

Thematically, the play consistently explores the contexts in which art is produced. Early in the play Vanessa declares that “work is salvation.” This sentiment is echoed in various forms, most notably when Grant reminds her “work is the great thing.” She immediately affirms that philosophy by agreeing that work is “the only thing.” For the characters in the play, their disciplined pursuit of art is the only constant amid the turbulent changes they face in their personal lives. The connection to Eureka’s process is clear: her work on the play protected her during one of the darkest periods in her life. Throughout our process of staging the play, the redemptive power of work was important for our creative team as well. Because theater is temporal, reborn with each performance, there is only a hypothetical divide between the results and the process by which one achieves them. It was only through working and re-working that we could advance. My understanding evolved time and again as did our interpretation of the text. More importantly, only through diligent work each night, for each new audience, could our production come to be. Indeed, I am still unsure whether we quite presented this atypical work at its best. That said, having learned much about its origins since we staged the piece, I am confident we undertook and presented the play in the spirit in which it was intended: a spirit that does not shy away from pain, that acknowledges complexity, eschews simplification, and affirms the intrinsic human need to create.

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Works Cited

DRAWING AS THINKING: A VISUAL RESPONSE TO To the Lighthouse

by Sarah Blake

Virginia Woolf’s novel To the Lighthouse was my starting point for a series of drawings on paper. The drawings, and their relation to the novel, raise questions about the connections between writing and drawing—text and mark. I argue that both drawing and reading can be creative, even playful, activities that enable spontaneity and continuing dialogue. The Lighthouse drawings are inspired by my readings of To the Lighthouse and informed by some of Woolf’s other writings. In making these drawings I have explored how drawing and reading are both active practices, and how the practice of one can benefit the other. I suggest that drawing is a fundamentally exploratory and open-ended process. Through drawing and reading I have entered into a dialogue with the book object.

This project—to make a reading of To the Lighthouse through drawing—extends to a broader interest in the connections between text and mark-making. I suggest a correspondence between the fluidity of Mrs. Ramsay’s experience of reading in To the Lighthouse, and ideas of indeterminacy and open-ended exploration in drawing practice. Conversational drawing, for example, is a technique that encourages a collaborative approach to mark-making. This idea of drawing as an exploratory process resonates with my reading of To the Lighthouse.

Drawing is visual thinking. Reading too engenders thinking, if it is done effectively. The process of making the Lighthouse drawings was a way of actively engaging with the text, furthering my understanding, and confronting my uncertainties. In making drawings as a response to To the Lighthouse, I attempted to unravel the dynamic between book and reader, and present this relationship in material form.

To the Lighthouse can be read as an exploration of two opposing ways of thinking, and of how these contrasting mind-sets coexist and communicate with one other. From the start of the novel—where Mrs. Ramsay and James’s thoughts thread between each other, disrupted only by Mr. Ramsay’s need for attention—Woolf presents a collage of perspectives, as conscious beings communicate silently, sympathetically, or at cross purposes. Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay have, throughout the novel, moments of intense, unspoken communication. This takes on a heightened form when Mrs. Ramsay comes to sit with her husband after dinner. The children are in bed. Mr. Ramsay is reading Walter Scott. Husband and wife sit silently together, but remain attuned to one another. There is another kind of communication going on in this passage too. Words spoken over dinner come back to her:

[...]

and slowly these words . . . began washing from side to side of her mind rhythmically, and as they washed, words, like little shaded lights, one red, one blue, one yellow, lit up in the dark of her mind, and seemed leaving their perches up there to fly across and across [...]. (178)

In this passage, Woolf’s descriptions of thought and reading capture the fluidity and the fleetingness—the patterns—of consciousness. The series of drawings I have made are an attempt to respond to her descriptions of thought with a visual language of my own.
In my drawings the text is often fragmentary—words are submerged in, or emerge from, the paper. The words become marks—part of the fabric of the drawings.

Mrs. Ramsay takes up a book and begins to read. “She did not know at first what the words meant at all. [. . . ] she read and turned the page, swinging herself, zigzagging this way and that, from one line to another as from one branch to another” (179). Woolf contrasts Mrs. Ramsay’s creativity of thought against the firmness and accuracy of Mr. Ramsay’s mind, which—in his quest for R—is presented as rigidly, comically linear. Mrs. Ramsay’s mode of thought is, by contrast, dynamic. She makes leaps of thinking, sparks connections; she is unafraid of uncertainty. Mr. Ramsay’s mind seems brittle and unpliant by comparison.

*To the Lighthouse* can be read as a deliberate project to capture with language the processes of reading, painting, social interaction—all here presented as different forms of creative thinking. My drawings are an attempt to represent in material form one of the relationships her writing examines: the relationship between reader and book. In these pieces the physical material of the book—pages, type, pulp—is fragmented. Distorting and reconfiguring these elements, the text drawings offer an unfamiliar experience of viewing, and reading, the text.

The process of reading and making drawings in response to *To the Lighthouse* made me aware of the precision with which Woolf identifies and articulates different modes of thinking. Reading *To the Lighthouse* in the context of making led me to think about drawing and reading as active practices, and to question how these different activities can stimulate creative thinking.

In her essay “The Common Reader,” Woolf makes a claim for reading as an emphatically active pursuit. The common reader creates; “His deficiencies as a critic are too obvious to be pointed out,” yet he creates (11). In “On Not Knowing Greek,” the mind of the reader “begins,” she writes, “to fashion itself surroundings” (40). The reader makes, imagines, and creates. Woolf’s common reader thinks, pursues meaning, and creates in the act of reading. Drawing, too, can be a way of actively engaging with the text.

As a child I understood this concept instinctively. When I was small, my sister and I would sit opposite one another at the kitchen table, each with a pad of plain white paper in front of us and a large biscuit tin full of crayons and colored pencils between us. We would play “the drawing game.” We would decide on a scenario to begin, and then we would take it in turns to describe a scene from the story. We would both draw the episode and then show each other the page we had drawn. Then we would make up the next scene and draw that, and so on. The subjects of our stories were, perhaps inevitably, influenced by the books we were reading at the time: Georgette Heyer, in my sister’s case; Enid Blyton’s *Mallory Towers* books, in mine.

There was a sense of reciprocity in the way we played at drawing. We were drawing together. And books had naturally crept into the mix and coloured the conversations that we had through drawing. It strikes me now that this was a collaborative approach—a collaboration between people, their drawings, and their readings.

Some time later I was reintroduced to this idea of conversational drawing. A friend gave me an article to read which suggested the idea of drawing as conversation, and it made sense to me because of my earlier experience. She invited me to make a drawing with her. We sat down together at a table with a page from her sketchbook shared between
us and various drawing materials laid out: pencil, pen, charcoal stick, eraser. She made the first mark and I followed with another one. As we got into a rhythm I found that it really was a kind of conversation. We could choose to agree with one another’s marks by copying them, taking an idea introduced by the other further with some mark of our own; or we could begin making marks on a different part of the page, different kinds of marks, spontaneous instead of considered, harsh or delicate, pin points or sweeping lines. We would shade areas, or erase, or even cut and tear the page. We were in dialogue: we responded to each other, we were sympathetic to one another, we improvised, we played.

In her paper “Drawing Conversations: drawing as a dialogic activity,” Angela Roberts suggests that “drawing can bring people into an especially open, spontaneous and playful relationship and simultaneously produce an artefact that materialises the exchange between them.” She suggests that it is “the indeterminacy of drawing over time that allows this freedom of interaction.” I find a sympathy between this idea of open-ended dialogue and the playful, energetic thinking of Mrs. Ramsay—and, in particular, the way that she reads. Woolf writes of Mrs. Ramsay: “She did not know as first what the words meant at all” (179). Her mind zigzags; it swings and climbs. She does not search forcefully for meaning in her reading, but follows associations that become apparent. My notions of drawing and reading as forms of dialogue have grown out of my encounters with *To the Lighthouse*, and specifically with Woolf’s representation of ways of thinking.

Both drawing and reading can, to borrow Roberts’s phrase, “bring people into an especially open, spontaneous and playful relationship,” whether that be the relationship of drawer to drawing or reader to book. The Lighthouse drawings are an attempt to open a playful dialogue with Woolf’s novel through drawing and reading. My readings of *To the Lighthouse*, in turn, have affected the way I understand these two activities.

To make this point clearly, I will now focus on drawing in a broader context and explain what I mean when I talk about drawing’s capacity for openness and playfulness. I will also explain the relationship, as I see it, between drawing and reading. To do this, I will talk about two distinct areas of drawing theory which inform my practice: the indeterminacy of drawing, and the relationship between mark and text.

For me, one of drawing’s most powerful and seductive qualities is its openness. In her essay “To Draw is to be Human” curator Emma Dexter suggests that “drawing forever describes its own making in its becoming. In a sense, drawing is nothing more than that, and in its eternal incompleteness always re-enacts imperfection and incompleteness” (6). This sense of irresolution can be traced back through the history of drawing. Artist and curator Deanna Petherbridge asserts that: “Drawings are frequently part of a serial process—moving towards another state which might or might not end in a ‘finished’ painting, sculpture, building or artefact” (11). For Paul Klee this sense of perpetual incompleteness is a joyful characteristic of the act of drawing. He writes: “An active line on a walk, moving freely, without goal. A walk for a walk’s sake. The mobility agent is a point, shifting its position forward” (16). Drawing, as these practitioners define it, is an activity that will not be concluded. Its spirit is enquiring, exploratory, and joyfully incomplete. This is the basis of my approach to drawing, and it resonates with the playful, energetic, and exploratory thinking of Mrs. Ramsay.

But what are the connections between drawing and reading? The Greek word *graphein* has this relationship rooted within it: it means to write, draw, or scratch (Krčma 1).
I am interested in the connections between the drawn mark and the written word. My work explores the places where mark and word meet, and what can be taken from one of these spheres into the other. Most recently I have explored how text can be read as a series of marks shimmering between a textual language and a visual one. The artist Avis Newman suggests that these connections run deep: “In the inscriptive act of drawing,” she has said, “there exists the shadow of our ambivalent relation to making marks, before the time when ‘image’ and ‘text’ are differentiated . . . And when one looks at a drawing, there is a consciousness of the ghost of the ‘text’ in the ‘image’; the inscriptive nature of the activity holds the two in suspension, irrespective of what is being drawn” (73). I have explored the idea that text and image can be held in suspension through drawing. The idea that “there is a consciousness of the ghost of the ‘text’ in the ‘image’” reminds us of drawing’s capacity for indeterminacy. Drawing’s fluidity, its ability to accommodate meanings rather than shutting them down, resonates with Mrs. Ramsay’s approach to reading, making it a fitting tool with which to think about Woolf’s novel.

To the Lighthouse is an intensely visual novel. The flapping circus poster, the pulsing beams from the Lighthouse, Lily’s personal struggle to complete her painting: Woolf’s images often argue for the subjectivity of vision; the individual’s unique and fragmented perspective on their world. Under Woolf’s pen, the visual is personal, untidy, in disarray. “[T]he mind receives a myriad impressions,” Woolf writes in “Modern Fiction,” “trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel” (189). This phrase suggests visual disorder, and it echoes my understanding of To the Lighthouse as deeply, structurally fragmented; abstract; a collage of visual elements which gather meaning through their fruitful juxtapositions. This understanding of the novel was my starting point for the drawings.

I found “Modern Fiction” useful for expanding some of Woolf’s thinking about fiction-making, and one phrase in particular: “an incessant shower of innumerable atoms” (189). As a way of thinking about consciousness I found this illuminating but also weight ed with uncertainty. It seemed to correlate with my understanding of how Woolf represents consciousness in To the Lighthouse, and the importance of the visual in her approach. But I could not pin down its meaning. My drawings are one way of reacting to the things that I didn’t understand, or wasn’t able to articulate verbally. This image of “an incessant shower of innumerable atoms” has been important to me in the way I have thought about To the Lighthouse and the Lighthouse drawings. I took it as a license for abstraction, and it seemed to me to resonate with the collaged perspectives of To the Lighthouse.

Through my drawing practice I have tried to develop a visual language to set alongside Woolf’s writing, to find ways of responding to her fiction through mark-making. I have used a variety of techniques and produced several series of drawings relating to To the Lighthouse. The techniques that I have used to make the drawings often involve using the book itself as a material. Working with the physical book object is one way I have tried to represent in material form the relationship between book and reader that Woolf describes so powerfully. The process of making these drawings is, for me, a form of re-reading the novel by engaging with the book both as a text and as an object.

For some of the pieces I worked directly with passages of text from To the Lighthouse, manipulating the printed words until they became illegible marks, unreadable as type, but readable in a different, purely abstract way. For another series I drew and printed onto
book pages to build up layers of delicate, intricate marks—my intention was to create a palimpsest surface—a drawn history on the page. I took this idea of a collaged surface further in a series of handmade prints. I embedded fragments of text from *To the Lighthouse* into handmade paper, which I blind-embossed with an abstract motif. The embossed design was made by fragmenting and manipulating extracts from Woolf’s text. The resulting pieces are subtle and tactile paper objects that refer to the connections between image and text. The palimpsest surface is a kind of memorialization or record. The artist Avis Newman conceives of drawing as “the action of an artist’s thought” (70). To me it is also an act of memory. Each new drawing holds within it a memory of past drawings, actions and marks. It is a record of what was done and thought in the moment of drawing, but also contains past actions and thoughts. Woolf’s novel is also an act of memorialisation— or, to use her word, an elegy.

Drawing can be a dialogic, collaborative, and thoughtful activity. My Lighthouse drawings are an attempt to create a dialogue with Woolf’s novel and, more broadly, to examine the connections between the processes of drawing and reading. Drawings are often made in series suggesting their inherent incompletion—the process is never finished. This is my feeling about the Lighthouse drawings. I will keep returning to drawing and reading as a way of thinking through my ideas about this richly visual novel.
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In her autobiography, *My Life*, published posthumously in 1927, Isadora Duncan tries to communicate with words the dance she feels forming in her body as she studies the Bacchanal from Wagner’s *Tannhäuser*: “I am only able to give you a vague indication,…of what most dancers will be later on—masses rushing like whirlwinds in rhythms caught up by mad waves of this music, flowing with fantastic sensuality and ecstasy…Can all this be expressed?…[C]an [these visions] be clothed in a manifested form? Why try this impossible effort? I repeat, I do not fulfill it, I only indicate” (144). Duncan’s preference for an art form that indicates and moves, rather than one that represents and stills, finds an echo in Virginia Woolf’s account of the arduous process that was writing *The Waves*: “[ideas] flaunt and fly like the shadows over the downs…I think then that my difficulty is that I am writing to a rhythm and not to a plot. Does this convey anything?” (L4 204). 

As was true for Duncan, rhythm for Woolf is “very profound, and goes far deeper than words” (204). In order to plumb these depths, Woolf recognizes that her images must “never work out; only suggest” (D4 4) and that she must “break up, dig deep, make prose move—yes I swear—as prose has never moved before” (11).  

Modern dance and dancers, Isadora Duncan in particular, have received renewed attention in Modernist literary studies as of late, most notably in Carrie Preston’s *Modernism’s Mythic Pose: Gender, Genre, Solo Performance* (2011). Regarding Woolf studies, scholars like Susan Jones and Evelyn Haller have contextualized Woolf’s fiction in relation to Diaghilev’s Ballet Russes or Japanese Noh, while Rishona Zimring has discussed how social dance signifies the precariousness of collective and communal values in Woolf’s work. However, there have been no considerations of Woolf’s oeuvre in relation either to Isadora Duncan’s dance or her theory thereof as espoused in her autobiography *My Life* and other essays. This may be explained, as Zimring notes, by the fact that for Woolf and Bloomsbury the Russian Ballet was far more significant due to its frequent London performances, whereas the American female soloists, like Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan, were simply not part of the regular theatre-going experience for Londoners (711). 

Indeed, Virginia Woolf makes only one specific reference to Isadora Duncan in a letter written to her sister Vanessa Bell, dated May 25, 1928, where she recounts a visit with Rebecca West and briefly mentions that West left her with a gift: “She gave me the true history of Isadora Duncan’s life—(I sent you the life, by the way, which is rather valuable, as the libraries are banning it)” (L3 501). Beyond this brief mention, we have only two other tangible encounters between Bloomsbury and Isadora. One comes on behalf of Clive Bell, who in *Old Friends: Personal Recollections*, shares an encounter he had with Duncan in Paris after a Montmartre lunch. As Bell reports it, Duncan approached him somewhat intoxicated and took one of his hands, running it over her body as she assured him that she was more than just a woman: “Je ne suis pas une femme, je suis un genie!” (qtd. in Caws 181). The other is the fact that Leonard Woolf reviewed *My Life* favor-
ably in *The Nation and Athenaeum* on May 19, 1928. So while it is true that we have no evidence Woolf actually saw Isadora Duncan dance and also no further reference to her in the *Diaries or Letters*, we might assume, especially given Leonard Woolf’s review and Virginia’s letter to Vanessa, that she had likely read or, at the very least, was familiar with Duncan’s autobiography.

Both Duncan and Woolf were attuned to visceral forces and vibrations that exceeded the limitations of their own skin and art. In current theoretical discourse, scholars like Greg Seigworth and Melissa Gregg refer to these visceral forces as “affect”:

> Affect...is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought...[A]ffect is persistent proof of a body’s never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world’s obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations. (1)

Moving between the visceral body and consciousness as well as between bodies and subjects, “affect” precedes representation in art while it also, as Isobel Armstrong notes in *The Radical Aesthetic*, “follows representation in reception” (109). Furthermore, insists Armstrong, because “affects cross categories,...belong to mind and soma, straddl[e] conscious and unconscious just as they straddle mind and physiology,” they have the potential to offer us a “democratic aesthetic education” (108).

In this essay, I will trace the affective current between Duncan’s “Art” of dance, as she characterizes it in *My Life* and other essays, and Woolf’s fiction—most specifically *The Waves*. By placing these two artists into a kinesthetic conversation with one another and unfolding their affective affinities, I hope to elucidate not only what I’m referring to as their shared aesthetic of movement but also how such movement performs a feminist politics. Privileging arousal, movement, and even frustration over stasis and certitude, Duncan and Woolf precipitate our desire to know new and very different modes of being in the world.

At the heart of Duncan’s dance aesthetic was a kinaesthetic dialogue with the movements inherent in the natural world. In *My Life*, she writes: “My first idea of movement, of the dance, certainly came from the rhythm of the waves...My life and my art were born of the sea” (10). This movement, Duncan tells us in her essay “The Dance of the Future,” knows no beginning and no end: “If we seek the real source of the dance, if we go to nature, we find that the dance of the future is the dance of the past, the dance of eternity, and has been and always will be the same” (54). It was this sense of movement as arising from nowhere in particular and continuing without a break that Duncan, by all accounts, successfully captured in her performances. After seeing Duncan dance in Paris, Edith Wharton declared that she had seen the dance she “had always dreamed of, a flowing of movement into movement, an endless interweaving of motion and music, satisfying every sense” (qtd. in Kurth 50). To dance was not, for Duncan, so much to perform, as to live: “I spent long days and nights in the studio seeking that dance which might be the divine expression of the human spirit through the medium of the body’s movement” (75).

While she was struggling with writing *The Waves*, Woolf also articulated a desire for an aesthetic form that might replicate the rhythm of the sea’s waves and blur distinctions
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between self and environment, self and world: “Suppose I could run all the scenes together more?—by rhythms chiefly. So as to avoid all those cuts; so as to make the blood run like a torrent from end to end” (D3 343). Although she initially doubts the success of her method, we know that Woolf accomplishes the movement and continuity she desires in two ways: first, by interspersing the novel’s soliloquies with Interludes teeming with natural life and sounding the constant rhythm of the ocean waves; and second, by immersing her characters in the world’s “obstinancies and rhythms,” thus avoiding “cuts” in favor of “torrents.” “A sight, an emotion,” Woolf writes in a letter to Vita, “creates this wave in the mind, long before it makes words to fit it” (L3 246-47). Every soliloquy spoken by Bernard, Neville, Louis, Rhoda, Susan, or Jinny emanates from an engagement with a sight, an emotion, a sensation, or objects, be they animate or inanimate. Stalks, caterpillars, snails, stones, the cock crowing, the waves crashing all incite not only the sensations and thoughts of individual characters but an affective pattern that exceeds them and moves through repetition, to the extent, as many critics have noted, that it becomes difficult at times to tell the voices and their soliloquies apart. In this sense, Woolf achieves something very similar to what Ann Cooper Albright suggests Gertrude Stein achieved in her portrait of Isadora Duncan: “Stein’s language underscores the inherent connectedness of rhythmic exchange between bodies, bridging verbal and physical languages” (12). However, if Duncan tends to idealize such rhythmic exchange and its capacity for blurring divisions between self and world, Woolf’s novel choreographs a dance of suspension and repetition that incorporates not only moments of communal ecstasy but also moments of anxiety and fear as they are inevitably provoked by loss.

If Duncan and Woolf both articulate and seek an aesthetic form that indicates or suggests a movement or an energy that is there before the gesture or word that fits it, their struggles to manifest such form is also rife with the awareness that, in a patriarchal culture, women carry affective burdens that deplete and exhaust rather than energize and mobilize. Duncan and Woolf’s aesthetics of movement, then, was also very much informed by a feminist politics bent on countering what each perceived to be the normative constraints holding the female body captive.

If Isadora Duncan’s My Life is at times overwrought, it nevertheless testifies quite powerfully to the difficulties and challenges that assail a woman artist. While Duncan never referred to herself as a “feminist” or “suffragette,” her autobiography and essays reveal that she saw her work from the beginning as dedicated to the emancipation of the female body: “If my art is symbolic of any one thing, it is symbolic of the freedom of woman and her emancipation from the hidebound conventions that are the warp and woof of New England Puritanism” (Isadora 48). Unashamed, Duncan danced in a “transparent tunic, showing every part of [her] dancing body” (My Life 157), performed while pregnant, took countless lovers, and yoked motherhood to sexuality by arguing against illegitimacy in support of unwed mothers.

In her essay “The Dancer and Nature,” Duncan unabashedly declares that women’s salvation and access to true beauty must come first “through the knowledge of their own bodies” (66-67). In this regard, Duncan speaks frankly about her own relationship to her body while pregnant with her first child, admitting that at times she felt overwhelmed by “sudden, sinking moods,…I felt myself some poor animal in a mighty trap, and I struggled with an overwhelming desire to escape, escape” (My Life 22). Duncan’s long and
painful labor—“on the third morning, this absurd doctor brought out an immense pair of forceps and, without an anaesthetic of any sort, achieved the butchery” (194)—led her to declare that she wanted to hear of “no Women’s or Suffragette Movement until women have put an end to this, I believe, wholly useless agony, and insist that the operation of childbirth, like other operations, shall be made painless and endurable” (194). Her attempts to start dancing again following her first child, Deirdre’s birth, lead her to exclaim “how difficult it is for a woman to have a career” (206) as she recounts performing while the milk from her breasts overflowed and ran down her tunic.

For women especially, Duncan’s dance bodied forth the vitality and agency they were continually denied in their daily lives. If Duncan herself was not a suffragette, she was the corporeal mother to the women marching in the streets, to the women who performed hunger strikes as a means of refusing state-sanctioned definitions of femininity, and to the women subjected to forcible feeding, a tortuous procedure that provided stark evidence of state-sanctioned brutality against women’s bodies. In fact, Duncan cast herself in such a role when, following a “lecture on the dance as an art of liberation” that “end[s] with a talk on the right of woman to love and bear children as she pleased,” she claims to have had an “interesting debate on the rights and wrongs of women” with the audience that was “considerably in advance of the Woman’s movement of the present day” (187). Duncan was able to speak frankly about the body and maternity in a way that the suffragettes did not dare for fear of losing the fight for suffrage. However, they knew she was there. While there were no women wearing translucent tunics while marching in the streets, less familiar iconography of the period like that associated with the Suffragette’s Ball or the image of a woman, dressed like a Duncan dancer, proudly holding up a flag reading “Votes for Women,” makes clear that Duncan’s unfettered female body resonated with women who were seeking political and sexual empowerment through full citizenship.

While there is no direct indication that Woolf had Isadora Duncan in mind as she wrote The Waves, the three women who appear in the novel’s pages—Jinny, Susan, and Rhoda—resonate with the Isadora who was dancer, mother, and rebel as they chafe against what Jessica Berman refers to as the “increasingly masculinized edifice of British nationalism” (111). Woolf’s fascination with movement both as a disruption of rigid aesthetic traditions and as a refusal of what Duncan calls “hidebound conventions” begins with her first novel The Voyage Out, in which Rachel Vinrace’s “intoxication” with movement (18) is tied to her dislike of Jane Austen’s “tightly plaited” narratives and of domesticity as represented by her aunts whose days are “cut into four pieces by their meals. These divisions were absolutely rigid, the contents of the day having to accommodate themselves within the four rigid bars” (214). In The Waves, Jinny, Susan, and Rhoda confront, swirl around, and move against the structure and rigidity that Bernard’s search for the perfect phrase, Neville’s ominous knife, and Louis’s erect stalk assert.

It is of course Jinny, with her exclamations of “I move, I dance; I never cease to move and to dance” (28-29), who most explicitly invokes Duncan. Echoing Rachel Vinrace, Jinny thinks, “I shall not let myself be attached to one person only, I do not want to be fixed, to be pinioned. I tremble, I quiver” (39). In a “red dress” that is “thin as a veil,” Jinny shimmers and pirouettes into a room providing a vivid contrast to Louis’s soliloquy immediately following, in which he expresses how comforting he finds order and progress: “How we march, two by two, orderly, processional, into chapel...I like the orderly
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While Jinny is quite literally the dancer, Susan and Rhoda also perform a feminist critique reminiscent of Duncan's own. Susan's hatred for regimentation and order is made clear early on in the novel as she longs to escape school: “In eight days time I shall get out of the train…[t]hen my freedom will unfurl, and all these restrictions that wrinkle and shrivel…will crack asunder…I shall walk on the moor…I shall there unfold and take out whatever it is I have made here; something hard” (37). Rejecting the masculine rigidity of her school days, Susan nevertheless goes on to marry and have children believing at first that her children will “carry [her] on”: “their teething, their crying, their going to school and coming back will be like the waves of the sea under me. No day will be without its movement” (95). And yet already, in this same soliloquy, she recognizes that pregnancy and motherhood will define her irrevocably as one thing: “I shall be debased and hide-bound by the bestial and beautiful passion of maternity” (95). Later Susan speaks words resonating with Duncan's own dismay and feelings of entrapment: “I am fenced in…What shock can loosen my laboriously gathered, relentlessly pressed down life?…I am sick of natural happiness, and fruit growing, and children…I am sick of the body” (139).

If Susan ends feeling trapped and debased by her body, her movement slowed and weighed down by the demands of maternity, Rhoda is the character who, from the beginning, feels her body to be “clumsy” and “ill fitting” (76). Jessica Berman has argued that “before the seemingly 'natural' realm of masculine values,…Rhoda disintegrates” (113). However, this perspective of Rhoda seems possible only if we read her through the lens of her suicide. Instead, I agree with Bonnie Kime Scott, who argues that Rhoda might best be seen as “a formal experiment with unexplored mental capacities” (38). In My Life Duncan writes, “I wanted to…create a dance and movements which then did not exist” (141). This desire to embody a form that did not yet exist, a form that Duncan herself had to discover and create, speaks to Rhoda's own sense of herself as a visionary rhythmically attuned to the affective resonances of the world around her: “I am incandescent. To Whom shall I give all that now flows through me, from my warm, my porous body?” (40). Her dilemma is not that she has nothing to give but rather that, unlike Jinny, her own body fails miserably to match her mental lines of flight. If Jinny's imagination is of the body, Rhoda's refuses the confinement that a body, most especially a female body, requires. Furthermore, if Rhoda dismisses the vision she has of herself as a Russian Empress, facing an “infuriated mob” with an attitude of defiance—“I am fearless. I conquer”—as a “thin dream…a papery tree,” it is because that vision, however empowering, ultimately suggests a position and a control that she consistently resists: “They say, Yes; they say, No; they bring their fists down with a bang on the table. But I doubt; I tremble; I see the wild thorn tree shake its shadow in the desert” (76). While Rhoda's trepidation does prompt her suicide, it is her doubt that performs the most powerful feminist critique in the novel by undermining the determinacy of Bernard's phrases, Louis' discourse of order and progress, and Neville's penchant for exactitude.

This is not to say that Bernard, Louis, and Neville are not equally sensitive at times to the destructive impulse behind masculine imperatives and ideologies. For example, Bernard refers to a priest and his sermon as having “minced the dance of the white butterflies at the door to powder” (24), and Louis, although he admires the majestic order and beautiful obedience of the officers of the Natural History Society marching in perfect formation, in turn realizes that “they leave butterflies trembling with their wings pinched
off;...They make little boys sob in dark passages” (32). Louis also registers Rhoda’s vulnerability to such violence when he notes that her shoulder blades meet across her back “like the wings of a small butterfly” (14). It is precisely in these moments of attunement that Woolf reveals the impetus behind the novel to be a shared understanding of vulnerability and the need for an ongoing critique of those forces and ideologies that would “mince the dance of the white butterflies” to “powder.” Such an understanding, transmitted by the affect Duncan and Woolf register before creating their art and the physiological impact we feel upon reception, has the capacity to facilitate what Isobel Armstrong again refers to as a “democratic aesthetic education.”

Following WWI, Isadora Duncan’s class consciousness, and her belief that her dance was an art of liberation, extended beyond her desire to emancipate the female body to the political body of the state as well. Her philosophy was somewhat paradoxical as, on the one hand, in “The Dance of the Future,” she declares that “the dancer will not belong to a nation but to all humanity” (62), while on the other hand, wrapped in a red shawl, she improvised a dance to the “Marseillaise” as a “call to the boys of America to rise and protect the highest civilization of our epoch” (My Life 316). She would dance the “Marseillaise” many times again and did so with a “terrible fierce joy” (334) in 1917 on the evening she first learned of the Russian Revolution. Duncan did not see her heightened political consciousness as at all incongruous with her Art: “[A]ll my art career it has been these movements of despair and revolt that have most attracted me. In my red tunic I have constantly danced the Revolution and the call to arms of the oppressed” (334). Woolf also dances the revolution in Three Guineas, a project she conceived while still in the final throes of The Waves. There Woolf tells women that she will grant them a guinea in support of women’s education only if that education is dedicated to “develop[ing], modify[ing], and direct[ing]...the traditions and the education of the private house” (TG 100). Only then, writes Woolf, can one

join the professions and yet remain uncontaminated by them...You can use them to have a mind of your own and a will of your own. And you can use that mind and will to abolish the inhumanity, the beastliness, the horror, the folly of war. Take this guinea then and use it, not to burn the house down but to make its windows blaze. And let the daughters of uneducated women dance round the new house...and let them sing, 'We have done with war! We have done with tyranny!' (100)

If, as Sara Ahmed writes, “feminist theorizing is about producing different ways of dwelling and moving in the world” and is not simply about “explaining ‘what is,’ but a way of re-making ‘what is’” (100), then Duncan and Woolf have left us with bodies and texts whose dynamic energies ask us to keep dancing and to move forward and against forces that discourage our doing otherwise.
The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the uncanny correspondences between Virginia Woolf and Clarice Lispector in terms of their innovations in language and technique, which challenge the boundaries of fiction. In their battle between words and silence, they go beyond the limits of language and write with their bodies by printing words as if they were painters. In so doing, they are giving voice to their unique experience of female *jouissance*, which can be understood, by the reader, as feminist *pouissance*.


Hermione Lee argues that books have changed their readers, teaching them how texts should be read, but that readers have also changed books. Books change as they are read, and re-read; therefore, readers must be conscious about their roles, not as isolated individuals, but as part of a long succession of readers. Woolf was aware of this in *A Room Of One’s Own*: “For masterpieces are not single and solitary births, they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice” (69).

In this dialogue between writers and readers, a number of different Woolfs have emerged, as have different aspects of her works. The contemporary critic has re-read Woolf’s thinking through a varied range of issues, creating a new map of her writing. It becomes part of a complex web of intertextual dialogue in Woolf’s works, and combines with novels, stories, diaries, letters, notebooks, essays, essay-novels, and essay-stories. The result is a long conversation between texts that now is beginning to be understood in a more comprehensive manner.

1.1 Lispector’s Web

Clarice Lispector (1925-1977), though coming from a very different cultural and ethnic background—she was born to a Jewish family in Ukraine and emigrated to Brazil when she was three years old—moves in the same direction as Woolf, exploring through the stream-of-consciousness technique the domains of the mind. Such a technique expresses the fluctuation of subjectivity—the states of soul, themselves sometimes unspeakable. Lispector’s text seems to be unstructured and the narrative line tends to be fragmented, as is the notion of temporality, which is often questioned in her works. This is the fabric of the text, which she weaves by using both the triviality of the ordinary life and the ruptures in which the perception of the narrator reveals some obscure facts that were not supposed to be revealed.

*Água Viva* was published in 1973 and translated as *The Stream of Life* in 1989. When Hélène Cixous discovered Clarice Lispector, she was immediately involved in Lispector’s
web of words, which gave her the inspiration for her own writing. In “Coming to Writing” and Other Essays, she analyzes Lispector’s works; her voice is lost in Lispector’s voice to the point which we cannot distinguish who is speaking, Cixous or Lispector. After Cixous’s discovery, Lispector’s work would become known all over the world. Cixous would thus promote new readings, new interpretations and new connections to Lispector’s web of texts, which became better understood in its complexities. There is a textual transmigration in Lispector’s body of writing; a mobility in which a sentence or a plot in one text can become a short story, a short story can be transformed into a novel, and a fragment in a novel can become an independent text, or a text can be reduced to a fragment.

2. Pushing the Boundaries of Fiction

Woolf’s writing has always aspired to create a disturbance in the conventional boundaries of fiction. Sometimes her essays may assume a fictional aspect, as if she was narrating a story, as can be seen in A Room of One’s Own. So too, a highly metafictional short story may become an essay discussing the aspects of fiction, as in The Mark On The Wall, when Woolf writes: “And the novelists in future will realize more and more the importance of these reflections, for of course there is not one reflection but an almost infinite number” (79). Woolf’s novels navigate between the factual and the poetical: she considered The Waves to be a play-poem; To The Lighthouse an elegy; Orlando a biography; and The Purgiters an essay-novel.

Similarly, Lispector’s works present a constant discussion about the nature of writing and a constant exercise of otherness. When she writes she is trying to define the identity of the text, and of the writer/reader, and she is pushing the boundaries of genre. In this metafictional discourse, she reflects upon how it is to write as a woman within the male tradition. The role of the reader is essential in constructing the meaning of the text. The language is playful and involves the author’s and the reader’s own pleasure in writing/reading. There isn’t a specific plot and there are no characters; rather, the narrative sustains itself by language. The text is performative and questions the power of fiction and language. Lispector continuously invites us to reflect upon the creative power of language; she engenders the word and creates a poetic moment of revelation. In The Stream of Life, she observes: “It is useless to try to classify me: I simply slip away not leaving, categories pin me down no longer” (7).

3. Woolf and Lispector – The Writer as a Painter

Lispector prefers to create a multiplicity of meanings and metaphors, which results in a unique poetic and organic style:

When I write I can’t create as I do in painting, when, as an artisan, I create a colour. But I’m trying to write you with my whole body, shooting an arrow that firmly pierces the tender nerve ends of the word. My incognito body tells you: “Dinosaurus, ichthiosaurus, and plesiosaurus,” words with a merely auditory sense, without turning into dry straw but staying moist. (6)
Woolf’s also unique, poetic and organic style is closely related to her theoretical conceptions as expressed in this passage of “A Sketch of the Past” from *Moments of Being*:

> If I were painting myself I should have to find some—rod, shall I say—something that would stand for the conception. It proves that one’s life is not confined to one’s body and what one says and does; one is living all the time in relation to certain background rods or conceptions. Mine is that there is a pattern hid behind the cotton wool. And this conception affects me every day… (72-3)

In the previous quotations, both Lispector and Woolf rely on the transformative power of art, and by putting things into words one can see their whole work of creation. In this conversation between literature and art, they both know that they have to invent innovative literary codes, as they manipulate words, by fishing for them, and painting and polishing them until they are fresh for the first use. In this sense, the intervention of the woman writer into the literary tradition requires not only the invention of a new literary code, but also a revolution in language.

Lispector’s text destabilizes the symbolic order, giving place to the chaotic and disorganized. Her language is illogical and breaks with rational discourse: “This is life seen by life. I may not have a sense, but it is the very lack of sense that a pulsing vein has” (8). In a parallel way, Woolf destabilizes the symbolic order in different moments of her novels. The chaotic mind of Septimus in *Mrs. Dalloway* also breaks with rational discourse, and as a result the reader has instants of ecstasy translated into poetic language:

> And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. (24)

Both Woolf and Lispector avoid being classified and constrained by the patriarchal literary system and in the urgency to invent a new language, they are dealing with a conception of literature which is much wider because includes all expressions of art.

Hélène Cixous, in the foreword to *The Stream of Life*, writes that the book is a gigantic metaphor for the creative process of writing which follows the flow of life, as if the natural flow of living water could build the natural rhythm of writing as a living process. Cixous understands Lispector’s writing as orgiastic, orgasmic, and organic. It is visceral; it is musical; and it provides the reader with instants of ecstasy, bliss and pleasure.

Woolf’s text is all about music. One can hear the sounds of the sea, which also provides the reader with instants of ecstasy, bliss, and pleasure, as we can read in *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To The Lighthouse*, and *The Waves*. We can also perceive this in her conceptions about art in general:

> I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. *Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is
the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. (MOB 72)

Woolf understands the novel as a kind of “cannibal” genre, which devours not only poetry and drama, but also visual and other forms of art. Painting, photography, cinema, dance, and architecture not only helped her to deal with her experiments with language, but also with the rhythms, images, and sounds in her novels.

4. Writing with the Body

Cixous points out that the reader has two possible approaches to reading *The Stream of Life*. 1) One can follow the themes, as there are thousands of themes, as well as mini-plots, which are of extremely high importance; 2) One can follow what brings pleasure, since Lispector writes with her whole body and delivers it to her reader. So, we have a body-to-body writing/reading process. This corporeal process of writing is a living, verbal, active movement in which we can feel the circulation of the living water in the text: “I write you completely whole and I feel a pleasure in being and my pleasure of you is abstract, like the instant. And it’s with my entire body that I paint my pictures and on the canvas fix the incorporeal—me, body-to-body with myself. One doesn’t understand music, one hears it. Hear me, then, with your whole body” (4).

Woolf in her text “Professions for Women” talks about the relation between women writers and the experience of body: “The girl was roused from her dream. She was indeed in a state if the most acute and difficult distress. To speak without figure she had thought of something, something about the body, about the passions which it was unfitting for her as a woman to say” (240). As well as Cixous, Woolf knew that women needed to write more of and from the body, and in *A Room of One’s Own* when she reflects “If Chloe liked Olivia” she is also expressing the need for women to write about women. Lily in her process of painting asks herself “How could one express the emotions of the body?” (196).

5. The Battle between Language and Silence

In *The Stream of Life*, all senses are called to act: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and even silence. Silence is maybe one of the most important aspects in the text because it allows us to listen to nature building itself and the small miracles that happen in it every moment, as it can be seen in this fragment:

Hear me, hear my silence. What I speak is never what I speak but something else. When I say “overflowing waters”, I am talking about bodily strength within the waters of the world. Capture this something else of which I truly speak because I myself cannot. Read the energy that is there in my silence. (21)

In this struggle between words and silence, readers also learn with their bodies. Lispector in her silent, mysterious process of writing teaches us how to see, how to listen, how to read, how to give ourselves. Above all, she makes us feel and be responsive to the smallest
living beings, because they will teach us about our human condition. Cixous says that Lispector’s philosophical questions are enhanced with a poetic charm which enchants us. Lispector writes as someone who performs incantations, because she has the great power of potentiality.

Woolf’s silence permeates all her novels. She too was completely aware of the power of language, but also of its limits. *To The Lighthouse* is a perfect example to describe this battle between language and silence. Sometimes, words are necessary when Mrs. Ramsay wants to hear her husband’s voice. But sometimes words cannot express certain feelings; for instance, when she cannot tell her husband that she loves him. In another moment words are not essential and the dialogue occurs in complete silence: “she had not said it, but he knew it” (115). The second chapter “Times Passes” is invaded by silence allowing us to hear the disintegration of the objects in the house. Lily in her attempt to recover the image of Mrs. Ramsay unites language and silence, painting and writing, words and images. Woolf’s style is known for its ellipses, absences, unfinished and broken sentences and repetitions which emphasize poetic rhythm of her text. Silence lies in the center of this language and it attempts to say what has remained unsaid, what cannot be said, but which needs more than words to express it.

6. Final Considerations

At the end, I can come to the conclusion that both Woolf and Lispector, although separated in time and space, share the same conceptions about the process of writing/reading and the unsettled boundaries of fiction. Lispector’s *The Stream of Life* could be an essay, a novel, and a long poem in prose. Thus, it is impossible to classify her writing from an exclusive *genre* perspective. This is the same for Woolf, whose experimental novels were not only revolutionizing language, but also creating a vision of the world, which was complex and contradictory. If for Woolf the modernist slogan was “make it new,” Lispector’s anthropophagical motto was to devour it, digest its best qualities, and produce something new.

Both Woolf and Lispector revolutionized language and the notions of genre to escape the restraints of a patriarchal narrative. They searched for the gaps in the system in order to subvert it and to build their own version of this system through their disruptive narratives. In doing so, they are inscribing their own voices and visions; they are transforming their pleasure in writing into the feminist consciousness. Not only this, but also by writing their own bodies and voices they are allowing and inviting other women to reach this freedom, which is to write and consequently to be. When they write, they are changing the logic of the phallogocentric society; instead of saying “Cogito ergo sum,” “I think, therefore I am,” they say “I write, therefore I am.” At the same time, they are also inviting the reader to engage consciously in this process: “You read it, so you are.”

Woolf begins *A Room of One’s Own* by claiming that “I” is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being. She playfully refers to a trinity of female personas—Mary Beton, Mary Seton, and Mary Carmichael. Lispector, working in much the same direction, states that ‘And if I say ‘I’, it’s because I don’t dare say ‘you’ or ‘we’ or ‘a person’. I’m limited to the humble act of self-personalization through reducing myself, but I am the ‘you-are’” (6). Both are creating a fictional persona in order to redefine the identity
of the text, the writer, and the reader. The “I” in the text is not Woolf or Lispector, but a fictional persona who speaks on behalf of a long tradition of women writers who were silenced and absent from history. Woolf was right when she said that Judith Shakespeare still lives:

She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes and putting children to bed. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences; they need only the opportunity to walk among us in flesh. This opportunity, as I think, is now coming within your power to give her. (102)

Woolf was proposing for women writers to speak on behalf of the silenced women in history, and feminist criticism has been re-reading, re-writing, and redefining meaning and a new sexual politics for women with her inspiration. Woolf shows that women writers can not only write about the female jouissance, but above all that the feminist pouissance can be entirely understood in their texts.

Lispector’s critics usually compare her works to Woolf’s, which allows us to say that Lispector was thinking back through women writers, not only Virginia Woolf, but also many others. The problem is: How could she think back through her Brazilian mothers, if they were excluded and silenced from the literary tradition? However, Lispector did not come alone. With her came many sisters—Nélida Piñon, Hilda Hilst, Ligia Fagundes Telles, Ana Cristina César—just to name a few of them. As Woolf said, “masterpieces are not single and solitary births, they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common” (69). Our role as readers and critics is to continue in this archeological work to recover all the Judith Shakespeares who were silent and excluded from the literary tradition.

**Works Cited**


Mystical Gibberish or Renegade Discourse?: Poetic Language According to Orlando

by Christopher Brown

In a recent biography of Melanie Klein, Julia Kristeva defends psychoanalysis as “an ethics of subjective emancipation” that defies identity politics by recognizing the “sexual polymorphism” in all persons (11). The statement alludes to Kristeva’s own concept of the semiotic chora, a “receptacle” of drives and affects that bond mother and infant prior to the Oedipal complex and the advent of subjectivity (Powers 13). Kristeva discerns the semiotic rudiments of symbolic order in infantile speech, glossolalia, and poetry, utterances that violate the structures of language and so ostensibly elude paternal authority. Given her subversive tone, it is surprising that Kristeva often describes the semiotic in such a way as to hinder women’s emancipation from the politics of gender. In About Chinese Women (1974), she cites the suicide of Virginia Woolf in a warning that women who write revolutionary literature may suffer the return of a primal identification with the mother and experience psychosis (41-43). Here Kristeva appears to divide the sexes, as writers, based on their disparate relations to the maternal and language. Identification with the mother threatens a woman’s sense of identity within the symbolic, while autonomy is granted to the male writer, who sublimates this feared or “abject” mother in art.¹

Anticipating Kristeva, Woolf’s Orlando describes a similar configuration of repression and poetic expression, tracing the poet’s capacity to transform language to an archaic maternal principle. At the same time, Woolf’s narrative challenges the notion that sexual identity determines one’s relation to this principle and reveals the contingency of Kristeva’s formulation on a paternal model of culture. Orlando gradually sheds the confines of subjectivity as prescribed by the Father to develop a more radical poetic practice than that envisioned by Kristeva. Whereas sublimation “imagine[s] the abject” to “thrust it aside” (Powers 16), the “cypher language” shared by Orlando and Shelmerdine neutralizes the prohibitive function of discourse and restores the fluid dynamics of the semiotic chora to the relations of adult subjects.

Following the opening pages of the novel, which foreground Orlando’s beauty, ancestry, masculinity—in short, his integrity as subject—the protagonist confronts “abjection”: the disruption of “identity, system, order” by that which “does not respect borders, positions, rules” (Powers 4). The undifferentiated relation of mother and infant in primary narcissism is the prototype for all later experiences of abjection (Powers 13). Hence we are told that, “Sights disturbed [Orlando], like that of his mother, a very beautiful lady in green walking out to feed the peacocks […]” (O 15). His disturbance can be understood as a primitive fear of “falling back under the sway” of an unsignifiable maternal body (Powers 13), here suggested by the mother’s adornment in green. As Kristeva remarks, describing the symptoms of Woolf’s descent into abjection, “I think of Virginia Woolf, who sank wordlessly into the river […] Haunted by voices, by waves, by lights, in love with colours—blue, green” (Chinese 41). Indeed, images of the ocean and, more generally, water function throughout the novel in a metaphor that casts the space of poetic explor-
tion as a fluid mass that cannot be weighed, measured, exchanged—as in a socioeconomic system—but seeps through the ordering constructs of law and language.

This “semiotization of the symbolic” (Revolution 80) is manifested in the reign of Elizabeth I, whose traversal of territories anterior to language imbues English culture with the freedom of trans-symbolic movement. The queen’s dissolution of the established order is captured in her statement, “This […] is my victory!” (O 25). On one hand, the statement claims entitlement, evoking the immobility of a phallic order governing the exchange of women in the marketplace of sex. Elizabeth makes her investment, serving England as monarch, and delights in the return: a young lover, lawfully hers. More significantly, Elizabeth subverts this economy by enacting a movement of subject positions: it is now the “woman” who performs the exchange, while the “man” is parceled. As Kristeva writes, “The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes […] a rule or a law; but turns them aside […] uses them, takes advantage of them” (Powers 15).

Orlando experiences this glimpse into semiotic motility as abjection: “[She] made him bury his face in that astonishing composition—she had not changed her dress for a month—which smelt […] like some old cabinet at home where his mother’s furs were stored” (25). The association of Elizabeth’s scent with that of Orlando’s mother suggests a foreign, feminine substance, recalling the Biblical abomination of menstruation, which “threatens […] through internalization, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference” (Powers 71). Here, Orlando’s physical internalization (through smell) of Elizabeth’s sex denotes an intermixture that has taken place psychologically. Under the queen’s keeping, the young man who vowed to follow in the footsteps of his forefathers’ colonial conquests is recalled before sailing to fight in Poland, while her bestowal of masculine titles on Orlando is accompanied by gifts—a ring and jeweled garter belt—bearing an uncanny resemblance to bridal accouterments (O 25). Placing Orlando in the role of “woman,” Elizabeth is the first (after the mother) to see beyond the biographer’s introductory proclamation: “[T]here could be no doubt about his sex” (13).

Indeed, the queen’s rituals seem to anticipate the failure of Orlando’s turn as bridegroom. When the symbolic resources of marriage (“covenants, jointures, settlements, mes-suages, tenements”) are invoked to secure the nobleman’s position (33), proceedings are thwarted by the Great Frost, in which London freezes over and the liberty of the Elizabethan age proliferates in a carnival on ice. Makiko Minnow-Pinkney describes the carnival in Orlando as a controlled suspension of law that permits “contact between the ranks” and transgression of sexual boundaries (123). Commoners are separated from the upper crust “only by a silken rope” (O 35), under which Orlando and Sasha pass freely (43). An uncategorizable other, the Muscovite princess awakes perceptions in Orlando that are both liberating and catastrophic, enacting a collapse of the symbolic. Like the abject, he regresses to a synaesthetic awareness of bodily sensation: “[H]e did not know whether he had heard her, tasted her, seen her, or all three together” (37). He attempts the poet’s “direct semantization” (Powers 53) of this pre-verbal confusion of the senses, calling her “a melon, a pineapple, an olive tree, an emerald, and a fox in the snow” (O 37). Yet, for all his “plung[ing] and splash[ing],” words cannot capture Sasha’s receding, fluid form: the English language has “gone […] stale,” and he longs for “another tongue” (47).

According to Kristeva, abjection may take the form of psychosis if a subject fails to find fulfillment in an object (Powers 14). Then, “desire and its signifiers turn back
toward the ‘same’ (11). This is no idyllic return to primary narcissism but the revival of primal repression: the murky interval between fusion and individuation, when aggression is channeled toward both the mother and the undifferentiated “self” (14-15). Such is the consequence of Sasha’s abandonment of Orlando. With her apparent act of infidelity and subsequent departure from England, Sasha upends the object economy, which then fails to shelter Orlando from her philandering ways. Separations and representations then crumble with the ice covering the Thames: “the human creatures who had been trapped in the night […] paced their twisting and precarious islands in the utmost agony of spirit […] their doom was certain” (O 63). So too is Orlando’s. Though he observes the melting ice from safety, rain pours down and he is “soak[ed] to the skin” (60), signaling the replacement of language by “fluid demarcations” that fail to sustain order (Powers 11).

Here, then, begins the novel’s elaboration of Kristeva’s project. In the latter, Woolf fills her pockets with stones and takes to the river, stepping from her melting island of self to an inevitable doom. Yet, Orlando seems to ask, if law and religion insist on its suppression, might the “abject” have a productive potential, beyond the work of sublimation? In answer to this question, sleep takes over as a “remedial measure” against death, “rub[bing] harshness off” with “incandescence” (67). The expression signals a movement from abjection to primary narcissism that complements Orlando’s change of sex. Indeed, Kristeva calls sleep our “closest approximation […] of the primary objectless state” (Melanie 59) that precedes the constitution of sexual difference. This is not the male writer’s mastery of the abject, from which he wakes to a sturdy singularity, but a departure from the search for stable identity. Orlando now meets the ambiguous “horrors” skirting the symbolic with perfect complacency: “We should not have blamed her had she rung the bell, screamed, or fainted. But Orlando showed no signs of perturbation” (140).

Anticipating the “grave charges” she will face on her eventual return to England, where her change of sex is legally recorded as decease, Orlando seeks refuge from civilization among a company of gypsies. As a nomad, she renounces fealty to an abstract Law in observance of nature’s cycles: “The gypsies followed the grass; when it was grazed down, on they moved again.” Dispensing with Western notions of cleanliness, she eschews bathing and smokes a pipe “filled […] with cow dung” (140-1). As her intimacy with the gypsies grows, however, the illusion of this community as a pre-symbolic Eden is quickly dispelled. According to Kristeva, prohibition is imperative to social order due to the frailty of law in the face of a more “archaic authority” (Powers 75). Here, fear of the maternal is understood as a universal displacement of the nursing infant’s “devouring” drive, which seeks fusion with the m/other through oral incorporation (Powers 96). Among the gypsies, Orlando encounters an alternative rendering of the abject in an equally restrictive cultural order.

Orality emerges from the shadows of repression when its concealment in the English lexicon confronts its condition as unspoken in the language of the gypsies. When Orlando cannot find the words in her new language to describe the “beauty” of nature, she exclaims: “How good to eat!” (142). Here, English notions of nature as “beautiful” are disclosed as masking what is “natural” in the human: the devouring drive of infancy. Through sublimation, the drive is hemmed in by words, which assume the capacity to trigger a confusion of bodily boundaries—a joyous “spree” from which subject and object return intact (Powers 11-12). In short, language tames cannibalism (118). Essential to this process is metaphor, its “indefinite jamming of semantic features” prompting a movement
from “drives and perceptions to words and conversely” (Tales 63). Thus, Orlando’s excursion to a mountaintop inspires an associative reverie that atomizes the signified world in a stream of metaphors: “She likened the hills to ramparts, and the plains to the flanks of kine […]. Trees were withered hags, and sheep were grey boulders. Everything, in fact, was something else” (O 143; emphasis added).

In the mountains of Turkey, however, a nature “much larger and more powerful than in England” (143) poses an immediate threat to the body’s integrity, compelling a deeply ingrained abjection of the gypsies’ physical environment. Its dangers materialize in the injuries of Rustum el Sadi, who displays fingers “withered by frost” and a foot “crushed where a rock had fallen” (144). To regard this totalizing force as “beautiful” or “ugly” automatically threatens slippage of such distinctions, so that repression is better maintained by ritual: “do[ing] the thing for the sake of doing” (146). Nature, whether external or internal, remains “a ‘something’ that I do not recognize as a thing” (Powers 2). Thus, when it is perceived that Orlando “sees […] something else,” a “vague and most unpleasant feeling” fills the gypsies, who come to fear this newcomer as the carrier of an “English disease” (O 143).

Tensions with the gypsies climax when Orlando, still clinging to a British “love of Nature” (143), remarks at the sight of Rustum’s injuries in English: “But so beautiful” (145). The statement’s missing syntactic subject would seem to validate the gypsies’ fears: does she savor a sunset, as previously, or the grisly sight before her? Indeed, Kristeva stresses the role of syntax in the formation of cultural boundaries, the social and spatial divisions of subject from object being designated by the syntactic pair, subject/predicate (Revolution 123). In Orlando’s sentence, the primary processes that syntax is employed to conceal, safeguarding bodily autonomy, are laid bare by the omitted subject. The predicate “beautiful” then slips the moorings of potential referents to wander elsewhere: “she asked herself what this beauty was; whether it was in things themselves, or only in herself; so she went on to the nature of reality” (O 145). Far from unleashing violence, however, the question inspires Orlando’s return to poetry. Here, the containment of subject and object by syntax has ceased, enabling the representation of the “object jettisoned out of that boundary” (Powers 45). An unfinished poem from her youth is resumed in the “margins and blank spaces” of the manuscript (O 145), opening a new field of signifying possibilities.

In effect, Orlando’s poetic practice reanimates the chora, enacting a synthesis of semiotic and symbolic, self and other. This is seen in her interactions with Shelmerdine, which complete the process Kristeva calls an “attempted fusion with the mother’s body,” now transformed from a “hollow and vaginated,” abject body to a “vocalic one—throat, voice, and breasts: music, rhythm, prosody” (Revolution 153; emphasis added). In an imitation of the infant’s first vocalizations (“ma”) and the French mer (“sea”), Orlando uses the diminutive “Mar” for “Marmaduke,” an utterance to be received in a synaesthetic blurring of touch, smell, and sight within sound: “when she called him by the first syllable of his first name, she was in a dreamy […] mood, as if spiced logs were burning, and it was evening […] and a thought wet perhaps outside, enough to make the leaves glisten” (O 257; emphasis added). All of these, the reader is told, should be heard in Orlando’s voice, indicating the glottal release of bound (drive) energy in the transcription of pre-oedipal synaesthesia (Revolution 154-5). Oralization also occurs in the lovers’ communication by telegraph, where Orlando writes in a “cypher language” the two have invented to convey “a spiritual state of the utmost complexity,” quoted in the phrase “Rattigan Glumphbooo” (O 282). This cipher defies all.
linguistic structures but the most primal—rhythm—and thus evinces the poetic disruption of ‘syntax itself, that guarantee of thetic consciousness,’ an ‘experiment’ Kristeva compares to echolalia, the infant’s repetition of sounds made by its mother (Desire 133).

Neither man nor woman, the “Orlando” generated in this exchange does not exist (307). In this way, “she” obtains the form of identity first conceived in her private ruminations as a man: “Over the obscure man is poured the merciful suffusion of darkness. None knows where he goes or comes […] he alone is free; he alone is truthful; he alone is at peace” (67). Thus defined, the poet surpasses the trans-symbolic movement of sublimation, a practice confined to the pages of poetry. Orlando does not vacillate, in writing, between subjectivity and “obscurity” but, inhabiting the latter space—in art as well as life—enjoys the free play of symbols, favoring no one representation over another. Like Elizabeth or Sasha, whom she now professes to understand (161), her sex “change[s] frequently” (158) and she acquires a “variety of selves to call upon” (309).

While the union of Orlando and Shel as “man” and “wife” suggest the couple’s integration in an Oedipal world of named objects, references to the latter’s “disembodied pacing […] in unfathomable seas” (260) support a reading of this relationship as pre-oedipal, a recuperation of primary narcissism. Just as the poet traverses the unfathomable chora, and so discards the signified Body, the sailor is also bodiless—hence the repeated request of man and wife to “prove” each other’s sex, which neither party retains in psyche or practice (258). The nature of this so-called “marriage” is best captured in Kristeva’s description of the infant’s relation to the mother’s breast, which is not an “object to be libidinally co-thected,” but a “model” or “pattern to be imitated” (Tales 25). Thus, we may understand Orlando’s explanation of poetry—“a secret transaction, a voice answering a voice” (325)—as Orlando and Shel’s narcissistic assimilation of one another: the poet’s recovery of “that good mother’s milk” (Cixous 1458).

Note

1. Miglena Nikolchina notes the Kristeva’s Feminine Genius series represents a shift from Kristeva’s near-exclusive interest in male writers. Yet, even here, the accent falls on sexual difference, so that it is Colette’s “discipline” and “rigorous sobriety” (Colette 15)—distinct from Baudelaire’s “drunkenness” and the blasphemy of Proust and Céline (96)—that Kristeva admires.

Works Cited


As they interpret a text, readers of most narratives must differentiate among multiple viewpoints, punctuated perhaps by quotation marks or indicated through shifts in focalization. Woolf is well known for conveying multiple perspectives in her work, often even in a single sentence, but she presents an extra challenge because her characters also express multiple selves and relationships with each other. Orlando’s biographer, for example, suggests she “may as well have [six or seven] thousand” selves, and Orlando variously refers to her lover at the end of the novel as Mar, Shelmerdine, or Bonthrop (or “all three together”), meaning for each name a different man and a different self who calls him (213). This complexity requires a more nuanced approach to character and viewpoint than traditional narratology has provided us, for two reasons. First, Woolf’s characters multiply under scrutiny, such that referring to them by name is ambiguous (which Orlando?). Second, they construe themselves intersubjectively—differently depending on the presence or absence of others—so that it is difficult to tell where one character ends and another begins. To what do Woolf’s characters refer when they invoke these selves or particular versions of others, and how do readers resolve multiple construals into a single ‘character’? To answer these questions, we require a robust methodology sensitive to intersubjective relationships and capable of operating for characters within the text as well as for readers without. As I hope to demonstrate, a cognitive approach to narrative satisfies these requirements. After introducing the discipline and defining subject and self as metaphorical constructs, I turn to passages from To the Lighthouse and The Waves to show how Woolf’s characters conceptualize their selves and others in similar ways: her subjects construe self and other as participants in an ongoing narrative as they interpret the world around them. Woolf’s use of multiple construals is a crucial narrative strategy in her pursuit to depict life as accurately as possible. Moreover, that these construals are active participants in the minds of their characters supports the theory that narrative is an integral aspect of cognition.

Cognitive narratology is informed in part by cognitive grammar, an approach to language that focuses on the conceptualization of grammar and the importance of embodiment in language acquisition and use. A crucial component of the theory is the construal relationship, in which a subject construes an object of conceptualization such that his or her utterances about it are more or less subjective (and rarely objective). Arie Verhagen argues the construal relationship is intersubjective because the subject of conceptualization is always multiple: “Even in the absence of an actual speaker, an addressee always takes a linguistic utterance as having been intentionally produced as an instrument of communication by another being with the same basic cognitive capacities as the addressee” (7). Subjects construe an object of conceptualization together, such that the common ground of their shared subjectivity contextualizes their utterances about it. In other words, construals are never entirely subjective or objective but intersubjective. Vera Tobin builds on this relationship to investigate a specific mode of intersubjectivity in To the Lighthouse: joint
attention, which is “the ability to share attention to some object with another person and mutually recognize that the attention is shared” (185). Tobin correctly identifies mutual understanding as a particularly modernist anxiety at work throughout Woolf’s novels, in which characters search for a “fleeting but real connection between minds” (194). In these novels, intersubjectivity offers characters the possibility of mutual understanding yet necessarily denies them unmediated connection with others.

Inspired by this theory of language, cognitive narratology suggests that narrative is crucial to our ability to understand and mentally model the world around us (Herman, “Introduction” 3), as well as those worlds linguistically or otherwise encoded in texts, films, and other mediums. Interpreting narratives involves the (re)construction of storyworlds: mental representations of events, locations, and participants in stories (Herman, Story Logic 14-8). Participants within the storyworld construe these components in a way that agrees to a greater or lesser extent with the “objective” storyworld of which all characters are a part. In addition to creating a mental space that encompasses the narrative, readers populate that space with characters that have their own mental representations of the world in which they are embedded. In other words, readers endow participants with minds that have similar cognitive abilities. But unlike readers, who have access to an omniscient perspective (e.g. construed from their privileged place outside the text or via an omniscient narrator), in most novels, characters are sealed within their own interpretation of the storyworld. These interpretations, much like those of readers, emerge out of interacting with the world and communicating with others in it, but most narratives deny characters direct access to other minds or objectivity. In To the Lighthouse, Lily Briscoe and William Bankes (two of many friends staying with the Ramsay family at their summer home on the Isle of Skye) construe the family matriarch Mrs. Ramsay separately, but they find commonality with each other through their different but mutual appreciation of her. Mrs. Ramsay’s own self-construals—whether by familial role (mother, wife) or abstract concept (“wedge-shaped core of darkness,” “third stroke of the lighthouse” [62-3])—are unique, voiced by the anonymous narrator and focalized through her but inaccessible to other participants. Each character, including Mrs. Ramsay, has his or her own experiences with her and construes her differently as a result.

Before examining how these construals of selves and others function similarly as narrative participants for characters in Woolf’s novels, it is necessary to distinguish between subjects and selves. Following the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their book Philosophy in the Flesh, I refer to the subject as an always present and embodied consciousness that can construe (and invoke) any number of selves, which are character constructions separate from but inspired by the subject. Lakoff and Johnson schematize this relationship between subject and self as many and metaphorical. In the metaphors they identify, the self functions as an independent person, object, or location acted upon by the subject (often the grammatical subject), which in all cases “exists only in the present” and is “always conceptualized as a person” (268). In the past and future, as well as in locations other than here, the subject construes a different self, as it must to reference its body or mind, distinguish emoting from thinking, articulate an inner sense of self from an outer persona, and so on. The prevalence of these metaphors means we consistently “experience ourselves as split,” yet use different metaphors to articulate the subject and self depending on what we wish to express. As the authors emphasize, these metaphors are not
“ontologically real”: they are linguistic constructions that give us access to the many verbs and phrases we use to discuss various nouns, which we borrow to talk about ourselves. In extended discourse, these self-construals combine and intersect in complex ways that allow us to narrate selves as characters with relationships, preferences, and histories. Out of these multiple selves emerges a profile we traditionally refer to as character in the narrative sense, though a single character (e.g. Mrs. Ramsay) frays into many metaphorical construals upon further investigation.

One of the ways Woolf’s characters construe themselves (and the world around them) differently depends on the presence or absence of others. In The Waves, Bernard recounts his day at college and asks himself, “Which of these people am I?” He answers, “It depends so much upon the room” (81). Bernard realizes that he is different in public and in private: “Especially now, when I have left a room […] it becomes clear that I am not one and simple, but complex and many. Bernard in public, bubbles; in private, is secretive” (81). Bernard embraces the complexity of his multiple selves rather than limiting himself to one version he prefers or deems authentic. But he recognizes that others lose this complexity when they construe him: “They do not understand that I have to effect different transitions; have to cover the entrances and exits of several different men who alternately act their part as Bernard” (81). The subject in these passages differentiates itself from the performance of Bernard as well as from the “several different men” who act him. The name ‘Bernard’ refers to each of them in their particular contexts; to this speaking subject, none of them is Bernard individually. For readers, the character ‘Bernard’ emerges out of the various self-construals he narrates, his narration (tagged with “said Bernard” in the general text), and the construals others have made of him in their own narratives.

These distinctions are perhaps most visible in The Waves because its six main characters employ a discourse of multiple selves and others throughout the novel. Furthermore, unlike Woolf’s other work, in which a single narrator focalizes different viewpoints, these characters speak for and narrate themselves. On the page, quotation marks identify their perspectives clearly for readers so that each character’s construal of another really is a participant in his or her own narrative. The narrators further call our attention to these distinctions by persistently questioning themselves, others, and their ability to know either. When Neville references Jinny, he invokes his construal of her based on his relationship to her; likewise, the same occurs when Jinny talks about Neville. Nevertheless, for readers, these various perspectives on the same character blend such that we learn of Jinny through Neville and vice versa. The boundaries, though clear on the page, need not be clear in our interpretation of the novel as a whole, except when these multiple perspectives conflict in some crucial way (as they do when Neville asks Bernard, “Who am I?” [83]). Indeed, by the final section of the novel, Bernard is completely unbound (perhaps because, as he is the only narrator to speak at this point, other voices are not present to give him structure). Throughout the section, he emphasizes his confusion with passages like, “I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am—Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs” (276; see also 281 and 288). Bernard blurs the boundaries among his construals of his selves and others by narrating his life and theirs together. He simultaneously questions both the possibility of his own individuality or independence from others, and the possibility of knowing another beyond his own subjective construal of them. Yet the nearest he can get to either is by narrating.
While construals of others as participants in the ongoing process of comprehending one’s subjective reality is most obvious in *The Waves* (where punctuation delineates individual narratives), these construals are at work throughout *To the Lighthouse* as well. Three parts structure the novel: first, characters prepare for dinner and muse about visiting a lighthouse the following day; second, the summer home is abandoned for many years of war and death; third, some characters return and finally visit the lighthouse. In this final section, Lily starts afresh the painting she began years earlier; doing so conjures the ghost of a deceased Mrs. Ramsay. At first, Mrs. Ramsay is only focalized through Lily, who “seemed to be sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay on the beach” (171; emphasis mine). The uncertainty of the verb “seemed” is attributed to Lily, not Mrs. Ramsay, though her presence is still focalized through Lily in this sentence. In the next paragraph, however, Mrs. Ramsay acts on her own: “Is it a boat? Is it a cask?” Mrs Ramsay said. And she began hunting round for her spectacles. And she sat, having found them, silent, looking out to sea” (171). Here, although the previous sentence implies focalization, the narrator does not qualify Mrs. Ramsay’s actions by introducing uncertainty; Mrs. Ramsay participates in the narrative as if she were physically present, though she is presumably Lily’s projection. But in the next paragraph, which begins with “Mrs Ramsay sat silent,” she is again focalized through Lily: “She was glad, Lily thought, to rest in silence, uncommunicative; to rest in the extreme obscurity of human relationships. […] Aren’t things spoilt then, Mrs Ramsay may have asked” (171; emphasis mine). That Mrs. Ramsay speaks and acts—however briefly— independent of Lily’s perception implies the potency of construals as participants in narrative and the significant cognitive overlap between Lily’s immediate experience while painting and her narration of that long-ago evening when Mrs. Ramsay read to James. This process not only enables but also is facilitated by Lily’s artistic production, suggesting that interpretation is an artistic process in and of itself.

Mrs. Ramsay’s ghostly presence prompts Lily to think of Paul and Minta Rayley, whose “lives appeared to her in a series of scenes” (172). These sketches depict them in a marriage that “had turned out rather badly”: in one, the two have fallen out of love but become “excellent friends” after Paul “had taken up with another woman” (173-4). Lily reflects how “this making up scenes about them […] is what we call ‘knowing’ people, ‘thinking’ of them, ‘being fond’ of them! Not a word of it was true; she had made it up; but it was what she knew them by all the same” (173). That the Rayleys had an unpleasant marriage seems to be storyworld fact: Lily “would feel a little triumphant, telling Mrs Ramsay that the marriage had not been a success” (174). Thus, Lily invokes the Rayleys in the presence of Mrs. Ramsay’s ghost to assert her own status as an unmarried woman and artist against Mrs. Ramsay’s insistence (even beyond the grave) that women marry and care for men and children. But doing so requires thinking of them as characters acting out scenes in a story, the details of which Lily knows little but embellishes in response to her other “structure of imagination”—Mrs. Ramsay (173).

For Lily, construals of others—of Mrs. Ramsay particularly—seem quite ‘real’ and have agency in her narrative. More agency, at least, than Augustus Carmichael, who is also onshore with her but to whose perspective the narrator denies us access, dozing as he is with his hat over his face (170). Yet these construals seem inadequate when one considers the substantial gap between consciousnesses. Lily supposes “one’s perceptions” can get only “half-way to truth,” and Woolf describes the result as “grotesque” in both *To the*
Lighthouse and The Waves. In the former, Lily reflects on Charles Tansley, Mr. Ramsay’s philosophy student who often mocked her for being a female painter: “Her own idea of him was grotesque, Lily knew well […]. Half one’s notions of other people were, after all, grotesque. They served private purposes of one’s own. He did for her instead of a whipping-boy” (197). And Bernard describes these construals of others similarly in The Waves: “I feel already those harbingers, those outriders, figures of one’s friends in absence. […] These are fantastic pictures—[…] grotesque, dropsical, vanishing at the first touch of the toe of a real boot” (117). The construals may be grotesque in both cases, but they function for the subject: Lily relieves her temper by “flagellating [Charles’] lean flanks,” and Bernard’s “visions of friends in absence […] drum [him] alive.” Like characters in all narratives, these “figures” may be varyingy detailed, but they are always more grotesque in the other’s absence—and, in even a friend’s presence, necessarily a reduction of that other consciousness. These figures are not merely decorative but have the potential to profoundly affect Lily and Bernard, because the construals are also part of them.

Woolf’s direct engagement with the problem of character and construal deserves more attention than it has received here or elsewhere. Her narrators skillfully incorporate a multiplicity of perspectives while acknowledging the anxieties of characters attempting to comprehend or transcend their subjectivity to achieve mutual understanding with others. Whether such a connection is possible is an unresolved doubt throughout Woolf’s novels, yet is itself what demands her characters question their own nature and relationships to themselves. In doing so, they require of readers an appreciation that interaction among cognitive agents involves selecting individual construals from permutations available to each interpreter and participant at any moment. Conceptualizing these intersecting viewpoints as mental spaces within storyworlds provides us with a vocabulary and apparatus for making distinctions among them. Woolf calls our attention to these complexities as readers. As critics, a cognitive approach to narrative gives us the tools to reconsider character and investigate selves and others as narrative participants in her work.

Notes

1. This paper was adapted from my graduating essay, which I completed at the University of British Columbia under the guidance of Dr. Barbara Dancygier. I thank her for her patience, support, and mentorship. I would also like to thank Lara deBeyer and Basit Iqbal for providing valuable feedback on a draft of this paper.
2. Ronald Langacker formulated cognitive grammar in the late eighties; see his recent book Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction for an accessible overview.
3. “Narration is the telling of a story […]; focalization is the submission of (potentially limitless) narrative information to a perspectival filter” (Jahn 94).
4. For cognitive linguists like Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors are conceptual mappings of the form “X IS Y,” where X is the target domain onto which the source domain, Y, is projected. In the metaphor “SELF IS A LOCATION,” SELF and LOCATION are the target and source domains, respectively.

Works Cited

Publishing, Politics, Publics
“THE MOST UNACCOUNTABLE OF MACHINERY”:
THE ORLANDO PROJECT PRODUCES A TEXTBASE OF ONE’S OWN

by Susan Brown, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy

Orlando: Women’s Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present is a hybrid creation, the descendant of The Feminist Companion to Literature in English (1990, a biographical dictionary of 2700 women writers in the English-speaking world); and it is the product of an experiment in the application of technology to texts. When the Companion went to press, there wasn’t room for everything we wanted to print, and we could include only a minimal index, even though it was a big book: 1231 pages, double-column format. Its extensive research was crying out to be written as a history.

Our Orlando is deeply rooted in Woolf’s work. Its name reflects the fact that no-one has had more impact on the recognition and understanding of women’s writing in history than Woolf. In our history’s title, together with the little oak tree that is its logo, we saw ourselves as paying homage to Woolf and to her rich, rollicking, future-embracing Orlando. We had a shared purpose—creation of a history of women’s writing from a position widely off-base from the canonical center, in a feminist critical framework—and, in our case, not as a book, but a dynamic literary history delivered online. Our project was highly improbable when it began—but who more inspires improbabilities than Woolf in Orlando?

This essay focuses on the interdisciplinary exploration that is at the core of our Orlando. We address the project’s beginnings and early contexts; its present, showing, with screen shots, what the online Orlando can do to support discovery, and what its future, and the future of work in literary and computing studies, may hold. We are acutely conscious as we reflect on our own project, since we began this work the digital has become ubiquitous and that everywhere around us rages discussion, often anxious, of its impacts—on the reproduction of texts, on literature and culture, on teaching. The March 2012 PMLA, for instance, opens with a moving and thoughtful Editor’s Column on “The Work of the Book in the Age of Electronic Reproduction” in which Simon Gikandi speaks of his “almost apocalyptic dread that an epoch is ending.” Yet, even here, nothing is ever only one thing, and he speaks also of hoping to read “an ending as the opening up of a new beginning” (Gikandi 211).

Our electronic Orlando, which is not and could not be a book, is all about books, and its principles of development were literary and scholarly first, and digital second. We first conceived our literary history as the production of volumes arranged by period, each of us to write one of these. But then, in an early planning meeting, Susan Brown suggested that we “look into” computing. “Oh, yes,” we said. Bear in mind that the three of us at that stage knew alarmingly close to nothing about humanities computing. It was a leap of faith, and it threw us into a radical collaboration of disciplines that changed dramatically not only our ways of doing things, but also our sense of what could be done. Without knowing it, we were on the way to building a team of research-
ers which, over time, came to number more than a hundred, including graduate students, technicians, designers, and scholars in computing; and we were on our way to the collaborative creation of a literary history in which the central intellectual engagement was a conversation between literary scholarship and computing. We could not have attempted this without the support of the University of Alberta, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the University of Guelph, and the Canada Foundation for Innovation.

And so three hitherto non-computational professors of English proposed to do what had not previously been attempted: to write an interactive, online, feminist, literary history. We faced two critical uncertainties: neither text encoding nor the Web had been used for this kind of scholarship. Dealing with the first challenge, the encoding, the team grappled excitingly with the idea of knowledge representation and the construction of tagsets or schemas that would make it possible to encode material we were actually writing. (At that stage, humanities computing scholars were largely focused on encoding existing texts.) Because the project was not generic, the Orlando tagsets (described below) were created to embody the principles and emphases of literary history. We dealt with the second challenge by betting on the Web, at a time when many scholarly projects were using discs, and it was quite uncertain whether the Web could be useful for scholarly purposes.

Those two decisions—about encoding and Web delivery—were structurally determining for the Orlando textbase. The schemas and markup shaped and made searchable in complex, critical, interesting ways the work of the many Orlando scholars who researched and wrote original material on the writers who became our subjects. Designed to deal with that original material—with life-events, publication histories, ideas, interpretations, and source citation—the tagsets are what makes the textbase interestingly and profitably searchable. The decision to mount the project on the Web governed the work of creating the delivery system, the interface that gives you what you see and what you use.
In the *Orlando* system, there are two principal tagsets: for Life and Writing. The Writing tagset includes three large-bucket tags: Production, Textual Features, and Reception. Figure 1 shows how the most complex of these is Production. We represent the data structures (the tagsets) as starbursts: though they omit some sub-tags, they illustrate the kind of decisions and explicit critical judgments an *Orlando* scholar faces in creating a document.

The *Orlando* textbase, as published through Cambridge University Press in 2006, was an interactive, highly searchable body of newly researched and written critical, biographical, and historical material amounting to five and a half million words. That since then it has added about three million words more.
Orlando has held surprises for its creators from the beginning. It dismantled and reconstructed our sense of how historical and interpretive materials can be written; as a multiply collaborative work it dissociated our history from a single sense of the author; and because of its interactive character it required us at every stage to be alert to a reader/user who might be a scholar, a student, a Sunday afternoon surfer. Its creators are constantly delighted when searches return results we didn’t know were there.

Some of Orlando’s unpredicted outcomes were institutional. At the University of Alberta it spurred the development of new undergraduate courses, then a Master’s Degree in Humanities Computing, and had significant impact on graduate teaching. Over the course of its development the project funded eighty-seven graduate students and seven post-doctoral fellows, all critical members of the team. Orlando graduate students worked collaboratively, and on a small scale the project became a kind of interdisciplinary college. Our students were supported by the collegiality of this work, and many remained attached to the group after they had finished. Some have built on the project’s scholarly insights in their own work, and for several the experience in computing work gave a professional boost. Orlando “graduates” are teaching in universities in Canada, the United States, and Britain, some in humanities computing. Several are working in information technology outside academe.

Some of the surprises Orlando now presents are challenging. The project has transformed our traditional sense of an ending, in which we send proofed and corrected copy to the publisher, then wait for books. Orlando, published in 2006, requires its makers to sustain and develop it, both as history and as system. Its regular updates are both scholarly and technical. If Orlando’s engines don’t run (which takes financial support), then new research findings don’t make the textbase, and eventually that—with all its research—becomes inaccessible. The hard question now, in difficult financial times, is how to sustain this work of scholarship. Could The Feminist Companion, securely static between its boards since 1990, outlive the much richer resource of the textbase? Until, as a research community, we resolve the issue of sustainability, digital scholarly projects will continue to be risky ventures. Stay tuned.

Meanwhile, for a readership of Woolf scholars, the natural place to begin looking at entries is the one on Woolf.

In a form not unlike that of a reference book, we begin with a thumbnail account of Woolf designed to draw in that not totally impossible user who asks, “Virginia Woolf? Why should I be interested in her?” Tabs at the top point you to the other screens that make up the entry: Writing, Life, Timeline, Works by, and Links screens, the last pointing you to mentions or discussions of Woolf in other people’s entries. Headings and subheadings outline the shape of the central Life and Writing screens of this entry; a column of Milestones picks out key time-linked events. In Orlando, literary-historical research provides the basic information; computing science enables this finite entry to open up innumerable avenues for further exploration. Woolf’s Writing screen (pictured on next page) shows, in its coverage of her Orlando, how our Orlando deals with a text in detail. It offers some material about Woolf’s intentions, process, feelings about her work, then a date of planning the book, then the publishing date. Then (moving beyond what is shown here) an account of the book’s entry into the world, of its extraordinary contents, of its immediate and later reception, down to what were called the “feminist and fabulist” qualities of a recent stage version.
Serendipitously, Woolf’s plans for her *Orlando* chime with our later *Orlando*’s aims. As the novel was “unwilled by [her] but potent in its own right” so our *Orlando* provides (through entries on other writers, coordinated through the Links screens) a many-angled account of her in which no one voice, no conclusive interpretation, predominates. *Orlando* the textbase is not satiric like the novel but its spirit is certainly one of opposition to very many current or former critical judgments on women writers both individually and collectively, and its structure is, in printed-book terms, wild. Search results fairly frequently reflect wildness of spirit or of association. A user seeking further information about the first reviewers of *Orlando* the novel might click on one of those mentioned here, J. C. Squire, and move via Squire’s Links screen to excerpts from entries in which he appears. These excerpts show him praising the traditionalist Alice Meynell but failing to recognize the originality of Mathilde Blind; they show him as an enemy of Edith Sitwell, and in an excerpt from the Romer Wilson entry they show him involved in a clash with Woolf over critical response. Here Squire’s views provoke Woolf to assert her own opposing views. These other glimpses of Squire color and contextualize his judgment on Woolf’s *Orlando*.

Our *Orlando*’s coverage of Woolf’s *Orlando* quotes from positive as well as negative reviews, and again we can contextualize those reviews by clicking on the names of reviewers. Doing this with Rebecca West, who called *Orlando* “a poetic masterpiece of the first rank,” could lead a user directly to the entry on her, or to excerpts that are relevant to her in other entries (qtd. in “Virginia Woolf: Writing”). The excerpts show West reaching...
into Ibsen's revolutionary fictions to find a writing identity for herself, and they show Violet Hunt in 1926 celebrating in West's intellectual life the very qualities Woolf sought in her *Orlando*: the ability "to play with facts while exercising all the power of detachment of a mind which can, in the midst of its wildest flights, return painlessly and without a hitch to actuality" (qtd. in "Hunt: Life"). No wonder West was a perceptive reviewer of Woolf's *Orlando*. Wild flights that return without a hitch to actuality are just what we believe that our *Orlando* enables.

All this demonstrates the power of serendipity in *Orlando* the textbase: following links away from Woolf's *Orlando* leads to other examples of *Orlando*-like thinking. This effect has not been individually or purposely produced. Someone writing the Woolf entry—graduate student or senior scholar—chose to cite reviews of *Orlando* the novel by Squire and West. (A lead contributor on the Woolf entry was Kathryn Holland, one of the editors of this book.) Other team members (students or faculty) writing other entries, not on Squire and West but on Romer Wilson and Violet Hunt, just happened to address some aspects of Squire and of West that are relevant to the way they reviewed *Orlando* the novel.

The textbase keeps its wild flights tethered to actuality partly through the structuring principle of chronology. You can generate a timeline for any word, name, or concept which is mentioned in date-specific statements, or you can search chronologically on some of the core tags: *Orlando* as title or *Orlando* as name; London as place or London as part of an organization name. Results from searching on Woolf as name will replicate the timeline that is part of her own entry. Or you can search without content but just by date.
Remembering the two dates we’ve seen supplied for *Orlando* the novel—October 1927 for choosing the photos, October 1928 for the publication—we reproduce here a part of the timeline covering the year between those dates. These are not Comprehensive search results (which would include much of purely individual or personal significance) or from a search labeled Selective, but from an intermediate level: Fairly Comprehensive.

The small selection omits the earliest results from this search: “date-range” items recording not events but processes or long-continued states (concerning, for instance, women entering the academy, breastfeeding, the dress trade, expanding air travel, and much more). The illustration omits many other publication events (from novels to feminist polemics, by authors including Winifred Holtby, Dorothy Richardson, Bryher, and Ray Strachey) that occurred during Woolf’s long love affair with her embryo *Orlando*. It begins with Romer Wilson. It shows that Forster’s *Aspects of the Novel* arrived a year too early to take *Orlando* into account; it shows that the very day before Virginia and Vita were together selecting Sackville family photos for *Orlando*, Vita published her milestone biography of Aphra Behn. Without turning aside to unpack Woolf’s immensely complex and even contradictory attitudes towards actual literary biography, this point in the timeline shows how close to that genre she lived. Finally, their act of preparation for Woolf’s *Orlando* is sandwiched between
Sackville-West’s Behn and something else unexpected: *Voltaire, A Biographical Fantasy* by the future Laura Riding.

*Orlando* searches repeatedly produce serendipitous finds. Following the link to Riding’s Writing entry reveals that in her *Voltaire* she meant to “approach history in a female manner, unofficial, using the imagination,” even though she also “supplies, and parodies, academic apparatus”—another odd simultaneity between Woolf’s aims in *Orlando* and the climate into which the novel was born. *Orlando* the textbase might well suggest critical investigation into possible relationships between Riding’s *Voltaire* (published by the Hogarth Press) and Woolf’s *Orlando*.

The last of these search results, dating from after Woolf’s *Orlando* appeared, are also interesting. Of course Woolf’s creative process was over by then, but the search illuminates the moment of *Orlando*’s debut. The *Well of Loneliness* furor was heating up; Sackville-West had another book coming out; Woolf was on the brink of the two lectures that became *A Room of One’s Own*.

We now turn from those glimpses of the entries and the chronological function of *Orlando* the textbase, to look at the more complex, even more interesting, capacity for searching by means of the tags. Tag Search is the third entry point on the home screen after People and Chronologies. It offers a picklist of all the tags that make up the Writing tagset, and provides the starburst diagrams for reference.

Using the Tag Search function to explore issues related to Woolf’s *Orlando* outside its coverage in her own entry, one might start with its generic make-up. A tag called

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*Figure 5.* Screen for Tag Search on Writing, showing search on “biography” within the tag Genre Issue
Genre Issue captures those many instances in which the genre of a work is problematic, multiple, or open to discussion. Searching on this tag as related to biography produces several results relevant to Woolf’s *Orlando*. The first finding is that interbreeding between biography and history, or autobiography, or fiction, is commonplace (though seldom as complex as Woolf’s generic hybrids).

Gertrude Stein

1874-1946 profile

GS began her period of portraiture around 1908. Her portraits resembled biographical sketches but they were usually more impressionistic than factual. She thought that this genre allowed her to capture the immediacy of characters and to break away from linear narrative. Most of the portraits are included in a collection entitled *Geography and Plays*. GS’s portraits “Picasso” and “Matisse” were widely circulated in the American periodical *Camera Work*. She also wrote portraits of *Mabel Dodge, Edith Sitwell, and Sylvia Beach*. When T. S. Eliot came asking for a piece of new writing for *The Criterion*, she wrote a portrait of him that day and entitled it “A Description of November Fifteenth. A Portrait of T. S. Eliot”. He published it in *The Criterion* two years later.

Virginia Woolf

1882-1941 profile

A Brilliant and Robust Art

WV, says Andrew McNicoll, editor of her essays, is “arguably the last of the great English essayists.” Her “brilliant and robust” art made the form her own in the course of more than a million words of “sluety, witty and unwaveringly dorky prose.”

The earliest published piece among WV’s essays which is not a book-review is “On a Fateful French”, the obituary of a family dog named Slag. It minerals the vein of biography, and explores character, all this with an irony pitched not to undermine authenticity of feeling but gently to spoof the features of the form: “As he advanced in middle life he became certainly rather schematic, not only with his own kind, but with us, his masters and mistresses.” This was published in *The Guardian*, “a weekly newspaper for the clergy,” on 13 January 1905.

Figure 6. Passages from Results of Tag Search on Genre Issue containing “biography”

The most relevant results show Gertrude Stein fanning the modernist winds of experiment in the biographical sketches of visual artists which she began writing in about 1908, and in which she sought “to break away from linear narrative” (“Stein: Writing”). And they show Woolf herself, or rather Virginia Stephen, in 1905, publishing her very first piece which was not a review: a mock-obituary, a mock-biography. “It mines the vein of biography, and explores character, all this with an irony pitched not to undermine authenticity of feeling but gently to spoof the features of the form” (“Woolf: Writing”). This short work is relevant to the later *Flush*, but also relevant to *Orlando* as an ironic undermining of the genre.

Results of searching *Orlando* the textbase for issues of genre around biography, or around history, include much of relevance to Woolf’s *Orlando*. In generation after generation we find women announcing their plans to reconfigure one or other of these august genres in feminized form, and in so doing to reclaim either women hidden from history or else history that is cultural rather than political. Results include Sophia Lee in *The Recess*, 1783-85, using the historical novel to probe women’s role in political power-struggles; Elizabeth Hamilton in *Agrippina*, 1804, and Lucy Aikin and Elizabeth Benger soon afterwards in memoirs of royalty setting out, in Aikin’s words, to present “the manners of the age, the state of literature, arts, &c.” with “as slender a thread of political history as will serve to keep other matters in their places” (qtd. In “Lucy Aikin: Writing”); and *Lucy’s Nose* by Cecily Mackworth, 1992, a novel that began as an attempt to write a biography of one of Freud’s subjects in *Five Studies in Hysteria*. Mackworth found herself “inventing (or perhaps ‘deducing’)” (qtd. In “Mackworth: Writing”), a parallel story about this woman, a highly suggestive fictionalization that unpicks Freudian psychology rather as Woolf’s *Orlando* unpicks literary history. *Orlando* the textbase throws up myriads of these unplanned, glancing points of family resemblance among the writings of women in different centuries.

Another fascinating Tag Search concerning Woolf leads to information on authors whose influence she felt or acknowledged. *Orlando* team members have noted influence on Woolf in entries beginning with that on Sappho, and ranging through Lady Anne
Clifford (who lived and read at Knole, and who surfaces in the concept of the common reader), Anne Thackeray Ritchie (whom Woolf praised, and portrayed as Mrs. Hilbery), Frances Hodgson Burnet (whose Clorinda Wildairs changes sex, in 1896, in the opposite direction from Orlando but in a similar spirit of outrageousness), and of course Jane Ellen Harrison.

Conversely, a search on Woolf’s name as influence on other writers leads to excerpts from entries on Willa Cather (almost ten years Woolf’s senior, sending for a copy of The Voyage Out when she too is writing a novel about a protagonist who dies at the end of the book) and Rose Macaulay creating in the fictional Julian Conybeare a kind of realization of Shakespeare’s sister. This gathering of writers enlisted under Woolf’s banner reaches to our contemporaries: Anita Desai in India using Woolf as a kind of tuning fork to keep herself on the right note, and Catherine Byron in Ireland invoking her idea of a tradition of women’s writing. Woolf, it seems, does indeed embody the tradition that she invoked, and the Orlando textbase provides a window on her doing it.

These examples give a sense of the kinds of inquiry the textbase can support. Our current technical research builds on the rich potential enabled by the extensive markup embedded in the project’s materials, seeking to develop new ways of learning from this additional layer of knowledge. The textbase contents can produce quite different impacts, depending on the kind of interface used to represent and make this knowledge accessible, employing different forms of contextualization, different ways of interacting with the materials, and complementary insights.

The current Cambridge University Press interface invites a reader to explore for herself the power of the tagging (Brown et al, “Between”). Monitoring user responses suggests that some find this interface intimidating. We are therefore developing a simpler search, alongside the current one, which will begin with a free text search and then allow the user to narrow down the search results using the tags. This new interface will look more like most popular search engines but still provide users with the power of markup. Literary researchers have taken mere baby steps thus far in figuring out ways of putting the power of computing to work beyond reproducing words on a screen. Much of our technical work since publication has focused on exploring the possibilities.

One rough prototype, inspired by the concept of degrees of separation, explores and visualizes the way people link together within our literary history. It turns out that Orlando represents a very closely interlinked group of people: no one is separated by six degrees; almost everyone is linked directly or by one step. For interesting results the most common links are best excluded. These include London, the Bible and Shakespeare, but also Woolf—which shows how central she is to Orlando and the history it has built. Her connections to other writers, personally and as a critic and a literary figure, are a defining feature of our project. Moving beyond Woolf’s immediate circle, however, produces some interesting paths. Canadian writer Ethel Wilson, for instance, is not immediately connected to Woolf. But Wilson praised Margaret Laurence’s first novel, and Margaret Atwood has written as a critic on both Laurence and Woolf. The prototype displays the passages in Orlando that link Wilson to Woolf.

We’re experimenting with such interfaces to promote exploration of links or connections between people because to us that is crucial to unraveling the complex patterns of literary history. Because the networks are so dense, however, we have moved from textual representations to visualization as a means of exploring this vast network of relationships.
The OVIs interface uses a standard node-edge graph to show the connections between people in *Orlando*. The squares represent people and the lines are the links between them. The 23,000 people in *Orlando* make the full graph unreadable, so we here show only Woolf and her immediate connections with writers.

The red squares are writers with entries: this view omits non-writers and omits names for some of the squares. This image will remind many of Bonnie Kime Scott’s graphs in *The Gender of Modernism* and *Refiguring Modernism: The Women of 1928*. Indeed, Figure 8 offers *Orlando*’s parallel to her graph of Woolf, Rebecca West, and Djuna Barnes by adding the latter two to this visualization.

Our graphs include all of the connections mentioned in the *Orlando* textbase between their subject or subjects and other writers (or non-writers), because they can be filtered down by the reader on screen, though in complete form they are too crowded for print purposes. The tags color-code the types of association involved, and we provide, in a reading pane below the graph, the passages of text from *Orlando* that describe the connection. A cluster of green lines represents links to do with friendships and social

Figure 7: OVIs prototype visualizing writers connected to Virginia Woolf. This image has been altered for print; see online edition for full-color version.
relationships, whereas the blues and purples and pinks indicate more literary relationships. One can, for instance, limit the view to show only intertextuality, where Woolf offers forty-two nodes or connections. The reading pane (not shown here) presents the passages in *Orlando* where the claim for an intertextual relationship is made.

Rather than representing a conclusive view, as Scott’s printed graph does, such dynamic and interactive graphs represent a provisional set of granular, interpretive judgments, as embedded in the tagging by multiple contributors. These together form the basis both for a kind of aggregate argument—here that Woolf is a pivotal figure in women’s literary history, based on the extent to which she is interlinked with others in a wide range of ways—which the user can use to test the evidence and build further arguments.

Connections between people constitute one of many kinds of link. For connections to place are we have begun working with maps to see what spatial visualizations can yield. A global map of the settings of texts by writers born in the nineteenth century allows one to zoom in to the prairies and see that Ethel Wilson set several novels in Saskatoon. A map of broader connections of text with place shows that a translation of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim by Katharina Wilson was first published here by the Peregrina Press in 1986 (before being republished in New York). One can also apply the mapping function to particular writers: if we select places associated with settings in Woolf, we find that there are eighty-seven of them, clustered around southern England of course, but including the Isle of Skye as the setting of *To the Lighthouse*, Italy for Septimus Smith’s wartime experi-
ence, Lisbon where Rachel Vinrace meets the Dalloways, and Constantinople (Istanbul) for Orlando’s transformation from man to woman.

Such visualizations demand critical reflection. In our view, these prototype interfaces and visualizations constitute forms of argumentation both about literary history and about digital interfaces (Galey and Ruecker). Johanna Drucker, considering how we display humanities scholarship graphically, insists that there is no such thing as data, only what she calls capta. *Capta* is “taken” actively while *data* is assumed to be a “given.” From this distinction, a world of difference arises. Humanistic inquiry acknowledges the situated, partial, and constitutive character of knowledge production, the recognition that knowledge is constructed, *taken*, not simply given as a natural representation of pre-existing fact.

As Woolf well knew, knowledge is produced in socially and politically situated ways. Illumination, the flash of light from a lighthouse, is produced by complex factors deeply imbricated in human lives and conditions. The “knowledge” represented in *Orlando* that
Woolf is central to women’s writing is, of course, a reflection of our collective judgment of her importance, coupled with that of others who preserved her writings, and an interpretive lens produced by a wealth of rigorous editorial, biographical and critical material. Not every gifted writer has been so lucky. Woolf, well aware of the cruel historical ironies to which women were especially vulnerable, worked to get their stories circulated. She formed her quasi-biographical composites, Shakespeare’s sister or Orlando herself, from a deep understanding of the conditions that shape writers’ lives and hence literary history.

Like Woolf founding the Hogarth Press, Orlando the textbase aims in a way to seize the means of literary production in the service of feminism. But those means could be more accessible than they are currently. Amy Earhart has perceived disturbing implications to the shift from low-tech websites to large-scale, standards-oriented projects. The development of best practices in scholarship with computers, while it has many good effects, has also resulted in a disturbing movement away from online projects devoted to marginalized writers. Unlike the early days, when websites devoted to redressing the biases

Figure 10. Mapping of settings associated with Woolf in the Orlando textbase
of the canon sprang up spontaneously on the wild woolly Web, now most large, funded
digital projects are devoted to canonical authors. This is distorting the online profile of
literary studies: they look far more conservative than they are, and much less responsive
to the highly diverse, international, and multicultural character of recent writing. The
impulse shown by Woolf in her irreverent, fiercely reclaimatory avatar of the “common
reader” is hardly to be seen. This disturbing trend is no doubt overdetermined: feminism
is no longer the academic fashion, and women’s participation in technological areas of the
humanities still lags behind that of men. Yet it is a trend that needs reversing.

To better enable the common scholar and the common reader to participate in digital
resource creation and enhancement despite the increasing levels of expertise needed, Orlando
is providing the basis for developing an online space for scholarship on writing in
and about Canada. The Canadian Writing Research Collaboratory (“CWRC,” pronounced
“quirk”) builds on Orlando’s tagsets and our experience of mobilizing a community of schol-
ars to collaborate in working online. It aims to enable individual scholars or teams of schol-
ars to access the kind of infrastructure it takes to produce projects like Orlando. It will allow
scholars to work online, provide guidance in the use of the technologies and the tags, so that
one does not have to be a “digital humanist” to contribute to online scholarship, and it will
support scholars in best practices so that their work will interlink with that of others. Above
all, CWRC builds on our desire to keep the Orlando Project going and to support a similar
venture in Canadian women’s writing. It has pilot projects on early Canadian poetry, colo-
nial girlhood, and a lesbian and gay chronology. CWRC promises a more accessible means
of production for Orlando and for similar work on Canadian writing.

Alan Liu has argued that “a relational database is a paradigm of knowledge” (310),
and Laura Mandell, Stan Ruecker, and Alan Galey that interfaces and prototypes for
digital systems constitute an argument. What we hope Orlando offers is not just access
to information, but engagement with an argument about the nature, the importance, the
interest, the complexity, of women’s writing. This argument grows from the conjunction
of the readable materials in the textbase and the markup that structures them. It also
suggests particular, less obvious arguments. These emerge not as explicitly articulated by
a single scholarly voice, but as embedded in the dispersed results of the collective prac-
tices of Orlando’s contributors, embodied in the markup they applied across thousands of
documents and millions of words.

Take, for example, the treatment of Judaism within Orlando’s set of tags called Cul-
tural Formation, which marks discussions of the shifting constituents of a writer’s identity.
Searching on “Jewish” within Cultural Formation reveals that the word is generally placed
within subtags that denote religion or ethnicity (or both). Two interesting exceptions are the
mid-Victorian Grace Aguilar, who is tagged as claiming Jewish nationality in the context
of the growth of Zionism, and Eva Figes, whose Jewishness is tagged as race or color in the
context of her experience of Nazi Germany and as a refugee in anti-Semitic England. The
markup here (which can be made visible on screen by a single click) suggests an argument
about changing discursive and ideological frames for Jewishness in Britain, one that emerges
from the collective tagging of the concept across the history of British women writers.

Such implicit arguments are not readily discerned, so one of the challenges we face is
that of figuring out new ways of making these collaborative critical arguments more avail-
able. This particular argument should not be understood as a truth-claim about Judaism
and women writers, nor has it a special status because computers were involved in making it. As Stephen Ramsay has recently argued, one must not think that computers somehow lead us to positivist conclusions. They are, rather an extension of the methods of pattern-recognition and meaning-making that have been employed by critics of literature since long before the silicon chip, and this example reveals how human interpretive activity necessarily informs that process.

As Ramsay shows in using text analysis to build on Miriam Wallace's investigation of subjectivity in *The Waves*, computers can “assist the critic in the unfolding of interpretive possibilities” but they are no substitute for those fundamental activities, nor for the ongoing, iterative adjudication of interpretations by the critical community (10). His insistence that reading with machines is, notwithstanding our anxieties about doing so, not substantively different from reading without them recalls Woolf’s conflation of the organic and the inorganic in the passage from which we’ve drawn our title. As Woolf remarks in a letter to Ethel Smyth from 1932, “My own brain is to me the most unaccountable of machinery—always buzzing, humming, soaring soaring diving, and then buried in mud” (*L* 140). The mud reminds of how mired we are in our own historical moment.

To return then to Drucker’s insights into the representation of digital information: “The history of knowledge is the history of forms of expression of knowledge, and those forms change.” We’re still in the very early days of devising apt forms for digital scholarship. For that very reason, it really matters that such exploration be undertaken by scholars committed to interrogating the ways in which cultural objects are produced and circulated through networks of power, and to demonstrating the compelling relevance of the humanities in an era of the defunding of liberal education, of fragility of public discourse, and of imperiled dissent. While the unaccountable machinery of computing may seem to take us a long way from Virginia Woolf, we hope that the Orlando Project’s feminist intervention into the emerging field of digital humanities can be understood as an important and necessary step in that field, as well as an advance in knowledge about women’s writing. Although our *Orlando* is a very different thing from Woolf’s, not to mention far less inventive and funny, we hope she would have seen something of an affinity between the two.

Notes

2. In these discussions about encoding, the team was grateful for the advice of Professor Susan Hockey, an early and distinguished scholar in humanities computing and a member of the Text Encoding Initiative. Later, we were grateful for expert assistance on the *Orlando* delivery system from Professor Renee Elio.
3. Susan Brown and the *Orlando* team wrote about this in “Published Yet Never Done,” 2009.
4. All quotations by and about literary authors are taken from “Life” and “Writing” screens in the *Orlando* textbase. See: http://orlando.cambridge.org/svHomePage.

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THE HOTEL AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE

by Steven D. Putzel

The late thirties was an extraordinarily painful but also an extraordinarily productive time for Leonard Woolf, as it was for Virginia. Many friends and family members had died in the thirties, the Spanish Civil War that would take the life of Julian Bell raged from 1936 until 1939, and capitalist, communist, and Fascist barbarians were about to destroy Europe. Virginia Woolf had just completed *The Years* (1937), and was writing *Three Guineas* (1938), the biography of Roger Fry (1940), and *Between the Acts* (1941). In 1939 alone Leonard published *Barbarians at the Gate* (in the U.S. *Barbarians Within and Without*), the second volume of *After the Deluge*, and his only play, *The Hotel*. I will focus here on Leonard’s quest to see his play *The Hotel* produced. Many factors contributed to Leonard’s difficulty in realizing his play in performance: the outbreak of war, the play’s sharp satirical treatment of religion and of UK and European politicians, and Leonard’s own inexperience with play-writing. But behind this “non-production” history, is the suggestion that Leonard, like Virginia, was ahead of his time, introducing absurdist theatrical techniques almost worthy of Genet and Albee in an age still dominated by realism and melodrama.

At the end of March 1938 Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary “L. writing his play—the one he’s brewed these 10 years & more” (*D5* 133). In August she noted progress with “P.H.” (Pointz Hall that would become *Between the Acts*), adding “Its to end with a play. L. is writing his in the garage room. I note he doesn’t like to be asked when will it be done? He has, amusingly, all an artists sensibilities” (*D5* 159). A diary entry dated 13 October noted “went to Tilton & read L’s play to the K.s,” adding “They gravely approved. M. as intent as a terrier. Very interesting. We like it very much. Suggest the Group Theatre” (*D5* 180). In a letter to Vanessa, curiously dated Oct. 8 (five days earlier than the diary entry), she wrote: “had tea with the Keynes…L. read them his play; They seemed rather impressed; they think the Group may do it. I thought it rather good too; but who am I? I never get any praise for what I write” (*L6* 287). By October Leonard and Virginia were already discussing a possible production with the London Group Theatre founded by Rupert Doone and Robert Medley. At the end of October Woolf speaks of dining with Isherwood, Auden, and Spender. Then she adds: “His play will be tried by the Group. Stephen S.[pender] thinks it a roaring comedy & very original” (*D5* 183).

These diary entries and letter are quite revealing. Woolf’s tone suggests a degree of competitiveness, skepticism, and even condescension toward Leonard’s “artistic sensibilities” as opposed to his acumen in political economy. Also, there is evidence that Isherwood, Auden, and Spender all read and professed to liking the play; and it is clear that both Leonard and Virginia believed that the play would, in fact, be professionally performed—and soon. Hogarth Press published the play in 1939 and Dial Press published it in the U.S. in 1963.

In his introduction to the U.S. edition, part of which is included in *Downhill all the Way*, Leonard confirms what Virginia had said in her diaries about his long-standing desire to write a play set in a hotel:
I had never written a play before I wrote *The Hotel*. But for a long time I had wanted to write one in which the scene would be the entrance hall of a hotel, with the revolving door through which a string of heterogeneous characters would have their entrances and their exits. It is a scene in real life which always seems infinitely dramatic. And then one day in 1938 I suddenly saw that my hotel on the stage might be both realistic and symbolic, the *Grand Hôtel du Paradis* which had become the Grand *Hôtel de l'Univers et du Commerce*, with Peter Vajoff, the proprietor, standing in front of the fire—and with bugs in the beds. (*H* 5-6)

*The Hotel* is a three-act, multi-layered allegory that critiques Judeo-Christian values, the destructive power of unregulated capitalism, and the political intrigue leading up to WWII. Vajoff is proprietor, arms dealer and look-alike old-testament god, who has a chambermaid/lover Mary, and a mild-mannered self-sacrificing son Christopher. A bit heavy-handedly, Woolf also includes a pageboy named Kyriil Dovë who flits about the stage with little dramatic purpose besides his name. As in medieval miracle plays, all the characters are transparently allegorical. Sir George and Lady Hepburn represent the British government, and through the revolving door come a British Communist, an Irish Communist, an Italian Fascist, a German Nazi, a French femme-fatal double-agent, and, of course, a wandering Jew. The Hall porter, a stand-in for Lucifer, appropriately named Lucien Stanovich, cynically manipulates all of the characters. Looking back at the play from the vantage point of 1963, Leonard Woolf claims that *The Hotel* predicted that the “Nazis, communists, and Fascists” would destroy “the world in which it was written,” and “what it prophesied has happened” (*H* 5). Vajoff, the patriarch, has filled his hotel with munitions and machine guns (packed in crates labeled pianos and frigidaires) to be sold to anyone with ready cash, the feckless Chris (read: Christian), intending to keep the arms from all sides, is shot by the Nazi who mistakes him for the Russian Communist agent. As denouement, the British government, the German and Italian Fascist agents, the spy, and the communists all pass back through the revolving door to go about their business. If there is a wise voice in the play it is Samuel Jacoby, the wandering Jew, who has (already in 1938) lost his communist son to torture in a Nazi concentration camp. Just before leaving the Hotel to resume his wandering (no country wants the dispossessed Jew), Jacoby and Vajoff diegetically discuss the nature of God—philosophically interesting, but not very theatrical:

He dropped out in my generation, you know. You can't believe in the old gentleman with the beard, and if it's not to be the modern kind of God,…there are so many fools and knaves whom one can see all round one turning the world into hell that there's no point in taking the trouble to invent an invisible super-fool or super-knave in order to put the blame on him. (*H* 89)

We can see already that such sharp criticism of theology might not have ensured a successful West-End run. In addition, the ending of the play is devoid of the hope audiences would have craved in 1938. Reminiscent of the end of *The Cherry Orchard*, a play that the Woolfs read, saw, and referred to many times, *The Hotel’s* denouement is—quite literally—more explosive. While Chekhov’s play ends with the abandoned Firs standing
in an empty room and the sound of distant axes destroying the cherry orchard and with it an ancient way of life, *The Hotel* ends with exploding munitions, a hotel with the back blown out, and the sound of hammers boarding up the hole that was once the revolving door—sounds that marked the end of pre-war civilization.

Whereas in October 1938, the Woolfs were confident that the Group Theatre would produce *The Hotel*, by June 1939, after returning from a holiday in Brittany and Normandy, they were not too sure. She wrote to Elizabeth Robins: “but I’m afraid nothing has happened yet about the play. Mr. Priestley, says that he can’t venture on a new play this season. However, we’ve just heard that the Co-operative Society, of all people, is (or are) starting a theatre, and as Leonard has a great name among co-operators we are going to try them. Or to ask Peacock, the agent to” (L6 343). All of the correspondence relating to Leonard’s almost 30-year search for a company willing to produce the play is preserved—in all of its heart-wrenching glory—among the Leonard Woolf Papers at the University of Sussex—starting with a letter to Stephen Spender in 1938 and correspondence between Leonard and the agent Walter Peacock in 1939 and ending with a rather brusque rejection letter from Martin Esslin, then Head of Sound Production for the BBC in April 1967.

So why was the play never performed? Is the script that bad? Or are there other reasons? The play’s strengths are also its weaknesses. If the play had been produced by the Group Theatre in early 1939, it would have delivered a timely message—alerting audiences to the genocidal camps already at work in Germany and Austria, shaming nations who were already turning Jewish refugees from their borders, warning audiences about the uncontrolled sale of munitions, and demonstrating Christianity’s inability to take on the moral issues of the day. Yet by the time Leonard wrote to his theatrical agent in April 1939 at least one of the major messages of the play was already passé: much of the play deals with the politics of non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War, but by April the Republicans had already capitulated to Franco, and the war that had killed Julian Bell was over.

Politically, any possibility of producing the play was precluded by Sept. 3, 1939 when Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. Between October 1938 and the outbreak of the war, the Group Theatre, Stage Society, Unity Theatre, and J. B. Priestley’s Westminster Theatre had all declined to produce the play. Were Auden, Spender, Priestley, Maynard and Lydia Keynes just being polite by praising the play while doing nothing to bring it to the stage? Possibly. But one almost off-hand comment by Walter Peacock seems more insightful. In April 1939 he wrote, “There will be the question of the Lord Chamberlain’s license to consider.” The possibility of censorship (active or passive) is also suggested by another intriguing bit of evidence in the Sussex collection—a brief handwritten letter to Leonard with an illegible signature (last name begins with C) dated 6 June 1939. The address is 98 Swan Court, S.W. 3:

Many thanks for sending me a copy of “The Hotel” I had already read it from a copy sent me by Walter Peacock, which I was retaining for Sybil to read. I found it most interesting & immensely [?] playable. I very much hope it will be done, and that I may have a chance of playing in it. But alas, beyond the Westminster management [J.B. Priestley] I know of nobody at all likely to take it. The general public do not encourage such experiments, alas! (SxMs13, IL 8)
From the address, the fact that the correspondent is an actor, and the reference to “Sybil,” I determined that the correspondent is Lewis Casson, an extremely successful theatre actor, director and producer, and husband of the famous actress Sybil Thorndike. Casson seems to have no objection to the subject matter of the play, nor does he seem worried about the Lord Chamberlain’s Office. Now, the style or form of the play was seen as a problem; i.e. traditional theatre folk such as Casson saw the play as too experimental.

It is not surprising that with the outbreak of the war Leonard had predicted, the death of Virginia, the rise of the Labour Party after the war, and the business of getting on with his life, Leonard stopped trying to produce his play set in a world long since blown apart. But by 1963 he was at it again. Perhaps it was his disgust with the cold war, with international arms’ sales, with “the unending war of Arabs and Israelis,” with the proliferation of nuclear weapons and with Vietnam, “a stupid, unjustified, bloody, and useless war” (Journey 169) that convinced Leonard that his old play was relevant once again, that what was left of civilization was again on the brink of destruction. From 1963 until 1967 Leonard doggedly pursued production of the play. The Dial Press reissue of the play in 1963 was meant to trigger a New York production; in fact, Robert Marby, editor of Dial press wrote to Leonard: “I have received some requests indicating interest and possible production of the play here” (SxMs13, IL 8). But the book did not sell at all well, and talk of a production went no further.

In 1963 Woolf wrote to Rev. Kenneth Rawlings, founder of the Little Theatre and rector of St. Michael’s Church in Lewes, only a few miles from Monks House, informing him that the play is being considered for production in NYC, which may still have been true, but Woolf slips in a little white lie, claiming “It was published here just before the war, but I never attempted to get it acted.” Woolf and Rawlings’ correspondence is quite charming. Rawlings’ response to the play is what we might expect from an Anglican priest: “Dramatically, I think it is first rate, although I demur to its implication that nothing can be done about the Hotel except to close it down. Might it not continue under new management?” Woolf writes back, “Personally I do not agree with Peter Vajoff or with his methods of running the hotel. The moral of the play in so far as it has one is that If you run a hotel on his lines the moment comes when nothing can be done but close it down. I myself would be all in favour of a new management. But as things are, I cannot pretend to see much sign of it coming.” Two years later, in March 1965, Rawlings wrote to Woolf that he has not yet found a director willing to take on the play, adding “We shall shortly be arranging the programme for next season and I shall again try to get your play included, for I think it is very relevant to these times and needs to be seen. I will let you know as soon as I can whether I can find a producer for it” (SxMs13, IL 8). Leonard finally took the hint.

So the play was rejected for being too political, too pessimistic, too experimental, and too iconoclastic. Leonard’s last hope was Martin Esslin, then Head of BBC Radio Drama. In March 1967 he wrote, “I should like the play to be considered by both sound and television or either. In any case, I should be very glad if you would consider it and perhaps when you have made your decision it might be considered for TV.” Although others had commented on the play, mostly with vague praise, Esslin provides the only real critique Woolf ever received:
I greatly enjoyed reading the play. It contains some fascinating reflections on Europe at the time of the Spanish Civil War, and is from that point of view highly interesting and illuminating.

All of us who have ever received rejection letters know what’s coming:

Alas, I feel that this aspect of the play however would be very difficult to appreciate for present day listeners, most of whom will not have lived through those times.

Esslin has a point here. How many folks in the 1963 audience would get the references to the Spanish Civil war, the endless conferences concerning intervention, arms deals with Republicans or Falangists? Who would know about the Battle of Jutland? Of course many of the political references would still resonate. We all know to what Vajoff refers when he speaks of “people killing one another because of their grandmothers” (H 20). But it is hard to believe that the remainder the critique comes from the same author who coined the term “theatre of the absurd” in his 1960 essay, and which later became such an influential book:

To retain its interest for a present day audience, a play on such a subject would have to be effective as drama in the sense that it told a thrilling and suspenseful story. I am afraid that probably at the time, when your main object clearly was the political and philosophical aspect of the matter, you treated this side fairly perfunctorily. And this is why I think as a play “The Hotel” would present little interest today. There are too many loose ends, and the background of the action is far too vague: in what country does the Hotel stand? How can the hotel-keeper get hold of munitions which are so important that they are fought over by the representatives of the great Powers? Why should important personalities going to an international conference have gone by boat—even in 1938? These are just a few of the very many questions which a present day audience would ask, and to which you at that time quite rightly didn’t think it was necessary to provide an answer. (SxMs13, IL 8)

Leonard Woolf is no Genet, Beckett, Ionesco, or Albee but what is the thrilling or suspenseful story in *The Screens*, *Waiting for Godot*, *The Bald Soprano*, or *Zoo Story*. Much of the power of *Godot*, *The Chairs*, or *The Balcony* comes from the lack of geographic specificity. The Hotel could be anywhere along the Adriatic. Like Douglas Adams’ Restaurant at the End of the Universe—it is a last outpost. The loose ends and so-called vagueness are not the problem; in fact, *The Hotel* would work better theatrically if there were not so much plot, and not so much realism. Of course *The Hotel* predates absurdism—Leonard used the word “symbolic.” But listen to this brief exchange from Act 1. Ledbury, Sir Hepburn Jones’ secretary, has wired the Admiralty who will be sending a destroyer which is “round the corner, some unpronounceable corner,” to take the stranded Foreign Secretary and his wife to Ravenna:
Sir Hepburn Jones: Any news?
Lady Jones: How very nice; many thanks, Charles. People talk about the battle of Jutland and all that, but I’ve always maintained that there’s a great deal to be said for the Navy.
Ledbury: No, nothing much, sir. The insurgents report another victory: they have bombed Barcelona—it’s thought that at least 500 civilians have been killed.
O, Lady Parkin’s Top Hole has won the City and Suburban.
Lady Jones: Not really? Won’t Emma be pleased! (H 22)

This is an exchange that could be straight out of Genet’s The Balcony. Ledbury talks right over Lady Jones, and Lady Jones registers the winner of the horse race, but ignores the Guernica-like slaughter. Esslin was probably correct but for the wrong reasons when he returned the text concluding “I don’t think it can stand up as a play today.” Leonard’s stage concept was, if anything, ahead of its time, but the dialogue is trapped in the politics of its time. It is too didactic, too diegetic, and too polemically heavy-handed. The revolving door has so much theatrical potential, as does the allegory and the edge-of-the-world setting, but Woolf just did not take the symbolism, the absurdism far enough. The world WAS on the brink of catastrophe in 1938-39, and Leonard realized it was still on the brink in the 1960s. If Leonard were here today, he’d say the doors of the hotel are once again about to blow, and the proprietor is still about the close up shop.

Works Cited

——. “Letters of Leonard Woolf.” Leonard Woolf Archive, University of Sussex Library. SxMs13, IL 8
GLOBALIZATION, INTER-CONNECTIVITY, AND ANTI-IMPERIALISM: LEONARD WOOLF, THE HOGARTH PRESS, AND KENYA

by Jeanne Dubino

In her 2003 article, “Modernism, Geopolitics, Globalization,” Melba Cuddy-Keane writes that the “modernist period merits attention for its significant role in the emerging global consciousness” (540). Of all the members of the Bloomsbury group, it is Leonard Woolf who could most easily be singled out for his global—or international—consciousness. In much of his prodigious writing—including more than 22 books and pamphlets and hundreds and hundreds of reports, memoranda, letters, introductions and more—Woolf tirelessly addressed globalization, especially in terms of geopolitics, internationalization, and imperialism, as critics such as Peter Wilson, Duncan Wilson, Janet Manson, and the contributors to the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* edited by AnnMarie Bantzinger, have shown. In his role as a co-publisher of the Hogarth Press, Woolf also demonstrated his commitment to what we now call global studies—or in his case, one arm of it, international relations—by publishing works by international authors, and about international subjects.

A related dimension of modernism and globalization that Cuddy-Keane raises is the notion of “inter-cultural connectivity” (540). Through, especially, the Hogarth Press, both Woolfs formed many connections with writers, activists, and thinkers around the world. In this paper I will focus on Leonard’s connection with one area: Kenya. Leonard, along with Virginia, published the works of writers on Kenya and British imperialism, including four by the Scottish doctor Norman Leys and one by the Kenyan educator Parmenas Githendu Mockerie. Leonard and Leys formed a lifelong connection, and Mockerie was a protégé of Leys’s. One might describe the union of Woolf, Leys, and Mockerie as a kind of informal and small version of the League of Nations. The League of Nations formed in 1919 and lasted just over a quarter of a century, until 1946. Among its purposes, the League administered mandates over territories that were transferred from one country to another. Those who are familiar with Leonard Woolf’s life know that he played a fundamental part in the League of Nations. His collaboration with Leys and Githendu did not have the same kind of intentionality as the League of Nations; rather, in their league, or intercultural community, lasting, roughly, for the same length of time as the League of Nations, from 1918-1944, the three men each sought, through their writing, to expose the realities of another kind of territorial jurisdiction, or the injustices of British colonial rule in Kenya. Above all, they agitated on behalf of the African Kenyan population.

This paper will continue to examine the nature and components of the Leys-Woolf-Mockerie association. After providing a very brief account of the white colonial rule that prompted all three men to write about Kenya, I will describe the separate roles each played in their anti-imperial alliance. In the course of my discussion I will explain how they formed this association, consider what kind of influence they may have had on one another, and offer a brief examination of one of the texts each wrote on behalf of anti-imperialism. Because they saw it as their duty to reach a broad audience (P. Wilson vii),
and because they were moved by such a strong sense of urgency, their works, while descriptive and to some extent analytical, tended toward the polemical. While the ultimate prize was self-rule, the immediate goal, for each of them, was the dominant anti-imperial idea of their day, or “native paramountcy”—that is, the continued status of Kenya as a colony ruled by the British government who, supposedly, made the “natives’” interests paramount—as opposed to white settler supremacy.

Though the First World War hastened Britain’s decline as the world’s leading imperial power (MacKenzie 96), in the 1920s and 1930s it still prevailed in terms of its dominions and dependencies. Kenya was “by far the most controversial British African possession during this period” (Duder 427). Britain had installed in all but name a system of apartheid in one of its premier colonies, a result of the government’s urgent desire to secure access to the Nile at the end of the nineteenth century. From 1896 to 1902 the British government built a 582-mile railway from the port city of Mombasa through the highlands of Kenya to the shores of Lake Victoria and beyond. This six-year project resulted in enormous loss of lives and ran well over projected costs; in an attempt to “pay back the unprecedented sum of public capital that seemed to have been so unwisely invested” (Elkins 3), Sir Charles Eliot, British East Africa’s second governor, proposed a settlement scheme along the railway line. Kenya’s own peoples who lived alongside it were pushed into reserves or were allowed to live as “squatters” on their own land, while the lush and fertile highlands were populated by white European settlers, starting with a trickle in 1902 and reaching 20 to 30,000 by the mid-1940s. Until its end, in the late 1950s, settler rule was marked by brutality and oppression.

Yet in “the iconography of British imperial endeavour, [Kenya] was the land of sunshine…and smiling, obedient servants, where the industrious white colonizer could enjoy a temperate life of peace and plenty in a tropical land” (Elkins 1). Mass culture reinforced this image of “white man’s country”; one form, the “Kenya Novel,” a subgenre of romance fiction typically set in the white highlands, positively represented white supremacy and “reek[ed] of unapologetic racism” (Duder 432). Kenya Novels like the bestselling Kenya Mist by Florence Riddell were very popular; for example in 1924, its serial version appeared in the Daily Express, whose circulation at the time was over 750,000 (Duder 434). Other forms of popular media—namely, newspapers like the Times and radio series such as the 1930 BBC radio series “Africa and the Dark Continent” also reinforced “dominant values about empire and the superiority of white culture” (Bush, “Imperialism” 252; see also Willis 241). It was in this pro-colonial atmosphere that Scottish doctor Norman Leys emerged. Leys lived from 1875-1944. Leys, as John Cell writes, “was simply Britain’s leading expert on Kenya” (8). By Kenya he was “possessed” and “his life’s consuming mission… [was to awaken] the British public to the inhumanity of its attitude toward Africans and to the inherently exploitative colonial system of which that attitude was the root cause” (7, 16). Indeed, for his entire life, writes Diana Wylie, Leys was a “fervid democrat” and a Christian, someone for whom egalitarianism, especially between black and white, was an absolute moral imperative (Wylie 297). In 1904 he started his career, as a public health officer in the British colonial service, first in Malawi (then Nyasaland) and next, in 1908, in various stations throughout Kenya (then British East Africa). He was outraged by what he witnessed. In 1917-1918 a combination of ill health—he contracted tuberculosis—and
politics drove him back to England, where he spent the rest of his life in a country medical practice near Derby and “began what amounted to a second career as an anti-imperialist activist” (Willis 214).

Before he settled into his medical practice, Leys spent a week in London to talk with influential people about imperialism in Africa, and that is how he came to lunch with the Woolfs (Willis 214). With that lunch Leys formed an association with Leonard that lasted all the way to his death in 1944. He started work on his first Kenya book—a 409-page volume entitled *Kenya*—in 1918, the same year he lunched with the Woolfs, and published it six years later.

As well as providing “a general account of what is distinctively African in the ideas and behavior of Africans in Kenya” (*Kenya* 49-50), *Kenya*, more significantly, is an examination of the “extremes of barbarism and civilization” (Cell 97) incurred by the colonial policies. Leys detailed the colonial government’s harsh labor laws, disastrous land redistribution policies, forcible removal of Kenyan Africans to reservations, failure to provide education, and more, including illustrations of injustice. For example, he describes the “revolting case” of Kitosch, an African Kenyan servant accused by his white settler master of riding his horse. In punishment the white settler tied Kitosch up, had him severely flogged, and left him to die. The white court determined that the white settler was innocent because Kitosch had willed his own death (178-79).

Leys’s vivid recounting of stories such as Kitosch’s, his detailed description of the fabric of Kenyan social life, and his keen and sympathetic analysis of the direct impact of imperialism, made *Kenya* an instant success (Cell 19). Up to the publication of *Kenya* there was “widespread ignorance of what was actually happening ‘on the spot’ in the colonies” (Wylie 294), and Leys’s readers were clearly eager to learn; the original print of 1,000 copies quickly sold out (Willis 216). A second impression was made in 1925, and a third, inexpensive edition in 1926 (Willis). It was still selling in 1944, the year of Leys’s death (216). Leys’s ideas were “readily adopted by liberals and humanitarians” (Wylie 294), including activists such as Charles Roden Buxton, an MP, and Henry Noel Brailsford, one of the chief socialist writers and thinkers of the day (Willis 224).

Above all, Leys came to influence Woolf’s own thinking. Leys helped Woolf in his research for his first major work in imperialism, *Empire and Commerce in Africa: A Study in Economic Imperialism* (Glendinning 191). Through Leys, Woolf took a deeper interest in Kenya; in May 1925 Virginia joked to Lady Cecil, “My house…has been a mere ante room to the House of Lords the past fortnight. Leonard has been caballing about Kenya day and night, and I have several times been shut out of his study while the great discoursed” (Letters 507). Through their work on the Labor Party’s Advisory Committee on Imperial Affairs, Woolf and Leys were to wrangle over Kenyan concerns for years to come, even after Leys resigned from the Committee in protest against the failure of the government to enforce its proposal on behalf of African paramountcy (D. Wilson 177). As a result of his association with Leys, Woolf came to offer a deeper analysis of imperialism; in his second major work on the topic, *Imperialism and Civilization* (1928), he expanded his economic argument—the thrust of his first major work on imperialism, *Empire and Commerce in Africa*—to admit “cultural, religious, and racial motives for imperialistic exploitation” (Willis 227).
Woolf may even have picked up on some of Leys’s fanaticism; in the mid-1920s Beatrice Webb went so far as to call Woolf an “anti-imperialist fanatic” (D. Wilson 116). Beginning in this decade, writes Peter Wilson, “The nature, cause, and cure of imperialism were Leonard Woolf’s abiding political concerns” (83). Many others have written about Woolf’s work on imperialism, and so here I will only address his ideas on “trusteeship” and “native paramountcy.” While he was a passionate advocate for self-rule, he was also a Fabian who believed in gradualism and reform. As he wrote in a memorandum on behalf of the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, “The only thing which can be done immediately is to do everything possible to prepare the peoples for self-government” (Letters 393). What particularly exercised him was the specter of white settler rule. Like Leys, Woolf associated self-government in Kenya with settler government, the immediate grant of which, he believed, “would be disastrous” (Letters 393). Settler self-interest alone “would make them bogus trustees of African political and economic development,” so Woolf, Leys, and others “devoted themselves to agitating for the retention of the ‘trust’ in imperial hands” (Wylie 295). He wrote that “if the white man’s burden is the burden of a trustee for non-adult races, then the ultimate trusteeship should be vested in the League of Nations” (Empire 364).

It is clear that “Woolf generally accepted prevailing assumptions about ‘the African’ being ‘backward,’ ‘savage,’ and ‘primitive’” [P. Wilson 134-35; see also 140]. However, he “firmly rejected the view that the ‘backwardness’ of African peoples had anything to do with race or color. Indeed, Europeans were partly responsible for their condition since they had failed to introduce a proper system of education” (P. Wilson 104-05). But though Woolf, to the end of his life, tended to represent “Africans” as “the African,” he was always alert to the uses to which the notion of “native paramountcy” could be put. In a 1941 letter Woolf indicated his full awareness that far from being a responsible trustee, the British Government, instead, “provided the settlers with the legislative and administrative power and measures demanded by them in order that they may enforce it” (Letters 428).

Woolf also used his role as a co-publisher to give voice to one particular African, Parmenas Githendu Mockerie, by publishing his book on Kenya, An African Speaks for His People. Born around 1900 or 1901, Mockerie started life as an educator and later became an activist and, finally, tribal chief. Mockerie was in England for two years, from 1931-1933. Lionel Penrose, a colleague of Norman Leys and a fellow doctor, brought Mockerie’s book to Woolf as an “important anti-imperialist statement and the first book in English by a Kikuyu” (Willis 231). An African Speaks for His People was Mockerie’s only book. Even though Woolf had some reservations about An African Speaks for His People—he “thought [it] disappointing, rather obvious and European in its points” 1 (Willis 231)—he took the project seriously. He commissioned the prominent polymath scholar Julian Huxley to write an appreciative foreword, had Richard Kennedy design the cover, and ordered approximately the same number of copies printed as he had for Kenya ten years previously.

In An African Speaks for His People, Mockerie, in “clear” and “sedate” prose (Calder 130), describes his voyage to England, Kikuyu cultural traditions and practices, and the effects of British rule. While he is in no way declamatory, his study does serve a rhetorical purpose with its emphasis, similar to other anti-colonial writing, on injustice. Mockerie notes, for example, that “it is unjust that when the official language is English, opportu-
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nities should not be given, but rather difficulties put in the way of Africans who wish to learn English” (59). His book, part memoir, includes descriptions such as the way he and his fellow traveler Jomo Kenyatta (the founding father of Kenya as a nation) “were not entitled to use the dining-car” on their train trip from Nairobi to Mombasa, and that, when they were finally served soup late in the evening, “it was very cold, being what was left after the Europeans had been served” (13-14). Mockerie describes the effect of Kenyans working outside of Native Reserves and leaving families behind (namely, “a high maternal and infantile death-rate” [66]), not being able to grow coffee (66-67), and the way the expropriation of the best lands leaves the majority of Kikuyu impoverished (68). Like his mentor Leys, Mockerie too is a proponent of “native paramountcy”; he states, in his own voice, that the British Government should hold true on its declaration, “Kenya [is] a black man’s country and that his interests should be paramount” (75).

In conclusion, as we know, the League of Nations was not, initially, successful in its primary goal to prevent war. With the onset of World War II, which greatly surpassed the First World War in terms of its global reach, destruction, and casualties, it seemed to be an abysmal failure. Nor did the struggles carried out by activists such as Leys, Woolf, and Mockerie initially immediately bear fruit. The brutality of settler domination led to the bloody Mau Mau revolt in the 1950s, and the British reprisal was ruthless and severe. Its colonial rule did not end until 1963. Woolf, Leys, and Mockerie are among the anti-imperialists who did succeed in holding back on some settler goals—such as “closer union,” or a great white dominion in East and Central Africa (Wylie 294). However, at the time they were working most fervently, they did not achieve significant victories apart from arousing public indignation over, generally, petty abuses of British injustice (Wylie 308). The white Highlands remained white, and by 1944 no African sat on Kenya’s Legislative Council (Wylie 308).

But, as Woolf states, “It is surely significant that over and over again the measures which we were urging in the 1920s and were rejected by ‘practical’ statesmen as utopian were adopted by them some twenty or forty years later” (Journey 166). The League of Nations was the precursor to the United Nations, the world’s most important global intergovernmental organization. Woolf’s vision of a “growth of networks of international and transnational cooperation in order to manage ever-greater economic, social, environmental, and technological interdependence” (P. Wilson 212) is becoming ever a greater reality in this era of intensifying globalization. The anti-imperial league of Woolf, Leys, and Mockerie was not just an assembly of voices in the wilderness (Bush, “Imperialism” 255); the “ideas thrashed out by critical minorities like theirs “became more influential as African problems permeated more widely into the public consciousness” (Bush, “Imperialism” 255). Together Leys and Woolf, through the Hogarth Press, made it possible for Mockerie, a Kikuyu/Kenyan, to speak in his own voice. Next year his descendants will celebrate Kenya’s fiftieth year of independence.

Finally, the combined forces of Norman Leys-Leonard Woolf-Parmenas Githendu Mockerie take us back to one of the major arguments Virginia Woolf makes in A Room of One’s Own on building women’s universities, or creating masterpieces: both kinds of edifices are the outcome of many people working together and “thinking in common” over the course of many years. Through the pages of their own words, through their hundreds of thousands of hours of labor, and through the many links and leagues and alliances
and coalitions they formed, these three men have shown, to quote Margaret Mead, the power a “small group of thoughtful, committed citizens” have not, perhaps, to “change the world,” but, as Leonard writes, in a more tempered tone, “to influence men’s minds and so to alter the course of historical events in one direction or another” (Journey 158).

**Note**

From our vantage point we can now see, of course, that Mockerie was very much a product of his education; given his minimal exposure to the kinds of ideas with which Woolf and Leys were well versed, one could hardly expect Mockerie to engage in a full-scale critique of imperialism.

**Works Cited and Consulted**


In the aftermath of the First World War, Britain’s international role in managing and manipulating the redrawn maps and renegotiated loyalties of the near and far East was a contentious topic in the English press. Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press, beginning to establish its credentials as a dedicated forum for anti-colonial writing in the 1920s, contributed meaningfully to Britain’s “Eastern” discourse in ways that shed interesting light on issues of racial and cultural identity in the fiction of Virginia Woolf. While it would be possible to neatly divide the editorial roles of the Woolfs into the separate but equal spheres of Virginia’s aesthetics and Leonard’s politics, scholars like Laura Marcus, Kathy J. Philips and Ursula McTaggart have insisted on the interaction of Virginia Woolf’s aesthetics with the political discourse so manifest in the Hogarth catalog. Taking seriously the critical invitation to consider Woolf’s work as constitutively bound up with the interdisciplinary project of the Hogarth Press, I designed a graduate seminar at Carleton University titled: “Producing Modernism: Bloomsbury and the Hogarth Press 1917-1938.” The reading list, consisting of a representative sample of the Hogarth Press’s extended catalog and including *Jacob’s Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway* as bookends, invited students to consider what happens to their reading of Woolf’s fiction when it is situated within the larger discursive environment of the Hogarth Press, an institution that was so critical in the creation and success of her mature body of fiction.¹

My critical intervention into Woolf’s Eastern discourse, evolving from that pedagogical initiative, draws upon two fleeting but famous racially and culturally inflected references in *Mrs. Dalloway*: Clarissa’s “muddling” of Armenians, first with Albanians and later with Turks; and Elizabeth Dalloway’s Chinese or Oriental features, a trope that Woolf will later redeploy for the character of Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*. Mark Wollaeger and Urmila Seshagiri have both criticized Woolf’s privileged use of essentializing, Orientalist stereotypes as a means for gender definition, artistic elevation, or ideological liberation and while I don’t mean to challenge those powerful readings of Woolf’s ambivalent participation in Orientalist fantasies, I do mean to suggest that when read in the larger context of Hogarth’s racial and Oriental discourse, Woolf seems more clearly to be pressing against the accepted limits of that discursive framework rather than simply reiterating it unquestioningly. Woolf’s racial conceptions both resonate with the ambivalences toward race and empire so markedly on display in Hogarth’s titles on the subject while also challenging the Press’s own enlistment of those ambivalences in a project of post-imperial national renewal.

A faithful reader of the Hogarth Press’s catalog (that is to say, an A-level subscriber who would have received every publication) would never have made Clarissa Dalloway’s gaffe of getting the Armenians “muddled” with the Turks. At the simplest level of observation, familiarity with the Hogarth catalog reveals a press that catered very deliberately to a readership that was nothing at all like Clarissa Dalloway, whose reading tastes incline
toward elite memoirs as a nighttime soporific. The Press, throughout the ’20s, assumed the responsibility of awakening its readership to the unsavoury realities of what English capitalism had done around the world and to the unpalatable and inconvenient truths of British-instigated racial violence. “You won’t like what you’re about to read” is a recurring introductory sentiment in so many of Hogarth’s political titles, including Leonard’s own Empire and Commerce in Africa. “Practically every page of this book,” he writes, “will be concerned with political subjects so controversial that no gentleman can discuss them with anyone who does not believe exactly the things which he believes, and remain a gentleman” (3). Edward Thompson, in his exposé of British violence in India, acknowledges that his topic will not so much outrage as tiresomely irritate his readers, since, as he admits, nothing is so likely to empty the smallest lecture hall as the mention of the word “India” (9). Joseph Burtt, writing on the Armenian refugee problem, similarly admits that “naturally” his readers “are weary of the Armenians and their sufferings” (120). Burtt’s assertion that “it is useless to shut our eyes to realities” (9) might well have served as a mantra for Hogarth as it brought unpleasant and indigestible realities before its readership’s eyes again and again, not only in its non-fiction selections but in fiction offerings like its recurring English translations of Russian tales that exposed the darker corners of human behaviour.

This is not to suggest, however, that Hogarth’s intervention into racial and Oriental discourse was as happily progressive and forward thinking as we might hope. Alongside dissident, marginal voices like those of Burtt or Norman Leyes, the Press published works by quite powerful imperialists themselves, whose views by today’s standards seem narrowly reactive. Lord Sydney Olivier, uncle of the famous actor, governor of Jamaica in the first decade of the twentieth century, and Secretary of State for India under Ramsay MacDonald’s Labour government, wrote The Anatomy of African Misery for Hogarth on the color bar in South Africa. As my students discovered, it contains assertions difficult for twenty-first century readers to swallow. Olivier unquestioningly assumes that Western civilization is ennobling and that, by contrast, tribal society in the Natal before “white men tampered with it” had been in a state of cannibalistic fascism (68-69). The best hope for black South Africans, Olivier avers, is constant contact with European civilization. The need of foreign races for Western or Aryan rejuvenation also seems to characterize the attitude of Julian Bell in China, as Patricia Laurence explains in her study of Bell’s affair with Ling Shuhua. In one of his letters, Bell distinguishes the Chinese as “human beings” from the “revolting blacks” depicted in E.M. Forster’s A Passage to India (Laurence 67). Yet for Bell, the Chinese hover threateningly on the abyss of racial degeneration, from which only a sustained interbreeding with Aryan blood could save them. In what Laurence characterizes as one of Julian Bell’s “moments of irritation,” he writes that “mass castration” of men in China would be desirable in order that the women could be crossed with “Nordic and Aryan stocks” (Laurence 68). To be sure, nothing quite so brazenly shocking as Julian Bell’s private epistolary sentiments ever occurs in an official Hogarth publication; yet, the double-edged compliment that Hogarth writers often paid to Eastern races was very much in line with Julian’s racial assumptions: they were worthy of salvation and development precisely because of their valorized distinction from lesser races around them, and they deserved English or international support because their feminized sensibilities demanded protection from an active, materialist or scientific minded race like the Englishman or the European.
This is certainly the bottom line in Joseph Burtt's Hogarth-published plea for international aid for the Armenians, *The People of Ararat*. Burtt goes beyond giving faces and personalities to the otherwise nameless Armenian victims of the 1922 massacre in Smyrna. In addition, he mounts a sustained argument as to why the Armenians are the racial stock most worthy of preservation and protection in the midst of an otherwise barbarous and primitive “Mussulman” region. In a chapter entitled “Why the World Needs Armenians,” Burtt emphasizes the Armenians’ natural eagerness to serve as a useful bridge or guide into an otherwise impenetrable Eastern world. He writes:

The Armenian seems to know everything and to be able to do anything. This remarkable combination makes him the most adaptable man in the world. When in difficulties turn to an Armenian. He will buy what you want better and cheaper than you can yourself; he will cash your cheque; he will translate any language for you; and, knowing all things, he can tell you anything you want to know. In his presence the difficulties of travel melt as snow before the sun. A remote Eastern town, devoid of all means of communication with a Westerner, will under his spell lie open before you. You can talk, buy, eat and sleep as at home, for he has made you a freeman of the city. (126)

The Armenian here is rendered almost superhuman, all knowing and hyper-capable, but particularly in his ability to serve as translator or mediator for the Westerner in an otherwise foreign and hostile world. The crucial point here is their distinction, as Christians who look, as Burtt writes, “much like any other Aryans and might be mistaken for Englishmen, Irishmen, Frenchmen, Italians, or Portugese” (127), from the Turks around them, who are demonized in Burtt’s text as atavistic barbarians who have stolen rather than forged what little culture they have. The Turks are, Burtt writes, “a backward race... While Western Europe has steadily advanced, Turkey has stood still” (136). While the Turk “belongs to the 15th century” and is thus an “anachronism” (146), the Armenian shows a willingness to develop and adapt to the products of Western civilization. Burtt admiringly quotes another commentator on Armenians, who affirms that they “profess our religion, are familiar with some of our best ideals, and assimilate each new product of European culture with an avidity and thoroughness which no other race between India and the Mediterranean has given any evidence of being able to rival” (135).

In muddling the Christian Armenian victims with their Muslim Turk victimizers, Clarissa Dalloway is not only showing her ignorance of the topography of basic early twentieth-century geo-political and cultural-racial terrain (not being able to say what the Equator is, she also can’t distinguish the good Aryan Armenian from the bad barbarian Turk), but she is also inadvertently opting out of a discourse driven, as I have suggested, by stark racial inequities and self-aggrandizing cultural superiorities. It’s not simply a matter of not keeping up with the latest world news and the latest shifts of political loyalties in post-war Europe. It’s a matter of being incapable of organizing one’s worldview according to the very kinds of racial and cultural polarities between good and evil races that even Hogarth’s anti-imperial publications propagated. Clarissa refuses to say of people, or of herself, “I am this, I am that” (9) and thus the distinction between a civilized and adaptable Christian Armenian and a barbaric Turk registers little on her consciousness.
Constitutionally unable to categorize or to label, Clarissa, silently accused by Peter Walsh and Miss Kilman as she knows she is of not being useful to society, also seems incapable of understanding the language of utility, adaptability, and interest that motivates so much of the racial discourse that Hogarth printed. While speculating that simply loving her roses might help the Armenians shows Clarissa’s silliness, Woolf herself certainly wonders what the function might be of aesthetics, of disinterested beauty, vision, and pleasure in the world that Burtt addresses: where even a human being must prove his or her worthiness and usefulness as an adaptable consumer of European products in order to be deemed worthy of salvation from genocide.

It is only two paragraphs after Clarissa’s meditation on being incapable of keeping the Eastern races in their appropriate boxes that Elizabeth Dalloway is reintroduced to the novel as a kind of racial hybrid of English and Mongol. In a clear reversal of Julian Bell’s later eugenistic fantasy of letting loose an Aryan or Nordic stud bull among a population of Chinese women, Woolf imagines Clarissa’s daughter as reflecting the genetic heritage of “some Mongol...wrecked on the coast of Norfolk” who “mixed with the Dalloway ladies, perhaps, a hundred years ago” (122-123). Elizabeth’s “dark” complexion with “Chinese eyes in a pale face” communicates “an Oriental mystery” (123) that, of course, partakes in the kind of Orientalist fantasies of inscrutable Chinese otherness that predate the period of the Great War and will inform Woolf’s treatment of Lily Briscoe as an artistic and sexual outsider to English gentility in the later To the Lighthouse. Yet Hogarth’s treatment of China in the 1920s was not as a timeless Other forever frozen in ancient mysticism. Like other favoured Eastern races, the Chinese post-1911 were seen as a potential source for salutary European development and conversion, a race that was ready to embrace Western ideas and products with a fervor equal only to that of the Armenians in Turkey. In Stephen King-Hall’s publication on China for the Hogarth Press, The China of To-day, the new China emerges as a delicate organism that must be nourished and supported via British foreign policy for the purposes of Britain’s own economic and political interests. “For fifty years,” King-Hall writes, “the vast lump of China was injected with Western principles, and gradually this yeast began to produce an effect. The ancient Chinese system began to break down” (13). King-Hall briefly demonizes the Boxer Rebellion as a fleeting “fanatical and anti-foreign” anomaly that represented the “final attempt on the part of Old China to resist the West by force” (17). In contrast, though, he identifies “an intellectual renaissance in China” akin to that of “the European renaissance of the early Middle Ages” (25). “In this present renaissance,” King-Hall writes, “the nature of the learning which is being so much sought after is a very different affair from that which engaged the attention of the scholars of Old China. Then it was the Classics and commentaries thereon...now it is Western knowledge in all its forms, particularly Western science and philosophy” (25).

Like the Armenians, described in Burtt’s book as having “small and dome-shaped” heads “suggesting facility in art, letters, erudition, finance and commerce, rather than eminence in science and philosophy” (127), the Chinese in King-Hall’s book are described as historically contemptuous of the Western belief in “action” and “science” (9). Unlike the Armenians, though, who seem to have a racial instinct to be useful to Westerners, those amenable to Western ideas and products in China have to be carefully selected and cultivated by the English. King-Hall thus advocates a policy of realpolitik toward post-Manchu China, wherein Britain unilaterally strikes trading deals selectively with those forces in
China that are most adaptable to influence. The China presented to Hogarth readers in the 1920s, then, was not the inscrutable civilizational Other of antiquity but the rapidly Westernizing China that stood precariously on the edge of a racial renaissance, ready to become useful to British commercial and political interests, to guide British subjects, as did the helpful Armenian, through the otherwise twisted labyrinth of an unknowable East. Elizabeth Dalloway, with her “oriental bearing” and “inscrutable mystery,” is similarly deployed by Miss Kilman and her mother Clarissa, the older women who battle over emotional ownership of her, as a ready symbol of ownership or control. Peter Walsh recoils at the insincerity of Clarissa’s expressed ownership of her daughter, whom she introduces as “my Elizabeth” (48), while Miss Kilman hungrily covets Elizabeth’s emotional support and sympathy while depending on her at one point quite literally for navigation: “Elizabeth guided her this way and that” through the Army and Navy Stores, “guided her in her abstraction as if she had been a great child, an unwieldy battleship” (129-130). Her “Oriental” eyes and bearing render her a passive tool in the hands of manipulative forces, a sign read only in terms of utility for others, touching nothing real or authentic within her own desires and feelings. She is described as a “dumb creature brought up to a gate for an unknown purpose” but “longing to gallop away” (132). Understanding that her “fine, Chinese, oriental” eyes make her desirable to the men who “fell in love with her” even as she is “really awfully bored” (135), Elizabeth resists the pressures on her to convert her innocence and childishness into something of service to her class. Endowing Elizabeth with Oriental features marks her less in terms of aesthetic, cultural, or sexual liberation from British cultural expectations than it does in terms of a desirable if tenuous dependency.

As the Hogarth Press’s political writers cautioned their readers to formulate sympathies and adapt policies that would cultivate the allegiances and protection of ostensibly dependent Eastern races, seeking entry into culturally and economically intractable regions through the aegis of valorized racial others who will act as translators, guides, cheque-cashers, and otherwise useful servants of Britain, Virginia Woolf casts the discourse of racial taxonomy for the purposes of cultivated dependency into suspicion. Muddling Armenians and Turks, Britons and Mongols, Woolf advocates not Clarissa’s political and cultural ignorance of the world, but rather her own semi-autonomy from a discourse that insists that knowledge of that world is synonymous with instrumental manipulation of it. While many of Hogarth’s political commentators, Leonard Woolf included, envisioned a post-imperial world benevolently managed by the League of Nations as a kind of paternal trustee of the world’s races, Virginia Woolf, recognizing the extent to which this model would continue to replicate the hierarchies of privilege and dominance so central to the imperial project, cast those hierarchies into productive confusion, muddling the ruling class’s political certainties and forcing it to see itself as Other.

Note

I am grateful for the creativity and enthusiasm of my students in that course and extend my thanks to Jennifer Browning, Henny Buffinga, Brianna Clement, Jason Davenport, Veronica Fiallos, Haley French, Christopher Jenkins, Marc Labelle, Rosemary Lazier, James Lebel, Daniel McElwain, Kathleen Roberts, Eve Robinson, Sarah St. Pierre, and Patrick Williams.
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Leonard Woolf’s 1928 essay, “Imaginative Biography,” begins by quoting Egerton Brydges, a nineteenth-century man of letters who defines the genre as follows: “By Imaginative Biography, I mean an Imaginary Superstructure on the known facts of the Biography of eminent characters” (qtd. in Woolf “Imaginative Biography” 45). In a characteristic move, Leonard Woolf transports his own exploration of literary genre to the realm of the book trade, which is always informed by practical concerns. He remarks that in the marketplace, ethical considerations often fall by the wayside: “It is little use stressing the points of good taste, and respect for family feeling. Publishers on the look out for saleable matter, and authors lacking a job, are never greatly affected by such nebulous considerations” (45). It is unlikely here that Woolf means to include himself among the “publishers on the look out for saleable matter” (45) since the Hogarth Press’s mandate—to produce “works of merit that the ordinary publisher refuses” (L2 242)—was predicated on the assumption that there were other reasons than profit for which the Hogarth Press, at least, might produce a book. However, the “nebulous considerations” of genre frequently came into contact with the practical and economic demands of the book trade, and Leonard Woolf’s role as both editor and publisher at the Hogarth Press and literary editor at the Nation & Athenaeum between 1923 and 1929, made him intensely aware of the potential for disagreement when literary or social ideals conflict with the world of books. Although at first glance Woolf’s might appear to be a skeptical attitude towards his fellow publishers, not to mention a rather cynical, corporate-minded approach to genre, his view stems from a more extreme and interesting reading of imaginative biography with which Woolf concludes his essay: “All biographies are ‘imaginary superstructures’—and admit of reconstruction” (45).

Leonard Woolf’s remarks on imaginative biography, of course, written in the year that Virginia Woolf’s Orlando was published, have particular relevance to that novel. The question that Leonard Woolf suggests that biographers must (regrettably, in his view) ask themselves when they experiment with the genre, and particularly when they walk the precarious high wire between fiction and non-fiction—“is such a thing permissible?”—is tested in the case of Orlando as the book enters the marketplace. Did readers want biography? What about “imaginative biography”? And what about a novel that wears a biographical jacket? Woolf’s fictional engagements with biographical tropes (i.e. in Flush and Orlando) were among some of the most important publications for the Hogarth Press. They enhanced her own reputation, made the Press a lot of money, and complicated the distinctions between fact and fiction that were also at stake for Christopher Isherwood, Henry Green, and a number of other Hogarth Press authors. The Press published, by my count, 64 titles in broadly biographical and autobiographical genres between 1917 and 1946, the twenty-nine years during which it was an independent business.
II. “The Fun of Calling It a Biography”: Readers, Booksellers, and Orlando’s Fictionality

In the case of Woolf’s Orlando (1928), the Press’s willingness to experiment with playful genre hybridity did, indeed, prove difficult once the book entered the wider market. It was so clear to the Woolfs that Orlando was a work of fiction that it came as a surprise when booksellers gave it a rather different “label.” In an observation that indicates just how important genre categorization was for success (both literary and financial) in publishing, Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary:

No one wants biography. But [Orlando] is a novel, says Miss Ritchie. But it is called a biography on the title page, [the booksellers] say. It will have to go on the Biography shelf. I doubt therefore that we shall do more than cover expenses – a high price to pay for the fun of calling it a biography. And I was so sure it was going to be the one popular book! (D3 198)

As it turned out, Woolf was pleasantly surprised that, partly because of the book’s sham-biological nature, Orlando was indeed a tremendous success and proved to be a turning point in the sales of Woolf’s own fiction. Even after the book’s initial run of 5080 copies, the Woolfs had to have a second impression of 3000 additional copies printed in October 1928, and a third of 3000 copies in January 1929 (Woolmer 69).

Woolf’s statement that “No one wants biography” seems initially contradictory when it is placed in the context of Leonard Woolf’s enthusiastic support of the proliferation of books in the genre during roughly the same time period and in the context of her own intense engagement with the form in her essays. However, there are a number of possible aspects of Orlando’s appearance and affiliation that might have created particular problems for selling it as a biography. For one thing, “Orlando” is not a recognizable or famous figure, and for another, the volume was priced at 9s, which was slightly above the regular price for novels (7s6d) and slightly below the price of a typical biography (12s). For buyers of serious biographies, the book might seem to be too insubstantial and too unfamiliar, and the in-between pricing (the slight increase over standard novel price was likely justified by the inclusion of the illustrations) places the book immediately in a grey area between the genres. Part of the perceived problem with marketability in this instance might not have been so much with the serious label of biography more broadly, as with the label of biography for a book that has been produced by the publisher to fit the specifications of illustrated fiction in terms of size, prize, and format. Although Orlando contains several illustration plates that imitate the material form of conventional biographies, the lower list price per title means that in order for a fictional work at 9s to make as much money as a biographical work at roughly 12s, it would have to sell more copies to make up the difference in list price that Leonard Woolf remarked in another of his Nation articles was sometimes the only dividing line between the genres.

Although the initial confusion about where to place the book in the bookshops clearly subsided relatively quickly and did not harm sales enough to prevent the work from being a financial success for the Press, confusion about its status remained for individual readers long after the work had been reviewed and celebrated in 1920s. A letter to Leonard Woolf from reader Stanley Scott in 1948 asks the following uninformed question:
I am so puzzled by [Orlando’s] illustrations that with some reluctance I write to ask if you will be so kind as to give me what information you can about them. I will not risk criticism without knowing more of the authority for their use; the apparent anachronism of quite recent photographs purporting to be of the subject ‘on her return to England’ and ‘in 1840.’ It is easier to explain resemblances of the dedicatee. I am embarrassingly conscious of the possible impertinence of writing to you personally, but other references and enquiries have failed; and at worst I hope to get off with no more enduring reproach than consignment to the waste-paper basket. (Hogarth Press Archive 567, 28 November 1948)

Scott’s was not the only letter from a reader querying Woolf’s historical accuracy in Orlando. For instance, a reply to a reader from one of the Press managers on Woolf’s behalf indicates that readers tended to nitpick about historical accuracy in any work that contained historical referents: “[Mrs. Woolf] cannot recollect that she had any authority for saying that Lord Cumberland founded almshouses; she thinks it probable that having some recollection of old almshouses in that neighbourhood, she fathered them upon Lord Cumberland on the spur of the moment” (Hogarth Press Archive 567, 27 August 1932). Woolf also notes in the “Preface” to Orlando that “a gentleman in America […] has generously and gratuitously corrected the punctuation, the botany, the entomology, the geography, and the chronology of previous works of mine and will, I hope, not spare his services on the present occasion” (6). This remark, in its context, seems likely to be a hyperbolic reference to the kinds of letters of correction Woolf received, although the Hogarth Press Archive shows that she frequently did make corrections in subsequent editions based on reader suggestions, and that readers certainly did not “spare [their] services” when it came to correcting Orlando. Scott’s letter, however, occupies an especially strange position, since it indicates that its author was familiar enough with the Hogarth Press to know to write to Leonard Woolf and to visually recognize Vita Sackville-West from a photograph. It is somewhat surprising, given that he had a certain amount of inside knowledge and that he recognized the temporal inconsistency, that Scott could have missed the joke, particularly more than twenty years after the work was originally published. Leonard Woolf’s weary personal response indicates, nevertheless, that he preferred to set the record straight than to ignore a reader’s query: “It is difficult to answer your letter, but I think that all one can say is that the illustrations were not intended really to be serious” (Hogarth Press Archive 567, 3 December 1948).

Orlando’s humor is hardly subtle: even its apparatus, including its “Preface” designed to thank those who helped with its historical aspects (a list of acknowledgments, it should be noted, that includes a great many Hogarth Press authors), begins by thanking the author’s dead “friends,” “Defoe, Sir Thomas Browne, Sterne, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Macaulay, Emily Brontë, De Quincey, and Walter Pater” (5). Its index contains such entries as “A., Lord,” “Canute, the elk-hound,” and “Frost, the Great” (229) and “Railway, The” (230). The illustrations also play overtly with gender, time, and identity by providing portraits of several different people to represent Orlando. Even the aspects of the material text, therefore, that imitate biographical book conventions position Orlando as comic fiction, as long as a reader or bookseller looks closely enough, even at the paratexts.

Virginia Woolf’s concern about the book’s reception was justified given its complex position in the literary and economic marketplace. Given the confusion it clearly caused among readers and booksellers, the sales figures and categories in the “Publisher’s Lists” do not tell the whole
story of the text’s reception as a work that plays with genre. Readers who were reluctant to revise their notions of historical fidelity were perplexed by what might be called, in a reversal of Egerton Brydges’s framework, the presence of a “biographical superstructure” on an imaginative work. The correspondence in the Hogarth Press Archive negotiating the work’s classification reveals some of the ways in which the Woolfs were negotiating the demands of the apparently clear-cut marketplace with the nuanced and delicate combinations of genres that they were publishing at the Press. It turned out that the two worlds, of the book trade and of literature, agreed this time. A great many people, whatever their views on biography, wanted Orlando.

Notes

1. The author acknowledges with gratitude that permission for all quotations from the Hogarth Press Business Archive has been granted by The Random House Group Ltd.
2. Brydges was a woefully unsuccessful poet, but wrote several biographical books about his literary heroes. He was also a bibliographer, autobiographer, antiquarian, politician, and genealogist (Manley par. 1). Among his many works was Imaginative Biography (1834), from which Leonard Woolf quotes.
3. Net profit for Orlando in Hogarth Press Archives (Hogarth Press Archive) account books is 1009.2.5 (Monthly Sales Records).
4. Alice Ritchie was the book traveller for the Press, and was, incidentally, the first female book traveller in England (Willis 384).
5. To the Lighthouse, published in the year before Orlando, had an initial run of 3000, and went into a second impression of 1000, and a third to 1500, so the total number of copies printed was 6500, compared with Orlando’s over 11080 within the first year (Woolmer 60).
6. “If the one is a biography and the other is a novel, then the only difference between truth and fiction has been reduced by the publishing trade to the difference between 16s. and 7s.6d” (“Truth and Fiction” 794).
7. Helen Southworth’s recent article on the Orlando preface traces the connections and networks at stake in the work and argues convincingly that Woolf’s mention of so many Hogarth Press authors in the Preface suggests that “Woolf was also celebrating with her Preface the freedom the publishing operation afforded her” (76).

Works Cited

West, Margaret. Letter to Reader. 27 August 1932. Hogarth Press Archive 567. TS. University of Reading.
——. Letter to Stanley Scott. 3 December 1948. Hogarth Press Archive 567. TS. University of Reading.
——. Monthly Sales Records (MSR). MS. University of Reading.
My title takes words linked to the ironic chorus from Wagner’s *Lohengrin* and turns the bride around. “There goes the bride” implies an identity transformation—from unmarried to married. Yet, however idealized the rite of passage, the past remains ever-present, human tendencies to thwart perfection exist, and unpredictable realities of married life lie ahead.

I. Introduction: “a…remarkable acidulated story” —V. Woolf

What do brides and weddings have to do with the Hogarth Press? Not much overall, yet at least three books by women authors, published between 1928 and 1937, examine this event. The one that caught my eye was a first edition of Julia Strachey’s novella, *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding*, published by the Hogarth Press in 1932, and still among the Woolfs’ books at Washington State University. To Clive Bell, Virginia described the manuscript as “a very cute, clever, indeed rather remarkable acidulated story” (L 527). To Carrington, Julia’s friend, Virginia wrote early in March 1932 that the manuscript was “astonishingly good…extraordinarily complete and sharp and individual” (L 529). Hoping to distract Carrington from her grief after Lytton Strachey’s death, Virginia tempted her with “scenes that want illustrations” (L 529). Sadly, her effort failed to prevent Carrington’s suicide. With no other illustrators in line for the job, Duncan Grant, Julia’s cousin, agreed to design a jacket. (See illustration, below).
Although he thought it “poorly lettered,” in need of Vanessa Bell’s color sense, and somewhat “vulgar,” Frances Partridge thought it “entirely appropriate” (Spalding, Duncan 317), and James Beechey calls it one of Grant’s “most fluent” (19). The eye-catching jacket includes a floral bouquet, a white-gowned bride, and a blurb marketing the author as the late Lytton Strachey’s niece. It is Julia’s text, however—what Leonard Woolf calls “the immaterial inside of a book”—that evokes a mixture of absurdity and despair in the face of social expectations (Downhill 80).

What attracted Woolf, as fiction reader for the Press, to Strachey’s story? Not unlike Julia’s bride, Virginia thought she and Vanessa seemed fated to wed. When Vanessa, both “reluctant and yielding,” said, “Of course, I can see that we shall all marry,” Virginia felt “a horrible necessity” that would “descend…just as we had achieved freedom and happiness” (MOB 192). True, their circle often avoided religious rituals and assumptions, not only by choosing civil ceremonies but also by their complex cohabiting, extramarital, and/or same-sex relationships. Yet awareness of weddings as entrees to traditional adult gender roles remained a touchstone, especially for women. Contexts for Strachey’s book include a brief orientation by way of ritual theory, relevant real-life weddings, and a scene from Orlando, the only on-stage wedding in books by Woolf the Hogarth Press released during her lifetime. After the ritual day Julia Strachey describes in Cheerful Weather for the Wedding (1932), the Press offered Viola Tree’s advice on wedding etiquette in chapter five of Please Help Me (1937).

II. Rites of Passage

Ronald L. Grimes, professor of religion and culture, distinguishes between a wedding—an evolving cultural rite—and marriage, “the legal and spiritual state” it creates (Deeply 156). Weddings remain central “rites of passage” in North America and Europe (152), he says, because, although we merely “undergo” our births and deaths, we consciously “enact” our weddings (5-6). Scholars examine wedding rituals as perpetuators of “lineages” or creators of “alliances between two families;” as exchanges or reassignments of “community wealth;” or as ways to fulfill duties to “family, nation, or tradition” (162). In the western world, however, Grimes thinks wedding rituals have been mostly about “sanctifying romantic love” in ways “emotionally and ceremonially beautiful” (162).

Grimes notes, however, that romantic traditions encounter resistance, and idealized rituals inevitably confront human realities (Deeply 177). Because rituals are “impure,” or hybrid genres (Ritual 192)—“performative” as well as “transformative”—performers, on display, risk “embarrassment.” They may feel nervous, oppressed, or threatened; they may find the ritual contrived, even amusing (Grimes, Deeply 7-9, 11, 158; Bell 40). In other words, like other rituals, Grimes says, weddings teeter on the brink of “ritual infelicity” or “ritual failure.” Although a wedding rite “may legally bind a couple,” it may “fail to generate a festive air” (Grimes, Ritual 191-94). Weddings often have more to do with “media images[,]…advertising,” and “conspicuous consumption” than with helping to establish “a common ground” that will enable two ever-changing individuals, with different backgrounds and personalities, to flourish together (Grimes Deeply 154-5; 210-11, 214).
III. “Nessa’s curse on marriage” —V. Woolf

A case in point is the wedding of Julia Strachey (1901-1979) and sculptor Stephen (“Tommy”) Tomlin (1901-1937) in July of 1927. Julia was part of the “Cambridge-Bloomsbury network” (Willis 207) and of a younger generation that aroused Virginia’s curiosity and often criticism. She called Julia a “gifted wastrel” (D 324) and, “teasingly but to my face,” Julia wrote, “the black sheep of the family” (Partridge, Julia 103). Daughter of Lytton Strachey’s elder brother Oliver, Julia was born in India but lived with relatives in England after her parents’ divorce. She half-heartedly tried to support herself in various ways, but mostly defined herself as “completely deserted” by her family. Her “one real occupation” was, in her words, “to find a loved one and get married” (Partridge, Julia 105). When she accepted Tomlin, it was not because she was “really in love” with him, Frances Partridge says, but because she was “desperately lonely” (Partridge, Julia 107).

The Woolfs attended the Strachey/Tomlin wedding, held in St Pancras Church to please the Tomlins. Virginia described it to Vanessa Bell as “a prosaic affair, though the service always fills my eyes with tears. Also the grotesqueness is so great. The Strachey women were of inconceivable drabness,” she wrote, and Tommy’s father the Judge, dressed “like a shop walker…got locked into his pew” and barely got out “to sign the register.” Behind them, Angus Davidson, enamored of Tommy, sat “glowering” (L 401-2; Spalding, Duncan 253). Virginia voiced her own reservations by teasing Vanessa, “I handed on your curse, just before the ceremony—Nessa’s curse on marriage, it is called; and has been known to strike a Bride dead on the altar steps” (L 401). Virginia referred to a letter Vanessa had sent in 1918 to Barbara Hiles, “said to have arrived the morning” she was to wed Nick Bagenal. Given Barbara’s plan to divide her year between husband and lover, Vanessa, “aware of the tensions in her own marital situation,” had advised “against marriage” (Spalding, Vanessa 168). In Julia’s case, marriage initially gave her a sense of purpose (Partridge, Julia 107). “Tomlin’s bouts of manic depression” and distant manner, however (Spalding, Duncan 253; Partridge, Julia 124, 127), soon left Julia as lonely as before, and the marriage slowly broke down.

In the background of Julia Strachey’s wedding, therefore, were Vanessa’s and, by then, Virginia’s. When Clive Bell proposed, Vanessa wrote him of her desire, above all, to paint (Spalding, Vanessa 54; cf. 58). Five years later, Virginia sent Leonard Woolf her own doubts, including fears that marriage would become her “profession” (L 496). Vanessa did accept Clive, and their 1907 civil ceremony was, Virginia noted, “successful,—very quick and simple” (L 279). Likewise, in 1912, Virginia accepted Leonard and even enjoyed the idea of ritual infelicities. She caricatured those likely to attend and made light of conflicts with Leonard’s mother (L 507-8). Decades later, Leonard recalled that, although civil weddings exact no promises “according to God’s holy ordinance,” he and Virginia “could see […] tombstones” through the window reminding them “of the words ‘till death us do part.’” Leonard describes the “comic relief…characteristic of the Stephens” when “Vanessa interrupted the Registrar to ask how to change her son’s name” (Beginning 69-70). Hermione Lee sums up the day as stormy; the registrar, “half blind;” the wedding party “ill-assorted” (317; cf. King 198-9).
IV. Orlando—“ritual felicity”

Three months after the Strachey/Tomlin wedding, Virginia Woolf began her mock biography of Vita Sackville-West, published by the Hogarth Press as *Orlando: A Biography* in October of 1928. In her parodic Preface, Woolf thanks “Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Tomlin” (viii) whose wedding perhaps had reminded her of ritual elements needed for Orlando’s.\(^{16}\) Not having met Vita until 1922, Virginia had not witnessed her 1913 wedding to Harold Nicolson in the chapel at Knole. Photographs show Vita in a dress of “natural-colored silk encrusted with gold” (Glendinning 61-3). It is the kind popularized by Queen Victoria’s own lavish ivory dress and veil, donned for her marriage in 1840 and designed to display social status, wealth, power, and (with yards of English lace) patriotism (Oakes 2; Grimes, *Deeply* 155-56). Woolf’s Orlando pokes fun at this influence by observing a statue, where one “of Queen Victoria now stands,” heaped with “ill-assorted objects” including “bridal veils” and “excrescences” like “wedding cakes” (232). Orlando also makes a “discovery, whether,” she says, “Queen Victoria’s or another’s, that each man and each woman has another allotted to it…till death them do part” (245). Fortunately Shelmerdine, Orlando’s “allotted,” is, like her, both manly and womanly (252); plus both want to retain independent lives. Woolf uses Orlando, her generic hybrid of fiction and biography, not only to pen “her most elaborate love letter” to Vita (L 3 xxii), and not only to give Knole back to her, but also to grant her a fictional wedding more appropriate to her untraditional married life.

In Woolf’s revision, a wind calling Shelmerdine back to sea sends the couple running to the chapel. The narrator mentions no procession, no lavish wedding dress, and no aristocratic audience. Everything traditional goes wrong, yet everything, ironically, is right. The wedding is a wind-swept swirl of sound and motion, one that dissolves class hierarchies and obscures gender inequality. Woolf’s prose is breathless, and repetition of the word “now” creates dramatic immediacy: the couple kneels; light and shadow alternate; growling music, “banging,” and “beating” obscure the service. Servants sing and pray, a thunderclap obliterates the word “Obey,” and the ring, so important when Orlando is without one, is reduced to a “golden flash” (261-2).

There is no honeymoon. Shelmerdine heads back to sea (262). Orlando returns to her poetry. She concludes she can be both married as her culture demands and true to herself (264-66). This is a version of the balancing act to which Vanessa, Virginia, and Vita all aspired. Difficulties notwithstanding, Virginia had already written, not to Vanessa, but to Vita, “In all London, you and I alone like being married” (L 3 221).

V. Cheerful Weather for the Wedding—“ritual failure”

If Vanessa Bell’s “curse on marriage” grew from experience, so Julia Strachey wrote her novella during one of the Tomlins’ trial separations (Partridge, *Julia* 113) and published it under her maiden name.\(^{17}\) Strachey’s novella, with its vivid characterization and dialogue, counter-balances Orlando’s poetically condensed wedding ritual with twenty-three-year-old Dolly Thatcham’s ritualized wedding day.\(^{18}\)

Strachey’s title is ironic, given the “really savage wind” that chills the March sun (*Cheerful* 12, 20-21, 26). A bridesmaid who imagines “standing [coatless]” in that draughty
church!” with her “sopping-wet bouquet of flowers!” concludes that “these quaint old customs are no joke” (19). Yet the bride’s determinedly cheerful, dithering mother, the “middle-class widow,” Mrs. Thatcham (5), praises the weather and forges ahead, oblivious to the discomfort of others. She is based, according to Frances Partridge, on Stephen Tomlin’s mother (“Preface” vi).

Unlike Orlando, Dolly has no real vocation. She is to conform to the career of the Hon. Owen Bigham, introduced as “eight years older…, in the Diplomatic Service,” and about to take her to South America (Cheerful 5). Strachey pays more attention, however, to Dolly’s former beaux, Joseph Patten. He is studying, as one of her cousins mocks, to be an “Anthro-pop-ologist!” (29), a fact that calls attention to the wedding as a cultural rite. Liking to shock conventional people, like Dolly’s sister Kitty, Joseph starts to describe Minoan Island puberty rituals. Mrs. Thatcham quickly interrupts, however, to show off a wedding gift. Joseph dismisses the badly hand-decorated lampshade as “a most skilfully contrived expression, and gratification, of the herd instinct…and, as such, a really most appropriate gift for a wedding” (345).19 He also bluntly counters Kitty’s romantic ideal of Continental men wooing women with poetry and ukuleles with his preference for the “clean-limbed, dirty-minded, thorough English gentleman” (58).

If Orlando’s wedding ritual is a series of exhilarating accidents, Dolly’s wedding day is a succession of ominous blunders. Owen, looking “miserably guilty and anxious” (Cheerful 42), arrives, for instance, where the groom shouldn’t be before the ceremony to collect the ring from the bride who shouldn’t have it. Dolly, upstairs dressing and drinking straight out of a bottle of Jamaica rum, wears “a reproachful, stupefied expression” and puts on her make-up, Strachey writes, like “a performing elephant…,—languidly, clumsily, as though her arms were made of iron” (48-9). She has dirtied her satin shoes, finds her long veil burdensome, and knows “that something remarkable and upsetting in her life was steadily going forward…as if she were reading about it…instead of…living through it” (52).

Both Dolly and Joseph, bride and not-groom, keep reviewing their unresolved relationship of the previous summer. Joseph had looked lovingly at Dolly, but never spoke the word (Cheerful 65-6). If he said it now, both wonder, but can’t imagine, what they would do (67-8). When Joseph catches up with Dolly, she is late, tipsy, and frantic, having knocked an open ink bottle onto her dress. Spot disguised, she rushes belatedly to the chapel. Joseph, unable to face the ceremony, listens to the church organ from the house as it signals the bride’s procession to the altar. Instead of the service, he overhears a village woman setting out food and mumbling a version of Vanessa’s curse: “in my opinion, marriage is a totally mistaken idea.…My husband has been dead seven years. Thanks be for that then. And never no more nothink of…that again for me!” (81).

After the ceremony, the “seven-year-old bearer of the bride’s train” tells an ill-omened joke: “What is the difference between a honey-comb and a honey-moon?” he asks. “A honey-comb has one million cells, and a honey-moon has one” (Cheerful 84-5). When Joseph finally gets Dolly alone, she is dressed to leave. They try to sort out their feelings and miscommunications. Joseph remains so agitated that Dolly embraces him just as Owen emerges to forbid her taking to South America a live tortoise she has packed as a remembrance (93-7). The newly married couple gloomily depart in the “furiously buffeting wind” (100). Left behind, Joseph’s coup de grace for Mrs. Thatcham is news, incompre-
hensible to her, that gives potential meaning to Dolly's soiled shoes and ink-stained dress. Still unable to untangle the past, Joseph concludes that what he thought was love was just “some depressing kind of swindle after all” (116).

Although sales were steady and better than expected for an author's first book, Leonard Woolf was unhappy with early reviews. Still, Strachey's satiric narrative of ritual misfires has survived as what Willis calls “a minor classic” (206-7). Persephone Books, in the latest reprint blurb (2009), includes it among books “neither too literary nor too commercial” and thus “guaranteed to be readable.” If readers enjoy even the pitfalls inherent in the wedding ritual, one wonders why, as C. F. Carter notes in an early anthology, renditions of weddings were relatively scarce in pre-1900 fiction, poetry, and painting (v). With the advent of the cinema, however, weddings have found their medium. “Since 1890,” as Grimes pointed out already in 2006, “there have been over 350 films containing the words ‘wedding’ or ‘bride’ in the title” (Rite 48)—and more since. Among the latest is Cheerful Weather for the Wedding, adapted for a movie late in 2011.

VI. Can I Help You?—ritual reality

Five years after Strachey’s book, the Hogarth Press offered another wedding in Viola Tree’s Can I Help You? (1937), a hybrid genre of advice and autobiography. As an actress, Tree treats weddings in chapter five as dramas as well as narratives. She invents “a love match” (Can 116) between Margaret Vale and H. R. Aladdin (a Canadian studying at Oxford). Queen Victoria’s influence persists. Driving past the Albert Memorial, Margaret, “a modern,” still hopes her marriage endures like Queen Victoria’s. At church, Margaret frets about gloves, veil, and bridesmaids. “Pull yourself together,” Tree directs; “if you cannot think of Mr. Aladdin” at the other end of the aisle, “think of your father on your left…. The organ peals…Now think of your future…don’t walk too slowly, but not too quickly…look at [your groom but], not furtively” (118-19). After the service (Tree substitutes Spenser’s idealized “Epithalamion”), the married couple walks back down the aisle. Tree advises the bride—“the observed of all observers”—to look “cheerful and natural” and then, as the carriages leave, “radiant” (121). “Tempers are stripped to the last sticking-point at weddings,” Tree admits (125), but in this much-performed ritual, every scene demands acting, if not feeling, calm.

VII. Conclusion: “the ceremony / has not yet been found” —Philip Booth

After Woolf’s fantasy, Julia Strachey’s satire, and Tree’s candid common sense, Woolf, a year later in Three Guineas (1938), did not include photos of “dazzling” wedding attire among the hierarchical costumes she criticized (TG 19). True, the masculine clerical establishment had turned weddings into religious sacraments and occasions for “moral exhortation” (Grimes, Deeply 203-204). Yet women from Queen Victoria to Mrs. Thatcham also had perpetuated hierarchies. Woolf does say in Three Guineas, that it would be absurd for women to advertise their “motherhood by a tuft of horsehair on the left shoulder” (TG 20-21). By implication, shouldn’t women remember values learned in obscurity when tempted to parade wealth and marriageability in elaborate wedding rituals? All rituals, as Woolf realized, ultimately are microcosmic of relations among selves and others—not
just partners, but families, communities, and nations. As Philip Booth cautions in “Saying It,” “Daily, as we are daily / Wed, we say the world is a wedding for which / as we are constantly finding, the ceremony / has not yet been found” (244-5).

Notes

1. My thanks to Jean Rose of Random House Group and Nancy Fulford for access to the Hogarth Press papers in Special Collections at the University of Reading Library; and to Trevor Bond and Jeff Kuure of Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections at Washington State University for the Grant image, reproduced here by permission of Random House Group Limited.

2. Jews recoiled from Richard Wagner’s reputation as anti-Semitic and some Christians from Wagner’s pagan narratives. Celebratory uses of his processional are ironic since the marriage in the opera failed.

3. See Southworth, Leonard, for the range of social issues the Press interrogated. See Wolfe for a discussion of forms of intimacy in modernist fiction.

4. Lee thinks that although Woolf “chose words of great beauty,” her desire that Carrington keep Lytton alive for them might have made Carrington feel “less significant” (618).

5. In April 1932 correspondence with the Press (University of Reading), Julia considered two other artists and said she could do nothing good enough herself. The Press also contemplated a patterned-paper cover.

6. The flap of the dust jacket says, in part, “Miss Strachey, who is a niece of the late Lytton Strachey, has written a first novel which is not only extremely entertaining, but shows remarkable insight and sense of character.” The same blurb appears in the Press’s Autumn List (1932).


8. Bell prefers the term ritualization which suggests “the external consent of participants” to social control “while…tolerating a fair degree of internal resistance” (221).

9. Ruby Mayer, Julia’s mother, had “four more children by different men” (Blain 1036); her father began a relationship with Ray Costelloe.

10. Partridge quotes most of this passage, omitting “Nessa’s curse” (Julia 108).

11. Duncan Grant penned a variation of Vanessa’s curse in 1921 in a letter to David Garnett, about to marry Ray Marshall (Spalding, Vanessa 190).

12. Julia gave up on the marriage in 1934 (Partridge, Julia 124-33). Later (1952) she married another artist, Lawrence Gowing.

13. No one could predict that both Clive and Vanessa would maintain some sort of friendship and commitment to their children along with complex relationships with others.

14. Saturday August 10th was “the Sabbath, the one day of the week Mrs Woolf would not attend a civil ceremony” (King 198).

15. Moving the wedding date so the painters could attend an exhibition irritated Leonard and, along with Vanessa’s interruption, possibly caused Virginia some “agitation” at the ceremony (Reid 136).

16. Tomlin and Strachey are among “fringe” Bloomsbury members and Strachey among Hogarth “authors-yet-to-be” dispersed throughout Woolf’s list (Southworth, “Virginia” 89, 92).

17. A letter (May 25, 1932, University of Reading) from the Press to Edward Garnett indicates Julia’s wish to use her maiden name. Press correspondence is to “Mrs. Julia Tomlin” or “Julia,” however, and that is also how she signs her letters.

18. Lee mentions that Cheerful Weather for the Wedding “had learnt from Virginia Woolf” (368). Obvious examples include the single day and past love (Mrs. Dalloway), working women (To the Lighthouse), and empty room (Jacob’s Room).

19. Although others studied group dynamics, Wilfred Trotter published Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War (1914) which made “herd behavior” popular.

20. Leonard Woolf to Julia Tomlin (Oct. 31, 1932, University of Reading).

21. Leonard Woolf enlisted the help of David Garnett (Willis 207) who reviewed the book as “new and first-rate” (Saturday 320) with “something of the realism of the stage” (Spectator 480). Reviews of the American edition, excerpted in two pages at Reading, were positive. Later, Leonard assigned rights to Julia (April 14 and 19, 1947, University of Reading). Penguin reissued the novella in 1978 together with Strachey’s The Man on the Pier (1951). Today, the novella is a “feminist” satire (Young 184) that reveals Virginia Woolf’s “tastes in contemporary women’s fiction” (Lee 606); it is a “brisk little book (Willis 206) produced by a
interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary Woolf

middlebrow woman writer (Sullivan 59) whose work is part of a “dialogue with modernity” (Holland, title).

22. Directed in the UK by Donald Rice, adapted by Rice and Mary Henely MaGill, and produced by Teun Hilte at Goldcrest Films, the movie stars Felicity Jones as Dolly Thatcham, Elizabeth McGovern as Mrs. Thatcham, and Luke Treadaway as Joseph Patten. IFC Films has US rights.

23. See Gillespie. Gordon notes how the Press balanced “commercial and noncommercial, democratic and elitist” (vii).

24. Koppen discusses Woolf’s “ridicule of ceremony” (25) and “ceremonial dress and uniforms of all kinds” (29).

works cited


Redefining Woolf for the 1990s:
Producing and Promoting the “Definitive Collected Edition”

by Elizabeth Willson Gordon

It is 1988. Hair is big and denim acid-washed. Calgary is host to the Winter Olympics, Rainman is the Oscar’s best picture, and Tracy Chapman is singing about a “Fast Car.” Stephen Hawking publishes A Brief History of Time, and Peter Carey’s Oscar and Lucinda wins the Booker Prize. The MLA bibliography lists eight-two publications about Virginia Woolf: in scanning the list the three main interests of academics are psychoanalysis, sexuality, and feminism. Many of the scholars working on Woolf are located in the United States. Diane Gillespie’s The Sisters’ Arts appears. The year 1988 is one of the key moments in marketing and publishing Woolf because of copyright, because of academic trends, and because of changes at the Hogarth Press itself.

I recently argued1 that there are three unexplored turning points of the Hogarth Press: the 1946 merger with Chatto and Windus, the change to a paperback imprint in 1984, and the re-launch of the Press in 1990. In exploring the economic, social, and cultural history of the Hogarth Press, I have traced threads of influence, modernist legacies that last far beyond the Second World War. Part of the changing impact of the Press can be found by tracing the content of the Hogarth Press brand as it was shaped across the decades of the twentieth century. The Hogarth Press has continuously affected, not only our views of authors like Virginia Woolf, of the Bloomsbury Group, and of modernism as a movement, but also some of the larger debates of the twentieth century: feminism and global capitalism. One place where many of these elements coalesce is in the production and promotion of the “Definitive Collected Edition” of Woolf’s novels.

My argument for the importance of the turning point of the late 1980s is based on my recent discoveries in the Hogarth Press archive, the thick files detailing the years of planning for the edition right up to its design, production, and promotion. In these files we read about the editors’ debates regarding marketing strategy, their attempt to establish new copyrights for the novels, the proper pricing for the volumes and financial constraints of production, as well as their larger program of changing the public perception of Woolf, particularly in Britain. In 1988 the expiration date on the copyright of Virginia Woolf’s novels loomed large. The texts would enter the public domain in January of 1992 (though copyright would later be extended), and multiple publishers—Oxford, Penguin, and Blackwell—all planned their own editions. The editors at the Hogarth Press, which had been purchased by Random House as part of Chatto and Windus in 1987, were in deep discussions about what to do about Woolf’s novels. The Press attempted to preempt the competition by producing the first, the most beautiful, the most personal, and the only edition of the novels “personally approved by the author herself”: the “Definitive Collected Edition” (Memo “Virginia Woolf” 17.8.89). Not coincidentally, the publication of the new edition coincided with a re-launch of the entire Hogarth Press imprint in 1990. Here I want to examine not only the finished product of the definitive collected edition—the hotly debated cover design, the introductions by Quentin Bell and Angelica
Garnett, the annotations, or lack thereof—but also the fascinating vicissitudes of publication and the meaning of Woolf herself at the turn of the decade.

The books of the Hogarth Press in the mid-1980s were a major departure from the publishing program of the Press up to that point. From the post-war years through to the 1970s the Press had continued to publish a small, varied list that included memoir, biography, poetry, history, fiction, various pamphlet and poetry series as well as translations. In the late 1950s they began publishing *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* in twenty-four hefty volumes, along with other psychoanalytic titles. One might usefully describe the list as “serious.” In 1984 the Press’s mandate underwent a major change and the imprint was re-launched as a trade paperback imprint. The list at this time changed to include light fiction, crime, lives & letters, travel, books on current affairs, etc. The Press had always been eclectic, but its small lists each year had generally maintained high standards, both in the content of the books—whatever their type—and in their physical production; the titles were also new publications. The Hogarth Press of 1984 published some reprints of earlier Hogarth books but was mostly used to reprint Chatto and Windus titles, many of which were genre fiction. This major departure from the publishing patterns of the previous sixty years resulted in a significant shift in the meaning of the Hogarth Press brand.

The paperback titles were not generally very successful in terms of sales, and the books themselves were often ugly. Even the Press employees complained about the ugly purple spines, the “diffuse and dowdy” covers (Memo “The Hogarth Press”), and the “weasel-like” logo. The new logo—a simple, very angular animal face—is mostly pointed snout, with sharp, triangular ears and angular slits for eyes. It resembles a fox or a weasel more than a wolf. While following in the vein of Vanessa Bell’s logo of 1925 and E. McKnight Kauff er’s of 1928, and attempting a further play on the wolf’s head, the redesigned logo departs too far from the original, a nice metonym for the entire list. An internal memo records the problem thusly: “there were three main markets for Hogarth books—the middle-aged housewife, the socialist/literary trendy, and the scholastic—and [...] while we’d achieved a reputation for interesting publishing, the very diversity of our list meant we were failing to establish a definite image in the shops” (Memo “The Hogarth Press”). Though the term is never used, the problem is one of branding. Readers no longer know what a Hogarth Press book means; they do not know what to expect from it. Without the communication of a message and expectation, a brand is useless.

After the 1987 purchase by Random House, plans for a new Hogarth Press list and a new treatment of Woolf’s books began in earnest. An internal planning document states that the goal of the new list is to be “intellectual and prestigious, but above all stimulating and exciting” (Document “The Hogarth Press”). The intention was to produce a small list of new titles with attention given to each book and greater care taken in design: “it is important that these books look beautiful and enticing and establish the image of the list.” They also decided to revert to the original Bell logo of the wolf’s head from 1925, and “no more purple” (Motion Memo 1988). The new brand is nostalgic, signaling a return to high quality and “serious” titles, as editors attempt to draw on “the traditional strengths of the imprint” (Motion Memo 1988). In 1990 the Hogarth Press was officially re-launched as both a hard and paperback imprint in an attempt to narrow and clarify the brand identity. The foremost name in this plan was Virginia Woolf’s. As the logo and publicity
material would show, the close connection of the Hogarth Press and Virginia Woolf would be intentionally and repeatedly cultivated.

In 1989, Carmen Callil—the Managing Director of the Hogarth Press who was also the founder of Virago Press in 1973—states in the minutes of a strategy meeting that she wants “to start work on thinking about what we can do to begin a new attack on this author. It seems to me that over the last five years the sales of every new book of hers that we have published had been appalling, yet she is one of the great writers in English of this century: I think we should begin work on an entire campaign to re-promote her” (Memo). What ensues are fascinating and lengthy discussions, along with written plans, about ways to rebrand Woolf and to emphasize the importance of her contributions as publisher, author, champion of women’s rights, champion of sexual tolerance, abuse survivor, etc. Callil perceptively asks why Woolf is “seen as a literary bluestocking when her diary reveals her to be a formidable, complicated, sometimes endearing, but fabulously interesting and catty and funny woman” (Memo). Why indeed! The aim of the editors and marketers is to present an admirable, important, and human Woolf, one relevant to the present moment. This rebranding involved biographical pieces, magazine articles, and television spots as part of their larger program of changing the public perception of Woolf. The “campaign to re-promote her” shows the active role the publisher took in shaping the meaning of the author as a key means to selling her books, and by extension, the entire Hogarth Press imprint. Authorial celebrity attaches itself to the publisher. The publisher, as a meta-producer, takes its symbolic capital from the books—and authors—it publishes and confers the credibility onto new books and names; it is a conduit of distinction. The Press at the turn of the decade understood, and refocused on the importance of Woolf as celebrity, the continued importance of her name, and books, to the Press. As Brenda Silver pointed out in 1999 (278), and Aaron Jaffe reminded us in 2005, the “best-selling postcard in the British National Portrait Gallery […] gift-shop is none other than Virginia Woolf” (170). Woolf’s face, even more than her words, had become iconic.

Another component of the attack on behalf of Woolf was the ambitious publishing plan set to begin at the end of 1989. A dozen volumes of Woolf’s writing went into print, some for the first time, and the push culminated in the massive investment and marketing involved in the “Definitive Collected Edition” of Woolf’s works in 1990 (a wishful, but telling, title). In the early plans, editors had hoped that at least some of the books would contain enough changes to re-establish copyright for the Press. They did not. The edition was aimed at “the general reader,” which in this context meant that there would be no interruptions to the text: no footnotes or other apparatus, only introductions and a list of variants. The problem with this choice is the complexity of Woolf’s texts, due in part to the separately revised proofs for British and American editions. Further, as Julia Briggs so strikingly argues, the variants continue after initial publication. Later editions during Woolf’s lifetime, “while consisting largely of identical text and page numbers” could still contain substantive changes because Woolf “was printer enough to ensure that [the changes] corresponded exactly to the space available” (Briggs 159). The Press decided to use the text of the first British Edition and all but The Voyage Out and Mrs. Dalloway were unedited. The definitive edition did not even attempt a critical edition of the type that Penguin or Oxford would in 1992, much less Blackwell’s scholarly tomes. As Jeri Johnson notes, “the claim ‘Definitive Edition’ is curious. This can only be a genealogical,
not a textual claim” (5). What was new, and a major selling feature for the Hogarth books, were the Prefaces to each volume by family members: Quentin Bell and Angelica Garnett.

An editor wrote to Quentin, “I suspect that, as VW’s nephew and biographer, what readers will particularly want from you is the personal and informed insight and the biographical details which can illumine her work” (Samuel letter 19.6.1989). The Hogarth Press edition was to be the most personal, the closest to Woolf herself. Indeed, in a chart from the Hogarth Press archives, an entry under the heading “Key Sales Points” reads, “An edition of these great novels for the 1990s—the most authoritative as well as the most handsome ever to have appeared.” And, further, “Will establish the definitive texts of the novels, as overseen by Virginia Woolf herself at the Hogarth Press” (RJL “Title Information” italics added). The editors very much wanted some finality—both in the sense of ownership and last word—just before Woolf became communal property. To this end, the description conjures up a vision of Woolf actively engaged in book production and places her back at work in the Press premises, setting type and controlling the printing process.

In an age long used to mass culture, the appeal of the Hogarth Press edition was both nostalgic and human. Walter Benjamin famously pronounced, “that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art” (220), but a new locus of authenticity can be found in the author and the traces of that author in specific editions or copies of a work. The books of the Definitive Collected edition were numbered, making each subtly unique, even if part of a series. Here was an edition published by a Press that recalled Woolf’s own home and hands. Though this edition was not printed by hand, Woolf did set type for books at the Hogarth Press and this tradition is invoked by the conjured Woolf actively engaged in book production. For those desiring proximity to Woolf, the series promised unique access to her via books that she, and her family, had the most hand in producing; versions she authorized, but also, at a step removed, touched. The dust jacket even reproduces Woolf’s handwritten signature, further working to re-establish an aura, that of the signed limited edition, and to offer Woolf’s imprimatur.

Other elements of design were also important: “we plan a splendid beautifully produced edition of each novel in a uniform set for the general reader and the collector—to be published in July 1990, 18 months before the novels go out of copyright” (Samuel letter to Quentin Bell and Ann Olivier Bell, 30.10.1989). For the dust jackets, “The designer’s idea is to use different colour ways for all 9 novels and a different linocut illustration for each novel, but the lettering and design would be constant as would the black panel over the bottom half of the front cover on which the illustration sits. […] The linocuts would be done by the designer who is also an artist” (Samuel letter to Quentin Bell 30.10.1989). Angelica Garnett, after viewing the designs, wrote,

[I] must say at once that, as seems usual, I do not like it. I shall be very disappointed indeed if you insist on presenting the complete novels in such undistinguished clothing. Why black? And why these little nebulous shapes with have little connection with the original woolf? Why such ugly colour? I also very much regret the inept imitation of VB’s hand painted lettering: if this cannot be the real thing then I think something quite different should be used. (Letter to Alison Samuel 5.11.1989)
The editor replies, “I’m SO sorry you don’t like the cover rough I sent for the novels. We are all quite in love with the design—for once sales, marketing and editorial people are agreed, and Carmen declared them divine. I’m sure the rough didn’t really do his design justice” (Samuel letter to Angelica Garnett 9.11.1989). In addition to their own enthusiasm for the designs, the editor makes an economic argument, one that equates economic value with artistic value: “I obviously didn’t make it clear that this was not just an in-house job. In fact we commissioned a very highly praised (and extremely expensive!) graphic designer to come up with a look for today which was to be original yet classy and evocative” (Samuel letter to Angelica Garnett 9.11.1989). This expensive graphic designer was Jeff Fisher, an award-winning logo designer and brand consultant.

After many financial scenarios were explored, the novels were priced at twenty pounds, and the print runs were of only 1,000 copies of each novel, individually numbered. These were actually smaller print runs for Woolf’s novels than the first publications in the 1920s and 1930s. Even with higher prices and smaller print runs, balancing the books for the edition was difficult. The editors describe the project as “so dear to our hearts,” writing to Quentin and Angelica that “Reissuing all nine novels represents a huge investment for us, as you can imagine, and not one on which we’re embarking in order to make money. It really is a labour of love as far as we’re concerned” (Samuel letter to Quentin Bell 30.10.1989). The literary value of Woolf’s novels were not the sole consideration, however. The letter continues with a stated desire “to establish a set text in a beautiful collected edition before other publishers come in with whatever texts and edition they feel like, and of course to get and keep all the novels in print until copyright expires. Our edition should catch the serious market which will then take longer to accept the new editions, we hope” (Samuel Letter to Angelica Garnett 9.11.1989). Precedent and market share were important when it came to an author of Woolf’s importance. At the conclusion of these appeals, however, was a request that the estate to take a cut in royalties to make the numbers work. Publishing Woolf is a complex mixture of love, money, art, and marketing.

The edition was promoted widely. Hogarth sent massive window displays to bookstores and arranged interviews for Quentin and Angelica on television and radio. The Press wanted the books to be “Part of a major celebration by the Hogarth Press, of its co-founder, guiding spirit, and greatest writer,” making clear that “Many young women writers [...] regard VW as a heroine,” and wanting “Articles on her legacy and importance to today’s writers” (RJL “Title information”). The production and promotion of this series of nine books reveals the desire to remake Woolf fifty years after her death into a newly modern woman as well as to evoke a nostalgia for an idealized past. The conflicting values and desires that spurred this edition become visible when one has access to what usually remains hidden: the memos, the angry letters, the meeting minutes, the financial statements, and the drafts of advertising copy that exist in the publisher’s files. However, conclusions must remain open to revision: the books and meaning of Woolf are far from definitive.

Notes

2. For more on the importance of feminist publishing in the later decades of the twentieth century see Simone Murray’s Mixed Media: Feminist Presses and Publishing Politics (2004).
Redefining Woolf for the 1990s 261

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In 1922, the Hogarth Press’s fifth anniversary notice described its aims to subscribers as that of “producing works of genuine merit which…could scarcely hope to secure publication through the ordinary channels” (Lee 366). Ninety years later, McSweeney’s has described itself as “a literary journal that published only works rejected by other magazines. That rule was soon abandoned, [but]…the journal continues to be a major home for new and unpublished writers; we’re committed to publishing exciting fiction regardless of pedigree” (“McSweeney’s”). With these announcements, the two presses overtly positioned themselves outside of the “ordinary channels” and as explicitly disinterested in prevailing notions of “pedigree.”

Why draw attention to the similarities between two author-run presses operating nearly a century apart? As this paper sets out to suggest, an extended comparative analysis of the Hogarth Press and McSweeney’s could afford a number of interesting opportunities, namely: an opportunity to assess the afterlife of historical modernist values as embodied by the strategies that author-publishers have adopted both then and now; an opportunity to examine author-run presses as an expression of the writers’ conceptualization of readers; and an opportunity to explore whether recent work on “reading class” versus “reading culture,” as exemplified by sociologists such as Wendy Griswold, can afford literary critics a supplementary means of understanding the ongoing significance of adopting modernist modes of presenting value and prescribing frameworks of expectations. First, however, a little about how I arrived at this pairing.

In April 2011, Random House announced that they would be reviving the Hogarth imprint in Summer 2012. One year on, the website for this new Random House imprint foregrounds a continued commitment to what is described as the Woolfs’ “determination to publish the newest, most exciting writing” (Hogarth). Upon encountering this attempt by the publishing arm of a multi-national media corporation to leverage the lasting authorial value and the afterlife of historical modernism in order to hail a pre-existing audience—an audience that already has a set of associations with the imprimatur Hogarth—an (initially) unexpected name came to mind: Dave Eggers. Rather quickly a question began to formulate. Is McSweeney’s a variation on the original Hogarth Press for a new generation of readers in a new century?

It is not simply that Woolf and Eggers, and relatively early in their writing careers (at thirty-five and twenty-eight respectively), founded the presses with which their own works are so closely associated. The presses also emerge as an expression of the authors’ literary values and their conceptualization of readers during two periods in which anxieties about the volume of material being published are palpable, and questions of readership, reception, and reputation have been widely debated. In both instances, the individual author-publisher’s vision works in tandem with the cultural value of the writer’s signature to assist in the creation, identification, and ongoing cultivation of a readership for the respective presses.
In setting up this discussion, I’d like to turn to Aaron Jaffe’s *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (2005), which explores how modernist visions and revisions of reputation inflect the production of modernist texts, their politics, and literary history. As Jaffe notes, many modernist authors mobilized their authorial imprimaturs into “durable promotional vehicles for their careers, hybridizing bodily agency and textual form” (3). Throughout his book, Jaffe illustrates the various ways in which modernists such as T.S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, and Ezra Pound cannily fashioned their literary careers to get the most effect possible from their existing renown in the popular press, on national radio, and through other cultural institutions, thereby assisting in the circulation of their names as “rarefied, fungible commodities” (4). Jaffe demonstrates how we might incorporate a discussion of celebrity and prestige into scholarship that conceives of modernism as “less a periodizing term or a bundle of formal concerns than a historically circumscribed mode of presenting value and prescribing frameworks of expectations” (12).

Jaffe’s work, along with numerous essays in Helen Southworth’s *Leonard & Virginia Woolf, the Hogarth Press, and the Networks of Modernism* (2010), provides us with a means of discussing the relationship between the modernist past and the persistence of modernism, and thinking about relationships between readers, writers, and literary presses in terms other than the triumph of the masses over the elites, or “selling out.” The trope of existing modernism draws attention to new modes of cultural valuation, in which knowledge of labor processes—in particular, an understanding of how cultural labor regulates the flow of value to cultural commodities—becomes preeminent (Jaffe 13). The micro-techniques of modernist dissemination, as embodied by the circulation of the texts themselves and the attendant web of secondary activities undertaken by the authors, are closely related to the techniques re-invoked by the early twenty-first century author-run press, of which Dave Eggers’s McSweeney’s is an example. Eggers is acutely and astutely aware of the ways in which an author can leverage his or her own authorial imprimatur when seeking to cultivate and maintain an audience for his or her cultural products. The similarities between the Hogarth Press and McSweeney’s draw attention to the resilience of modernist economics and micro-techniques as embodied by the practices of these two author-run presses.

To succeed as a literary entrepreneur, the author-publisher must reach readers. In a 1999 *Village Voice* article published shortly after Eggers left *Esquire* and launched *McSweeney’s Quarterly*, Eggers stated:

I think there are a lot of things wrong with most glossy magazines. It’s an unfortunate clash between a crass, commercial enterprise and some wonderfully creative people who want to create art, or the closest thing to it under the circumstances. It’s so rare for someone who writes passionately about something late at night in their apartment to ever really find the right reader. (Goldberg)

Eggers’s construct of “an unfortunate clash” is drawn upon as a means of initiating a dialogue about the difficulties of art reaching “the right reader.” This returns me to my opening suggestion that any extended comparison of the two presses must explore the authors’ respective conceptualizations of readers.
In Woolf’s case, her literary journalism and letters are valuable tools in any endeavor to reconstruct her vision of the writer/publisher/reader relationship. Throughout her career, she wrote numerous essays that drew attention to the reading labor required to activate textual and authorial value: double values that the author-as-publisher has a particular stake in developing. As the two factors informing a successful mode of cultural and economic exchange in an increasingly massive market of commodities, they speak to the demands of an era of mass literacy. This is evident in “The Patron and the Crocus” (1925) when Woolf asks “for whom should we write”:

For the present supply of patrons is of unexampled and bewildering variety. There is the daily Press, the weekly Press, the monthly Press, the English public and the American public; the best-seller public and the worst seller public; the high-brow public and red-blood public…(65)

Within a single sentence, the press is supplanted by the public; the patron is no one monolithic entity, but rather “some [specific] public” to be reached: “writing is a method of communication…every writer has some public or another at the end of his pen” (66). There is then a double power to her assertion “To know whom to write for is to know how to write” (67).

Of particular relevance in this context is Woolf’s sense of the reading public’s responsibilities. Her sense of the reciprocal relationship between writers and readers is evident in the multiple versions of “How Should One Read a Book?” The reader—“you”—must “[b]e [the writer’s] fellow-worker and accomplice,” for to read a novel is “a difficult and complex art. You must be capable not only of great fineness of perception, but of great boldness of imagination if you are going to make use of all that the novelist—the great artist—gives you” (60, 61). Most thrilling for many readers is Woolf’s insistence that “we have our responsibilities as readers and even our importance. The standards we raise and the judgments we pass steal into the air and become part of the atmosphere which writers breathe as they work” (68).

Throughout his career, Eggers has also activated allied notions of a confederacy of fellow-workers and accomplices. Early on in his career as a publisher and an author, this entailed, in part, leveraging the cachet of margins and outsiders in a manner reminiscent of the world of modernist little magazines and small presses with which the Hogarth Press was associated. Indeed, in the opening chapter of One Man Zeitgeist: Dave Eggers, Publishing and Publicity (2010), Caroline Hamilton focuses on Eggers’s relationship to his readers from the days of Might, his first magazine which folded in 1997, up to the publication of his first book A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius (2000). A more recent example of Eggers’ sense of the reader is evident in his 2008 TED Talk, in which Eggers discusses his 826 Tutoring Centers. Here he emphasizes the absence of boundaries between the students arriving at 826 Valencia Street for tutoring and the McSweeney’s editors and writers volunteering their time. In his talk, Eggers highlights the permeability of the roles: the students are encouraged to develop as readers and writers, just as the tutors—many of whom are also writers—additionally assume the role of reader and mentor in relation to the students. The space—the storefront tutoring operation and McSweeney’s Valencia Street operations—is as permeable as the roles. Further, encouraging the students
to develop as readers and writers through the support and assistance of established writers and editors parallels McSweeney’s own editorial mandate to publish new and established writers alike. There is no insistence of maintaining a distinction or separation between the various positions; there is instead a sense of interdependence and collaboration, or even playful collusion if the discussion expands beyond the 826 National Centers to include the non-fiction open letters published on Timothy McSweeney’s Internet Tendency and in McSweeney’s Quarterly.

Conceiving of readers as confederates and accomplices is an effective means of maintaining an ongoing relationship with one’s readers both as an author and a publisher. In turn, the culture of celebrity further affords the Hogarth Press and McSweeney’s with publicity and marketing mechanisms unavailable to the small independent presses not overseen by a recognizable author-publisher with his or her own well-constructed public persona. Even a cursory review of the publishing lists of both presses shows repeated examples of well-timed releases of texts by Woolf and Eggers which share themes and concerns with works penned by other writers published by the Hogarth Press and McSweeney’s. For example, just as there is a provocative dialogue between Three Guineas (1938) and the collection of essays edited by Ray Strachey, Our Freedom And Its Results (1936), so too is there a dialogue between Dave Eggers’s novel What Is the What: The Autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng (2006) and Out of Exile: Narratives From the Abducted and Displaced People of the Sudan (2008), a title from McSweeney’s Voice of Witness imprint. What Is The What emerged from an extensive series of interviews with Deng, which were then fictionalized by Eggers. Two years later, Out of Exile told the stories of refugees and abductees compiled and edited by Craig Walzer. The book included additional interviews and an introduction by Deng and Eggers. The conversation between books being published by Woolf and Eggers, the writers, and by Woolf and Eggers, the publishers, makes explicit the ways in which the presses are an extension of the literary values embodied by the author-publishers themselves, which in the case of Woolf has extended beyond her natural life and is being (re)harnessed by Random House with the revival of the Hogarth imprint.

Unsurprisingly, Woolf and Eggers repeatedly draw attention to the value of their own signatures in the publishing process. Simon & Schuster published Eggers’s first book, A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius (2000), a book that enjoyed commercial and critical success, reaching The New York Times bestseller list as well as being nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction. With this success, the expectation might well have been that Eggers would continue to publish with Simon & Schuster. Instead, he elected to publish his second novel You Shall Know Our Velocity (2002) with McSweeney’s, thereby strengthening and reinforcing the connection between his own writing and his own publishing house. Not unlike the “signed copies for subscribers” plan adopted by the Woolfs with the Hogarth first edition of Jacob’s Room (1922), a limited number of personally inscribed copies of You Shall Know Our Velocity were made available to readers purchasing the book via the company’s website (Brouillette 3). The authorial imprimatur resonates threefold in this move: Eggers as publisher, author, and signatory bridges bodily and textual forms of cultural authority.

Subscribers, or the “right readers” who have made an ongoing financial commitment to the publisher, have played a central role in the McSweeney’s story from the outset. In a 2006 Forbes interview, Eggers said that, after his experience with Might, during which
it “seemed crazy that an advertiser—or a 22 year old media planner—could determine whether or not magazine had merit, how many pages you could print or whether (in the end) you existed at all,” he deliberately took a different approach with his next venture. When he founded McSweeney’s in 1998, he chose to produce a smaller publication with a modest distribution network and a high cover price: “We were determined to rely only on the support of readers. We grew only in relation to what the readers would support” (Hagan). Nevertheless, this has still meant substantial growth. The print run for the first issue of McSweeney’s was 1500 copies; it was 5000 for the second, and 7500 for third (Hamilton 15). The current circulation is estimated at approximately 23000 (19).

Reader support in a very literal sense has continued to be an important component of the McSweeney’s business strategy with three subscription options—the Book Release Club, A Year of New Shirts, and McMullens, the children’s book subscription service—in addition to the more traditional magazine subscription, where the options include McSweeney’s Quarterly Concern, The Believer, Wholphin and, most recently, Lucky Peach and Grantland. Those readers in the subscriber database receive electronic notices regarding new publications and sales as well as e-newsletters with information on the press’s various activities. In May 2012, the McSweeney’s e-newsletter included a link to an interview with McSweeney’s editorial director Ethan Nosowsky published in The Economist’s Lean Back 2.0 blog on April 24th. The entry revolves around a discussion of how a design-focused publisher such as McSweeney’s will respond to digital platforms and people’s changing reading habits, and it gestures towards the third dimension for analysis suggested at the beginning of this paper: the need to consider publishers’ strategies in light of emerging data about the reading habits and the reading class at the beginning of the twenty-first century. What is missing, however, from the 2012 blog post is any acknowledgment of the role that the website (with a visual style mirroring that of the print publication right down to the font) and the various McSweeney’s Internet Tendency columns have played in the cultivation of readers from the project’s outset in 1998. The complete searchable archive of McSweeney’s Internet Tendency is available on the McSweeney’s website, including the direct request to readers back on 28 August 1998 for assistance with the placement of orders for the fourth issue of McSweeney’s from their local bookstores: “In the meantime, if you happen to happen into your local bookseller, you might remind her or him to put in his or her order for the new issue. This will help us get the copies distributed promptly, and will help your bookseller become rich.” Yoking a survey of these entries to comments made elsewhere by Eggers regarding craft, distinct experiences, and the politics of publishing suggests another means by which it would be possible to map ways in which McSweeney’s has successfully adapted to the micro-technique of modernist publishing ventures to publishing landscape of the early twenty-first century.

Wendy Griswold, Terry McDonnell, and Nathan Wright’s 2005 article, “Reading and the Reading Class in the Twenty-First Century,” argues that “a reading class is emerging, restricted in size but disproportionate in influence, and that the internet is facilitating this development” (127). Interestingly, studies cited by Griswold and her co-authors do not suggest that the Internet is displacing reading, and they conclude that a review of “the available research suggests that the relationship between reading and going online is not zero-sum but more-more” (137). McSweeney’s appears to be ably navigating this expanded synchronous media ecology, hailing its readers within the print, digital, and, more
The Believers recently, mobile sphere through the 2009 launch of the McSweeney's iPhone application. Readers can access the McSweeney's products in a variety of shapes and forms; they may be found "reading" the Wholphin DVD quarterly, content delivered via the iPhone app, or the fur-covered edition of Dave Eggers' novel The Wild Things (2009). McSweeney's does not insist on a “this” or “that” approach: readers are encouraged to encounter the work of the writers and artists supported by the publishers in a variety of formats. Again, this is reinforced through careful attention to cross-platform consistency and, in spite of a high level of inventiveness in terms of the packaging of individual issues, an unchanging base visual aesthetic. The website and its choice of typeface have remained virtually unchanged over the past decade and a half.

Paradoxically, in contrast with the static world of its website, McSweeney's commitment to playful and innovative book design has become the subject of a 2009 text published in collaboration with Chronicle Books: Art of McSweeney's. The book chronicles the first eleven years of the publishing house and tells the stories behind the making of the first thirty-one issues of the Quarterly, the founding of The Believer and the Wholphin DVD magazine, and the inspiration for other books published by McSweeney's. The book is a physical testament to this publisher's ongoing interest in the reading experience and the craft of book design. Elizabeth Willson Gordon's visually rich Woolf's-head Publishing: The Highlights and New Lights of the Hogarth Press (2009) notes that Hogarth Press productively drew on a number of traditions “mixing and performing a balancing act between seemingly competing aesthetic of fine, private press printing, avant-garde publishing, and commercial publishing” (x) all the while producing relatively inexpensive books made for reading. A similar argument could be advanced with respect to the design achievements of McSweeney's.

Building on my emerging sense that there are suggestive similarities between these two author-run presses, I am left wondering whether it is possible to claim that the complexities of Virginia Woolf’s “common reader” find expression, reinvention, and expansion in the various print, digital, and community-based projects overseen by McSweeney's. With both presses, there is strain of egalitarian exceptionalism—a kind of inclusive distinction—with which the reader is addressed. At the respective presses, the author-publisher is a curator or taste aggregator in conversation with the reader through the editorial decisions in all their rich diversity.

Publishers have historically relied on the symbolic capital of their authors for critical and economic success. Woolf and now Eggers are in the distinctive position of having had taken on the dual role of authors and publishers. Their authorial value—their reputations and iconic power—infuses their own work and those they elect to publish. As early as 2003, Sarah Brouillette noted, “One of the most interesting aspects of Eggers’ authorship is his effort to control all aspects of his paratextual world, by acting as author, editor and publisher, as self-critic and self-defender.” The McSweeney's chair—whether it is supporting the writer, editor, or reader—does not yet have the canonical force of the Vanessa Bell wolf's head and E. Kauff er McKnight's later reworking of the Hogarth seal, but it does encapsulate the degree to which existing modernism, modernist publication strategies, and the authorial imprimatur are being effectively harnessed one century later.
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May 2012.

Print.


Southworth, Helen, ed. Introduction. Leonard and Virginia Woolf, the Hogarth Press, and the Networks of Modern-


65-68. Print.

To establish context for this presentation, I should introduce myself as someone whose textual-genetic and bibliographic scholarship is best known in Yeats studies, in connection with the Palgrave Macmillan and Cornell series and the W. B. Yeats Collection at the National Library of Ireland. I’m also the editor of *The South Carolina Review* and executive editor of Clemson University Digital Press (CUDP). In that connection, this paper is largely autobiographical as I consider the agenda at hand for producing monographs on Woolf and bibliographic studies in my particular workshop.

In 2001, the Clemson University Digital Press was born and, with it, *The South Carolina Review* On-Line Library (or SCROLL). Soon after, a themed number from 1996, *Virginia Woolf International*, became a list of digital articles and monographs in that library. In the last eight years, CUDP has published the *Selected Papers* from Virginia Woolf conferences numbers 11, 13 and 15-21, with numbers 22 and 23 anticipated for the two Canadian conferences. For a time, we made pdf facsimiles available with “read only” access by subscription at the Center for Virginia Woolf Studies (CSU-Bakersfield), which ceased operation a couple of years ago. The whole “Virginia Woolf International” segment of Clemson’s SCROLL site has undergone at least three major renovations to integrate and better present its articles, its links to the *Selected Papers*, and its monographic series (for example, *Virginia Woolf’s Illnesses*, *Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway*, and *An Annotated Guide to the Writings and Papers of Leonard Woolf*). The network has grown like an organism, and this shrubbery has required tending with respect to a number of complexly reciprocal branches. I want to give you a sense of really only the Woolf branches as they relate to the whole picture. If you can see where we are, you can imagine, with me, where we might be going in a few more years. And I use the word “we” to refer at once to the small university press at Clemson but also broadly to all of us in academia, especially the research institutions. So let me explain how the options of print and online publishing on the Woolfs are progressing at CUDP in spite of some harrowing economic challenges incumbent to public universities today. I’ll start by giving you a tour, which I think should begin with the landscaped image of the cover of the book we published only two weeks before this conference. See Figure 1, below. The layout illustrates the electronic and digital platforms now very common in print publication. Only the bleeds and crop marks are hidden. (A copy of the book was passed around for inspection at this point.)

But here is how the book shows itself (see Figure 2, below, at upper left in the screenshot), on the CUDP home page. This is the first of at least three routes to the book on our website. Links are provided directly to the book and to its order form. The home page
advertises a selection of our most recent monographs and journals. But if you click on the word “Publications,” at the top of the screen, you’ll come in the door properly.

The page “About CUDP Publications” greets you with a thumbnail introduction to the Press, hardly the thorough-going presentation one finds in reading the entire charter available by clicking a link at the top right portion of the screen. The aim of publishing only “three books per annum” is regularly exceeded by double or triple that number. We also announce, in paragraph 2, that, “whenever possible, digital publications [should] retain the aesthetic qualities of their print versions when these versions exist,” which is generally the case when one offers small print runs and online pdf facsimile editions at no cost. You will find that, when selecting “Virginia Woolf Selected Papers” from the list at the left side of the screen, a similar thumbnail will outline for you the nine CUDP volumes and acknowledge the following as context: first, that numbers 1-10 were published by Pace University Press; and, second, that numbers 12 and 14 were published exclusively at CSU-Bakersfield (online only, with 14 being a shorter version of a two-volume edition published by Palgrave Macmillan, in 2010, from papers presented in 2004).

Figures 3 and 4 (below) are screenshots of Voyages Out, Voyages Home, number 11 in the series, lacking the order form that can be accessed there. Similarly, one can review the individual pages for each of the eight additional volumes, descending in chronological order from earliest to latest, and access not only information about their contents and how to order printed copies of them but also access complete texts of the whole series. After number 11, the list consists of the following:

No. 13 Woolf and the Real World
No. 15 Woolf and the Art of Exploration
No. 16 Woolfian Boundaries
No. 17 Virginia Woolf: Art, Education, and Internationalism
No. 18 Woolf Editing / Editing Woolf
No. 19 Woolf and the City
No. 20 Woolf and the Natural World
No. 21 Contradictory Woolf

The format is much the same for all of them although No. 21 in the series is distinguished from the others by being the longest as well as the most extraordinarily illustrated. Notice in Figures 5 and 6 (below), for example, that Suzanne Bellamy’s painting The Chaucer Horse is visibly engaged with the contents, as the reproduction manages to do in the printed volume when placed on the back cover as a complement to the front cover logo and the frontispiece (by Carolyn McNairn). Since the covers are lacking in the print edition and color printing impractical in the body of Bellamy’s pageant and commentary, we reproduced the image on the web page and added a zoom feature to allow one to examine carefully the details of the painting after clicking on the image as prompted by the caption beneath it.

Taking you to another location on the CUDP website, entitled “Bibliographic Studies,” I am pleased to introduce eight books of recent date, again, roughly, in reverse chronological order: (1) W. B. Yeats’s “A Vision”: Explications and Contexts, edited by Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson, and Claire Nally; (2) The W. B. and George Yeats Library: A Short-Title Catalog by yours truly; (3) Writing Modern Ireland, a special issue of The South Carolina
INTERDISCIPLINARY / MULTIDISCIPLINARY WOOLF

Figure 3

Figure 4
Figure 5

The Chaucer Horse, oil on canvas by Suzanne Bellamy, is featured on the back cover and discussed at the end of her pageant (see pp. 54–55). Click image for larger view.

Figure 6

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The home page of the latter e-book opens the most detailed bibliographic account of this subject. The book corrects and extends the bibliographic record that was given in Leonard Woolf, A Bibliography (1992) by Leila Luedeking and Michael Edmonds, who in haste to meet their publisher’s deadline, incorporated certain undigested findings from our research on Leonard’s unsigned journalism (with occasional tidbits by Virginia) during his tenure as literary editor of The Nation & The Athenaeum. The index in Luedeking and Edmonds is rudimentary and less than adequate by most standards for such a book, limited by “space constraints” (291) evidently imposed by St Paul’s Bibliographies and Oak Knoll Books. The much preferred alternative is a fully searchable bibliographic corpus, which An Annotated Guide to the Writings and Papers of Leonard Woolf offers, besides an outline of his oeuvre as far as that may be ascertained given the incomplete nature of the extant archival evidence. One finds, at the top of the screen in each of six sections, that the book is partitioned into the following discrete units: Intro (in two parts), Part 1, Part 2, Part 3, Contexts, and Relevant Links. Beyond the authors’ introductory essay, Part 1 is a list of Leonard’s acknowledged (or “signed”) works—authored books and monographs, edited books and monographs, and journalism (articles chiefly in seven periodicals but occasionally in “Other Periodicals”), with quick links to all subsections. Part 2 gives LW’s “Unsigned Published Writings…in The Nation, The New Statesman, The Athenaeum, The Nation & The Athenaeum, The Political Quarterly, and Other Periodicals,” with quick links
for browsing convenience and a link to the web page “About the Athenaeum,” created by City University (London), to show what is meant by a “marked file” (when they exist) within a journal or newspaper archive. See Figure 8. Part 3 of the Annotated Guide is a cross-section of books in the Leonard and Virginia Woolf Library at Washington State University that are generally or specifically associated with Leonard Woolf’s political interests and his writings, many instances of which were reviews or works cited by him and accounted for in Parts 1 and 2. The source used in Part 3 (see Figure 9) is WSU’s annotated copy of the original Holleyman and Treacher sale catalog, and links are provided to the online version of the alphabetical conspectus entitled The Library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf: A Short-title Catalog. Part 3 is indexed and followed by Contexts (selected articles, notes, and reviews by Manson and Chapman, courtesy of Pace University Press and CUDP) and Related Links (in all, a dozen connections to “Archives, Collections,
and Bibliographic Sources” useful in tracing the Leonard Woolf papers, particularly the Bloomsbury-related collections and Leonard Woolf Archive at the University of Sussex).

To complete the tour of “Woolfs in Print and Online” on the CUDP website, I direct your attention to a screenshot of the home page of the South Carolina Review On-Line Library, cited above as SCROLL. (See Figure 10.) In following the “Themed” link there, at left, one learns that “Virginia Woolf International” is one of three themed locations where articles are collected from the pages of The South Carolina Review, the others being “Ireland in the Arts and Humanities” and “James Dickey Revisited.” On the Woolfs, the themed site is, of course, cross-linked to the Selected Papers series but also features a monographic series of its own (6 titles published from 2003 to the present), as well as 21 articles and reviews appearing in The South Carolina Review (from 1996 to the present). The Virginia Woolf International monographic series includes, for example, three studies by the late psychoanalyst Douglass Orr, the Leonard Woolf Annotated Guide, a paper on Leonard Woolf and the League of Nations by historian Janet Manson, and a large book of commentary on Mrs. Dalloway and Roman elegy by Molly Hoff. For the present Selected Papers volume, however, the tour will have to end here.¹

¹ Figure 10
What’s my vision for the Press in the future? Four years ago, during the 40th anniversary of *The South Carolina Review* and before economic meltdown distinguished the Great Recession from every other business cycle in my lifetime, a word, an acronym—SCROLL—embodied my vision. Today, four years from retirement (hopefully), I see differently the SCR online archive, where the entire searchable SCR inventory might be posted on the Internet in PDF and HTML formats and in conformity with university branding policies and CSS coding. Rather than joining the Project Muse journals housed electronically by Johns Hopkins University Press, I thought we might build our own franchise online. Recently, after all, the University of North Dakota Libraries asked for a subscription arrangement to legitimize their adding to their catalog everything we’ve published on Virginia Woolf online, confirming that subscriptions might provide wholesome alternatives to small royalties paid for downloads from corporate databases such as ProQuest Media.

Instead of expanding the SCROLL initiative beyond the two additions ordinarily issued each year, I intend to reorganize the editorial infrastructure of the journal as staffed in the English Department, starting this fall, when new tenurable faculty in digital humanities and in literature and technology assume permanent appointments in the department. It might be noted that CUDP is joined by Parlor Press, a private publishing house owned by David Blakesley, my colleague of the past two years. Hence, emphasis has shifted toward the production of books—to perpetuating the Virginia Woolf Selected Papers and Virginia Woolf International monographic series, our list in Bibliographic and Textual Studies, and our Ireland in the Arts and Humanities monographic series. At risk of sounding disloyal to this group, I would dearly like to see published by 2016—in print, perhaps, but certainly online—my current book project, *“Something that I read in a book”: A Volume of Annotations by W. B. Yeats as Compiled from His Books in the National Library of Ireland*, posted beside the down payment I made in the short-title catalog. The relevance to the Woolfs is one of the opportunities that I will discuss in the conclusion of this presentation.

Change is an everyday occurrence in scholarly publishing. Our capacity to do desktop publishing and to develop online appendages to SCROLL and other aspects of CUDP’s website is promising work and clearly growing. Of course, we could use either extramural or institutional funding to support student assistants, release time for editing, programming, and overhead to completely resurrect and display our entire inventory. All sources of revenue, put together, barely leave us in a sustainable position. But a recent fiscal audit has confirmed that we are indeed self-sustaining, supposedly a requirement for all centers and institutes as unprecedented cuts to the university budget have been inflicted by the state of South Carolina. The present economy and prevailing political atmosphere are not helpful. But we will prevail. Our journals are the “heart” of the Press and still positioned at the heart of the English Department, a constant not likely to change much even as the Press takes over more of the overhead from English. As that transition is effected, my aim and most ardent aspiration is to follow the example of editor Dillon Johnston, who published only three to five titles a year but every year for 25 years and, as a result, made Wake Forest University Press peerless in some things. Unlike Clemson, however, Wake Forest University cannot claim to be the caretaker of a state literary magazine as we
can. We have been building an imprint around ours. In ten years, we have published 60 monographs, 9 exclusively e-books, 47 books both in print and online, and only four print books without an online equivalent. During that time, 21 issues of SCR and 10 volumes of our Shakespeare journal were published, neither of which is generally issued completely in an online state because of their dependence on subscriptions from libraries and individuals who desire printed copies for their institutional and private collections. Still, in the next year or two, we anticipate one complete makeover in format and medium, launching a new journal with the National Dropout Prevention Center, and archiving online our retiring Shakespeare journal, after thirty-five years service to the Bard, with the existing website to be converted for this purpose.

I will conclude with notes on two opportunities that should interest you. First, because downward pressure from administration and the rise of excellent scholarly and creative literature are, respectively, lamentable and enviable, there is a way to resist the call for austerity, on the one hand, while increasing, on the other, the means by which we disseminate the best of what has been written, an affirmation of our mission within the university. The key, in our case, might be e-commerce. To put it simply: we want the ability to transact sales automatically by credit card. After years of waiting for the right moment, we found ourselves positioned to move forward last year, first with one journal and then the other, with the GCCP (General Credit Card Processing) application provided by our Bursar’s office. The coding was essentially prefabricated and ready to be adapted. In short, subscriptions and orders for single copies of The South Carolina Review may now be executed by credit card. Official Payments Corporation, the same folks who provide services for Federal IRS payments, handle the fiscal mechanics, which are then communicated with our Accounts Receivable Office and my fiscal analyst in the English Department. But this achievement is fractional in comparison with what must be done to realize the full benefit of this technology. CUDP will have to create for itself a shopping mall in order to generate book sales in the same way. Variables are compounded by differences in price, postal rates, sales tax payments by South Carolinians, and other factors. The web construction will require special gifts because the object will need to resemble those transactional spaces with which most of us are familiar on Amazon. Fortunately, Clemson’s Bursar (presently rechristened Cash and Treasury Services) has engaged with TouchNet Marketplace and is at work building the online store of my dreams. Tapping that technology is no longer a remote possibility, as we expect to see the CUDP store go live by mid-2013. In the meantime, I shall get by with one of only a handful of telephones that remain in service in the English Department and expect to see book sales rise, especially overseas, by means of a credit card reader more or less on permanent loan from the Bursar as the university shifts from one service provider to another.

Finally, I see a silver lining in the cloud of copyright incomprehensibilities over which scholars and publishers alike have fretted since the enactment of the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act of 1998, also called the “Mickey Mouse Protection Act,” after its more talented beneficiary. Publishing scholars will know, just as the Woolfs at the Hogarth Press understood from their own experience, that rights issues also involve costs that must be borne, and generally borne by authors (for example, contributors to our Virginia Woolf Selected Papers series). I’m not going into Fair Use here, but the right to quote short patches of copyrighted text ordinarily is not a matter of applying to the copyright holder,
agent, or representative thereof for permission in lieu of or after agreeing to pay a negotiated fee. Several excellent authorities are available on the subject of Fair Use, for instance Parrinder and Chernaik, *Textual Monopolies: Literary Copyright and the Public Domain* (1997) and, more recently, Aufderheide and Jaszi, *Reclaiming Fair Use: How to Put Balance Back in Copyright* (2011). Articles in our series usually do not involve such complications except in the case of images, especially artistic works, including photography, or unpublished pre-textual materials such as drafts, annotations, corrected galleys, page proofs, and such, which might require application to a literary estate, delegated authority, and/or owner of the actual physical property. There is almost always some reason for the publisher (me) to consult with authors to answer questions posed by rights authorities, such as pricing, anticipated print run, and medium (print and/or online), as the volume editors and contributors of our monographic Woolf series discover. Once in a while permissions are granted with dpi restrictions for images to be posted on the Internet, and there are two misconceptions to be corrected by writers inclined to use images found on the Internet (because copying is so easy): first, they are rarely print-quality; and, second, they are the intellectual property of the artist or photographer who made them, and subject to their approval to reproduce them in any form, unless they fall in the public domain.

Now we come to the “silver lining.” Very recently, the three Modernist writers closest to my heart—W. B. Yeats, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce—are out of copyright outside the U.S. and, inside the U.S., only works by them that were published for the first time after 1922 remain in copyright. Unpublished works in manuscript, too, are in public domain. My authorities here are Robert Darnton, founder of e-Gutenberg and the author of *The Case for Books: Past, Present, and Future* (2009), as well as my interrogation of representatives of the Yeats and Woolf estates and recent notices in *TLS* reporting the jubilation of Joyce scholars following at least ten dismal years of battling the grandson. One of these, “Pirates in Joyceland” (by “J.C.”), and a letter to the editor by Hans Walter Gabler, of the same date, speak to a flagrant challenge that has been made in the use of an allegedly purloined letter. For my work as an editor and publisher, I only say that the development is helpful if still bearing complications seeded by Sonny Bono in 1998. One might recall that Yeats, Woolf, and Joyce came out of copyright once before, in 1989 and 1991, fifty years after the death of the authors. On the occasion and for several years, excellent new editions of their work proliferated overseas but were usually unavailable in America. On almost every summer research venture to Dublin or London, one sent home copies of the latest ones in order to keep up. But let us speak of manuscript materials. Presently, “[f]or works unpublished as [of] 1.1.78, US copyright now subsists for the life of the author plus 70 years” (Shaughnessey)—for Yeats through 2009, for Woolf and Joyce through last year. If the work remains unpublished it is fair game, whereas a work first published in 1923 or later and subsequently renewed in the 28th year, or published for the first time between 1964 and 1977, will have a flat 95-year term. For my book in progress on Yeats’s annotations, I may now do more than merely quote the words that Yeats wrote in his books, with permission kindly granted and fees waived for that by Yeats’s literary estate: I may digitally reproduce facsimiles without being required to ask, as long as the reproductions are not drafts of Yeats’s post-1922 published work. And in the case of my essay in *Contradictory Woolf*, the fact that I quoted a substantial part of Virginia Woolf’s unpublished reminiscence of Lady Ottoline Morrell was not a concern of the Society of
Authors, agents of the Virginia Woolf estate, though they did ask to see the quotation just to make sure. Single-authored monographs seldom see royalties nowadays equal to the scholar’s expenses in fees paid to rights holders. Therefore, is it not fortunate, indeed, that less may be paid in the future that more might be gained, at least in textual-genetic scholarship and publishing, both in print and online?

Notes

1. Up to this point, the conference presentation on which this essay is based had projected 52 images. For the print “tour,” therefore, the number of figures has been reduced by 42, or 81%.

2. For a short treatment of Fair Use defined in terms understood before and after the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act of 1998, Arizona State University law professor Dennis Karjala gives an authoritative account, also recommended.

3. As an aside, I note that the Artists Rights Society and possibly a gallery or two have levied variable terms for print and online reproduction, being more restrictive for the latter because circulation is assumed to be broader.

Works Cited


Notes on Contributors

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Sarah Blake was born in Wales in 1983. She studied English Literature at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and has an M.A. in Art and Design (Studio Practice) from Loughborough University. For examples of her work visit: <sarahblakeartist.tumblr.com>

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Susan Brown is Professor of English at the University of Guelph and Visiting Professor at the University of Alberta. She works on Victorian literature, women's writing, and digital humanities. All of these interests inform Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present (Cambridge UP 2006), an online literary historical textbase and testbed for experiments in digital literary history co-edited with Patricia Clements and Isobel Grundy. She leads development of the Canadian Writing Research Collaboratory, which is producing an online repository and research environment for literary studies in and about Canada.


Kimberly Engdahl Coates is Associate Professor of English at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. Her work has appeared in Literature and Medicine, Journal of Narrative Theory, PsyArt and elsewhere. Most recently, her essay “Phantoms, Fancy
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Melba Cuddy-Keane is Emerita Professor, University of Toronto-Scarborough, and Emerita Member of the University of Toronto's Graduate Department of English. Her publications on Virginia Woolf include Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere (CUP 2003) and the Harcourt annotated edition of Between the Acts (2008). Her collaborative book Modernism: Keywords (Wiley-Blackwell) will be published in 2013.

Madelyn Detloff is Associate Professor of English and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Miami University. She is author of The Persistence of Modernism: Loss and Mourning in the 20th Century (2009) and co-editor of Virginia Woolf: Art, Education, and Internationalism (with Diana Royer), as well as several articles on Woolf, queer theory, feminist studies, and modernism.

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Sarah Dunlap is a Ph.D. candidate in English at the Ohio State University, where she studies modernist literature and ecocriticism. Her essay is derived from her dissertation research on ecological ideas in modernist fiction.

J. Ashley Foster is currently a Ph.D. candidate at The Graduate Center, City University of New York, where she is writing her dissertation “Modernism’s Impossible Witness: Peace Testimony from the Modernist Wars.” Her research interests include Peace Studies, Modernism, Ethics, the Spanish Civil War, and Women's Studies.

Jane de Gay is Reader in English Literature at Leeds Trinity University (UK). She is the author of Virginia Woolf’s Novels and the Literary Past (Edinburgh University Press/ Columbia University Press 2006), as well as several articles and book chapters on Woolf. She delivered the Virginia Woolf Birthday Lecture for 2009.

Diane F. Gillespie, Professor Emeritus of English (Washington State University), is author of The Sisters’ Arts and numerous essays, including most recently chapters for Maggie Humm’s Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts and Helen Southworth’s The Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism. She edited Woolf’s Roger Fry and The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf and co-edited Julia Stephen’s writings, Virginia Woolf and the Arts (selected papers), and Cicely Hamilton’s Diana of Dobson’s.

Jane Goldman is Reader in English Literature at the University of Glasgow and author of a number of works on Woolf and on modernism. She is a General Editor of the Cambridge University Press Edition of the Works of Virginia Woolf.

Elizabeth Willson Gordon is Assistant Professor at King’s University. She has published on Woolf, the Hogarth Press, E. McKnight Kauffer, and Sylvia Plath. She is currently at work on a literary and cultural history of the Hogarth Press 1917-2017, as well as a collaborative digital endeavor, the Modernist Archives Publishing Project (MAPP).

Isobel Grundy, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, was until 2003 Henry Marshall Tory Professor at the University of Alberta and is now Professor Emeritus. She is co-editor of Orlando: Women’s Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present (2006) and The Feminist Companion to Literature in English (1990). She is author of Lady Mary

Leslie Kathleen Hankins is the President of the International Virginia Woolf Society, and a professor in the department of English and Creative Writing at Cornell College, Iowa. Recent papers on Virginia Woolf and the cinema have been published in the Modern Language Association Approaches to Teaching Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway, The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts, The Gender Complex of Modernism, and Woolf Studies Annual.

Kathryn Holland teaches English at MacEwan University. Her research interests include synchronic approaches to modernism, modernist literature and visual arts, and late-Victorian and modernist feminist networks. Her work has been published in Modernism/ Modernity, Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature, and the Times Literary Supplement. She was recently Fleur Cowles Endowment Fellow at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin; she completed her DPhil at the University of Oxford.

Catherine W. Hollis, Ph.D., teaches writing and literature through U.C. Berkeley’s Fall Program for Freshmen and is the author of Leslie Stephen as Mountaineer (Cecil Woolf 2010). She blogs about climbing in Leslie Stephen’s footsteps at: <downhillalltheway.wordpress.com>

Michael J. Horacki is completing his Ph.D. in English at the University of Saskatchewan. He is currently working on a dissertation that utilizes emergence and assemblage theory to examine the relationships between memory, collective memory, and history in the fiction of Virginia Woolf, Evelyn Waugh, and George Orwell.

Maggie Humm is an Emeritus Professor, School of Arts and Digital Industries, University of East London. Her recent publications on Woolf include Snapshots of Bloomsbury: the Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell (Rutgers UP and the Tate 2006), The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts (Edinburgh and Columbia UP 2010), chapters in Cambridge Companions, Virginia Woolf’s Bloomsbury, Contradictory Woolf, and articles in the Virginia Woolf Miscellany. She is currently writing about the Polish artist Joanna Rajkowska for Zero Books, and researching the connections between Mai Zetterling, Simone de Beauvoir, and Virginia Woolf.

Alice Keane is a Ph.D. candidate in English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is currently completing a dissertation on Bloomsbury’s literature and economics.

Marie Lovrod is Coordinator of Women’s and Gender Studies and Assistant Professor of English at the University of Saskatchewan. Her research focuses on intersectional constructions of gender, youth and aging, in relation to commodified employment markets. She values communities of practice that respect research, learning, and social environments as inclusive spaces.

Aurelea Mahood teaches English at Capilano University and coordinates the Faculty of Arts and Sciences’s Liberal Studies BA. Her teaching and research interests include the intersection between the historical and digital avant-garde. Current research projects build on her recent article, “Drink Me: Student Audiences, the Construction of Value, and the Digital Avant-Garde,” published in Media: Pedagogy: Culture (2011), which examined the adventures and pitfalls of teaching an undergraduate course on electronic literature and digital poetry. Her last book-length project was Modernism: An Introduction (EUP 2007). She is also the current web editor for The Capilano Review.
Ann Martin is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan, and was lead organizer of Interdisciplinary / Multidisciplinary Woolf. Her scholarly publications include Red Riding Hood and the Wolf in Bed: Modernism’s Fairy Tales (UTP 2006) and articles on Djuna Barnes, Emma Donoghue, J. G. Sims, and Virginia Woolf. She is currently researching the place of the motor-car in interwar British literature. Eleanor McNees is an associate dean and professor of English at the University of Denver. Her research interests focus on Woolf and her Victorian predecessors. She is editor of Critical Assessments of Virginia Woolf and annotated The Years for the new Harcourt series. Vara Neverow, a professor of English and Women’s Studies at Southern Connecticut State University, has written the Introduction and annotations for Jacob’s Room (Harcourt 2008), “Virginia Woolf and City Aesthetics” (Humm, Virginia Woolf and the Arts 2010), “Woolf’s Editorial Self-Censorship and Risk-Taking in Jacob’s Room” (Dubino, Virginia Woolf and the Literary Marketplace 2010), and “Echo Chambers of War in A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas” (Wood, The Theme of Peace and War in Virginia Woolf’s Writings 2010).

Lolly J. Ockerstrom is an Associate Professor of English at Park University in northwest Missouri, where she teaches writing and English literature. Her most recent publication is Virginia Woolf and the Spanish Civil War: Texts, Contexts, and Women’s Narratives, published by Cecil Woolf Publishers. Maria Aparecida de Oliveira has just completed her Ph.D. at Unesp. She was a visiting scholar at the University of Winnipeg, thanks to a scholarship from Capes Foundation. Her current research is on “The Female Representation in Virginia Woolf’s Works: A Dialogue between the Political and the Aesthetic Discourse.” She has also participated in the 2011 Virginia Woolf conference in Glasgow.

Charlie Peters is a theater artist from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. He recently completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Acting at the University of Saskatchewan. He has directed works as diverse as Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Rossini’s The Barber of Seville, Willimon’s Farragut North, and plays by Saskatchewan artists. His poetry has been published in The Fieldstone Review and Windscript. His works for the stage have been produced at the Saskatoon Fringe Festival and by the Saskatoon Opera.

Steven D. Putzel teaches at the Pennsylvania State University, Wilkes-Barre campus. He is the author of Reconstructing Yeats, and numerous essays on W. B. Yeats, Sam Shepard, James Joyce, Paul Muldoon, Sheila Watson, and Woolf. His most recent work is Virginia Woolf and the Theater (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 2012).

Conor Tomás Reed is an activist, student, and educator with the City University of New York and Free University. Conor’s work explores narratives and archives of revolts; Africana literary and social movements; and the politics of cultural ownership and theft. Kyle Robertson graduated in May 2012 from the English honours program at the University of British Columbia. He lives in Vancouver and culture jams at Adbusters between freelance work as a writer and web developer. Contact him by email: kyle@robow.ca Brenda R. Silver is Mary Brinsmead Wheelock Professor Emerita at Dartmouth College and Adjunct Professor of English at Trinity College Dublin. Publications include Virginia Woolf Icon, Virginia Woolf’s Reading Notebooks, and, with Lynn Higgins, Rape and Representation; articles on Charlotte Brontë, E.M. Forster, hypertext, popular fiction in the digital age; and numerous essays on Virginia Woolf.
Elisa Kay Sparks has been teaching in the English Department at Clemson since 1978. Since 1993 she has focused on studying Virginia Woolf, publishing numerous papers on the relationship between Woolf and the American painter Georgia O’Keeffe, as well as on gardens in Woolf’s life and work, and is halfway through a book on flower imagery in Woolf. She is also a printmaker, specializing in color-reduction woodcuts, often of subjects related to Woolf and O’Keeffe.

Kathleen Wall is Professor of English at the University of Regina, where her teaching and research interests include feminist theory, new formalism, and aesthetics. Her most recent publication on Woolf is “Significant Form in Jacob’s Room: Ekphrasis and the Elegy,” which was included in the Norton Critical Edition. She has nearly finished a study that considers how Woolf’s formal practice, one that maintains the autonomy of art (a concept supported by her knowledge of Roger Fry’s formalism) demands the reader’s critical engagement with what Gregory Jusdanis describes as “a sovereign space…from which to reflect on society.”

With roots in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, Dr. Karen Wood is a researcher and clinician in Saskatchewan. Incorporating feminist analysis with an interdisciplinary background in social work, education, and health, Karen’s research explores the complexity of healing from the impact of the residential school system and child sexual abuse.
THURSDAY 7 JUNE

SESSION 1: THURSDAY 9:00-10:30AM
1. WGST 390.3 Poster Presentation

2. Historical and Historiographical Woolf
Chair: Kathleen Wall (University of Regina)
“Transatlantic Feminist Historiography and Virginia Woolf’s The Years”
   Audrey D. Johnson, University of South Carolina-Sumter
“History as Scaffolding: Woolf’s Use of The Times in The Years”
   Eleanor McNees, University of Denver
“Woolf, History, Us”
   Melba Cuddy-Keane, University of Toronto

3. Who Goes There? Contemporary Figures in Woolf’s Fictions
Chair: Steve Putzel (Pennsylvania State University)
“Virginia’s Whipping Boy: Edmund Gosse and Virginia Woolf”
   Andre Gerard, Patremoir Press
“Mrs. Dalloway’s Party-Poopers: A Quarrel on Cue”
   James Kelly, Queens’ College
“Reading 1923/4: Conversion/Proportion, Romanticism/Classicism, and Interdisciplinary Invective in Mrs. Dalloway and the Magazines”
   Katie Macnamara, Indiana University-Bloomington

4. Visual Modernisms I: Icon, Image-Text, Object
Chair: Sarah Blake (Loughborough University)
“Victorian Photographs, Bloomsbury Myth, and Virginia Woolf’s Freshwater”
   Emily Setina, Baylor University
“Pictures of Invisible People: Photography and Fictionality in Woolf’s Image-Texts”
   Sean Starke, University of Toronto
“Curating a Modernist Space: An Object-Centered Reading of To the Lighthouse”
   Lindsay Andrews, University of Nebraska-Lincoln (to be presented by Hilary Clark)

KEYNOTE ROUNDTABLE 1: THURSDAY 11:00-12:30pm
Interdisciplinarity and Institutional Practices
Moderator: Kathryn Holland (MacEwan University)
   Marlene Briggs, Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of British Columbia
   Jana Funke, Associate Research Fellow, Department of History, University of Exeter
   Elizabeth Hull, Dr. Robert L. Martin Chair in English Literature, Professor of English and Director of the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Bethany
SESSION 2: THURSDAY 1:30-3:00pm

5. Musical Readings of Woolf’s Aurality

Chair: Elicia Clements (York University)

“The Rhythms of Language in Woolf’s Later Novels”
   Elicia Clements, York University (Toronto)

“The Quality of Silence in Virginia Woolf”
   Brad Bucknell, University of Alberta

“The Opera in Between the Acts”
   Trina Thompson, Andrews University

“Between the Acts: Lyric, Music, and Drama in the Novel”
   Adriana Varga, Indiana University

6. War Then, War Now: Representational Strategies

Chair: Eleanor McNees (University of Denver)

“Writing in a Time of War: Virginia Woolf’s War Novels between Anamorphosis and the Void”
   Alessandra Capperdoni, Simon Fraser University

“Photography, History, and Memoir of the Spanish Civil War: Interdisciplinary Views by Virginia Woolf, Gerald Brenan, and Gamel Woolsey”
   Lolly J. Ockerstrom, Park University

“Vincent van Gogh, Virginia Woolf, and Old Shoes: A Cross-Cultural Iconography of Historical Trauma from the Great War to the Iraq War”
   Marlene A. Briggs, University of British Columbia

7. Woolf and Empire

Chair: Marie Lovrod (University of Saskatchewan)

“Behind that plain china off which we dined’: China/Chinese in Virginia Woolf’s Writings”
   Xiaoqin Cao, North University of China, P. R. China (presented by proxy)

“Chinese Eyes and Muddled Armenians: The Hogarth Press and British Racial Discourse”
   Adam Barrows, Carleton University

“Intimacy and Transnational Aesthetics in The Voyage Out”
   Wendy Knepper, Brunel University

8. Lucretius, Dante, Nietzsche, Woolf

Chair: Lisa L. Coleman (Southeastern Oklahoma State University)
“Goddesses, Atoms, Puddles and Waves: Lucretius in Woolf”
Patrizia Muscogiuri, University of Salford

“The Ambivalence of Descent: Dante as the Mirror of the Soul Personal and the Soul Social in Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway”
Robin J. Anderson, University of Ottawa

“Apollonian Illusion and Dionysian Reality in Mrs. Dalloway”
Michael Horacki, University of Saskatchewan

Chair: Jane Goldman (University of Glasgow)
“Picture after picture as if he sought the likeness of somebody whom he could not find’:
Framing Woolf, Stein, Moore, and Sitwell”
Lois J. Gilmore, Bucks County Community College

“But this image forged itself with the inevitability of lightning’: Post-Impressionism, Pictorialism, and Cubism in Virginia Woolf’s “Together and Apart”
Krista Laliberte, Florida State University

PLENARY 1: THURSDAY 3:30-4:30pm
“Multidisciplinary Woolf/Multiple Woolfs?”
Maggie Humm, Professor of Cultural Studies, School of Arts and Digital Industries, University of East London
Introduction: Keith Bell (University of Saskatchewan)

WELCOMING RECEPTION: THURSDAY 6:30-7:45pm

PERFORMANCE: THURSDAY 8:00-9:30pm
Emrys Jones / Greystone Theatre, University of Saskatchewan
Angel in the House by Eureka
directed by Charlie Peters; with Pamela Haig Bartley and Bob Wicks

FRIDAY 8 JUNE

SESSION 3: FRIDAY 9:00-10:30am

10. Journeys and Junkets
Chair: Terry Elkiss (Michigan State University)
“Virginia Woolf and Constantinople: The Persistence of Visual Memory”
Krystyna Colburn, Common Reader

“Into the Jaws of Whitechapel’: Virginia Woolf’s Passages through the East End”
Terry H. Elkiss, Michigan State University

“Flush and the Hero’s Journey: Woolf, the Monomyth, and Literary Archetypes”
M. Virginia Brackett, Park University

11. The State and the Body/Bodily States
Chair: Martin Winquist (University of Saskatchewan)
“The Materialized Object: Woolf’s Radical Resistance”
Catherine M. Ahart, Sonoma State University
“Body Movement and Modernist Dance in The Waves”
Yuko Ito, Chubu University

12. Woolf, Greece, and Rome
Chair: Ann Martin (University of Saskatchewan)
“Perspectives on Virginia Woolf from Students at the American College of Greece”
Leigh Harris, The American College of Greece
“Speaking Citizen to Citizen in a Time of War: Miss La Trobe’s Use of Parabasis in her Historical Pageant”
Kathleen Wall, University of Regina
“Virginia Woolf as Sophist: Going to the Roots of Woolf’s Multidisciplinarity”
Lisa L. Coleman, Southeastern Oklahoma State University

13. Markets and Material Desires
Chair: Graham Fraser (Mount Saint Vincent University)
“‘Full of Experiments and Reforms’: Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, and the Impossibility of Economic Modeling”
Alice Keane, University of Michigan
“Knowing Desire: Rational Materialism, Colonial Discourse and the Ethics of Abstraction”
Amy Smith, Lamar University

PLENARY 2: FRIDAY 11:00-12:00noon
“‘Time has Whizzed Back an Inch or Two on Its Reel’: Virginia Woolf, Emily Carr, and To the Lighthouse”
Leslie K. Hankins, Professor of English, Cornell College
Introduction: Kathleen Wall (University of Regina)

IVWS BUSINESS LUNCH: FRIDAY 12:00-1:30PM

SESSION 4: FRIDAY 1:30-3:00pm
“The Thing Itself: Text, Book, and Material Culture. Virginia Woolf and the Creative Industry of Interpretation”
Suzanne Bellamy, University of Sydney
“Virginia Woolf, the Occupy Movement, Transparency, and ‘Truthiness’: Staying ‘Outside’ and Relevant”
Judith Allen, Kelly Writers House, University of Pennsylvania
“Sunflower Suture: Disseminating the Garden in The Years”
Elisa Kay Sparks, Clemson University

15. Institutional Responses to Trauma, Then and Now
“A Healing Centre of One’s Own: Positioning Woolf’s Legacy with Respect to Sustainable Social Responses to Child Abuse”
Karen Wood, University of Saskatchewan
Marie Lovrod, University of Saskatchewan

16. Pedagogical Practices: Woolf in the Classroom
Chair: Kimberly Coates (Bowling Green State University)
“Learning From Virginia Woolf: What Teachers Say”
Beth Rigel Daugherty, Otterbein University
“Capacious Hold-alls of Their Own: Using Virginia Woolf’s Diary in a Diary- and Memoir- Writing Course”
Drew Shannon, College of Mount St. Joseph

17. Perspectives on Re/Production, Re/Purposing, Re/Definition
Chair: Susan Wegener (Southern Connecticut State University)
“Mother as Other: Ambiguous Mother Figures in Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf”
Heather Brady, Southern Connecticut State University
“Desiring Statues in Jacob’s Room”
Vara Neverow, Southern Connecticut State University
“Ambivalent Assimilation: The Jewish Self in the Writings of Woolf and Amy Levy”
Susan Wegener, Southern Connecticut State University

18. Creative Practices: Woolf as Inspiration
Chair: Lolly J. Ockerstrom (Park University)
“Drawing as Thinking: A Visual Response to To the Lighthouse”
Sarah Blake, Loughborough University
“Notes on The Waves”
Alan Reed, Novelist
“An Art Student’s Journey through Bloomsbury”
Maria Tedesco, College of Mount St. Joseph

Chair: Ann Martin (University of Saskatchewan)
“Woolf the Bloodthirsty Poetry Theorist”
Emily Kopley, Stanford University
“Mystical Gibberish or Renegade Discourse?: Poetic Language According to Orlando”
Christopher Brown, Saddleback College
“Woolf’s Interdisciplinary Dogs: Canine Aesthetics and the (Gender) Politics of Creativity”
Jane Goldman, University of Glasgow

COMMUNITY FORUM 1: FRIDAY 3:30–4:30pm
Access to Education
Moderator: Aloys Fleishmann (AIDS Saskatoon)
Kathleen Makela, Manager, Aboriginal Students’ Centre, University of
Saskatchewan
Dianne Miller, Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan
Dara Semchyshen, Adult Literacy Coordinator, READ Saskatoon
Roy Sondershausen, Principal, E. D. Feehan Catholic High School
Lisa Wilson, Director, Gabriel Dumont Institute
Garnet Woloschuk, Education and Resource Coordinator, Avenue Community Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity

PLENARY 3: FRIDAY 4:45-5:45pm
“Waving to Virginia”
Brenda R. Silver, Mary Brinsmead Wheelock Professor Emerita at Dartmouth College
Introduction: Hilary Clark (University of Saskatchewan)

RECEPTION AND POETRY READING: FRIDAY 7:00-10:00pm
Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon
Address by Kristina Fagan, Assistant Dean, College of Arts and Science, Aboriginal Affairs
Poetry Reading by Louise Halfe: 8:00-9:00pm
Introduction by Nancy Van Styvendale, Department of English, University of Saskatchewan

SATURDAY 9 JUNE

SESSION 5: SATURDAY 9:00-10:30am
20. Pulling Back the Covers at the Hogarth Press: Reading Lists, Genres, and Rituals
Chair: Diane Gillespie (Washington State University)
“Pulling Back the Covers: Virginia Woolf’s Undiscovered ‘Bedde’s Head’ Reading Lists”
Alice Staveley, Stanford University
“No One Wants Biography’: The Hogarth Press Classifies Orlando”
Claire Battershill, University of Toronto
“There Goes the Bride: Virginia Woolf, Julia Strachey, and the Hogarth Press”
Diane F. Gillespie, Washington State University

21. Navigating Domestic Space, Negotiating Social Norms
Chair: Catherine M. Ahart (Sonoma State University)
“Party Politics: The Convergence of Public Roles and Private Spaces at Woolf’s Parties”
Mandy Elliott, University of Saskatchewan
“Conformity, Transgression, and ‘Moments of Being’: Habitus in Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse”
Illya Nokhrin, University College London
“Virginia Woolf and Architecture: The Gendered Implications of Partitioning”
Katie Thorsteinson, University of Manitoba
*Chair: Elisa Kay Sparks (Clemson University)*  
“Writing Nature in *Night and Day*”  
Diana L. Swanson, Northern Illinois University  
“One Must be Scientific’: Natural History and Ecology in *Mrs. Dalloway*”  
Sarah Dunlap, Ohio State University  
“And again mutton for dinner’: Meat and Subjectivity in *The Waves*”  
Vicki Tromanhauser, SUNY New Paltz

23. Critical Disability and Woolf Studies: Interrogating the Normative  
*Chair: Marlene Briggs (University of British Columbia)*  
“Albert’s ‘Tradition’: Locating Virginia Woolf’s Disabled Subjects”  
Lisa Griffin, St. Andrews University  
“The law is on the side of the normal’: Virginia Woolf as Crip Theorist”  
Madelyn Detloff, Miami University  
“Improper Bodies: Seeing and Being Seen in *Mrs. Dalloway*”  
Barbara Lonnquist, Chestnut Hill College

24. War and Reconciliation: *Three Guineas*  
*Chair: Jean Mills (John Jay College, CUNY)*  
“Turning Activism Outside-In: Practical Applications of *Three Guineas* and the Outsiders’ Society”  
Lisa Buchanan, University of Saskatchewan  
“Woolf, Schmitt, and the Possibility of a Private Politics”  
Catherine Rush, University of Georgia

25. Time, Light and Movement  
*Chair: Lois Gilmore (Bucks County Community College)*  
“Lighted Spheres: From Impressionism to Phenomenology in *Jacob’s Room* and *The Years*”  
Robin Adair, University of Saskatchewan  
“Time Passes: On Ruin and the Afterlife of Things”  
Graham Fraser, Mount St. Vincent University

SESSION 6: SATURDAY 11:00am-12:30pm  
*Chair: Wayne Chapman (Clemson University)*  
“The Woolfs in Print and Online: A University Press in Transition”  
Wayne K. Chapman, Clemson University Press  
Vara Neverow and Susan Wegener, Southern Connecticut State University

27. Ethical Aesthetics: Woolf’s Depictions of Space, Place, and Movement  
*Chair: Vicki Tromanhauser (SUNY New Paltz)*  
“Virginia Woolf and the Ethical Writing of Place”
Bonnie Kime Scott, San Diego State University
“The Ethic-Suffused Spatial Aesthetic of Mrs. Dalloway”
Brenda S. Helt, Independent Scholar
“Performing Feminism, Transmitting Affect: Isadora Duncan, Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Movement”
Kimberly Coates, Bowling Green State University

28. Science, Art, and Mind
Chair: Melba Cuddy-Keane (University of Toronto)
“Relativity and Quantum Theory in Virginia Woolf’s The Waves”
Ian Ettinger, The Graduate Center, CUNY
“Pattern and Polysemy: Virginia Woolf’s Mathematical Generality”
Jocelyn Rodal, University of California - Berkeley

29. Self, Subjectivity, and Community
Chair: Gillian Phillips (Nipissing University)
“Dispersed are We’: Performance and Community in Between the Acts”
Allan Pero, University of Western Ontario
“Affectional Ambiguity in Woolf’s Night and Day”
Paul Graves, University of Ottawa
“Let me then create you’: Narrating Self and Subject in Woolf’s Novels”
Kyle Robertson, University of British Columbia

30. Influences I: Woolf’s Legacies in the Works of Others
Chair: Gabrielle McIntire (Queen’s University)
“American Variations on Virginia Woolf: Alice Walker’s The Temple of My Familiar and Robin Lippincott’s Mr. Dalloway”
Pi-hua Ni, Department of Foreign Languages, National Chiayi University, Taiwan
“Thinking Back Through Brazilian Mothers”
Maria Aparecida de Oliveira, Unesp - Brazil and University of Winnipeg

CONFERENCE PLANNING LUNCH: SATURDAY 12:30-1:30pm

SESSION 7: SATURDAY 1:30-3:00pm
31. Bringing Woolf Online
Pamela L. Caughie, Loyola University, Chicago
Mark Hussey, Pace University

32. Animal, Vegetable, Mineral
Chair: Bonnie Kime Scott (San Diego State University)
“Tempus fugit: Eliding Species Barriers in Virginia Woolf’s Between the Acts”
K. S. A. Brazier-Tompkins, University of Saskatchewan
“Unexpected Allegiances: Science and Art in the Work of Roger Fry and the Friendship of William Bankes and Lily Briscoe”
Christina Alt, University of Sydney
Catherine Hollis, UC Berkeley Extension

33. Boundaries: Drawn, Redrawn, Redefined
Chair: Allan Pero (University of Western Ontario)
“Excepting Septimus, Of Course: Normalizing the Body in Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway”
Martin Winquist, University of Saskatchewan
“Molecularizing Gender: The Becoming-woman of Septimus Warren Smith and Orlando. A Deleuzo-Guattarian Approach to Woolf”
Dolors Ortega, University of Barcelona
“Virginia Woolf’s Heart of Darkness and Deleuzo-Guattarian De/territorialization: Fear, Desire and the Aesthetics of Becoming”
Laci Mattison, Florida State University

34. To “Think Peace into Existence”: Woolf’s Global Pacifism
“Endless War/Perpetual Peace: Virginia Woolf’s Three Guineas and the Formation of Peace Studies as a Discipline”
Jean Mills, John Jay College, CUNY
“Q. And babies? A. And babies: On Pacifism, Visual Trauma, and the Body Heap”
Conor Tomás Reed, The Graduate Center, CUNY (presented by proxy)
“Virginia Woolf’s Peace Witness: Three Guineas and Spanish Civil War Pacifism”
J. Ashley Foster, The Graduate Center, CUNY

35. Leonard Woolf: Emphatically Not a Stick
Chair: Terry Elkiss (Michigan State University)
“Globalization, Interdisciplinarity, and Inter-Connectivity: Leonard Woolf, the Hogarth Press, and Kenya”
Jeanne Dubino, Appalachian State University
“Emphatically Not a Stick: Historiography of Depictions of Leonard Woolf”
Zachary J. Hacker, College of Mount St. Joseph
“The Hotel at the End of the Universe: The Woolves Take on the Barbarians”
Steve Putzel, Pennsylvania State University

36. Influences II: Receptions and Relations Across Divides and Over Time
Chair: Wayne Chapman (Clemson University)
“Reading A Room of One’s Own in the Era of Lady Gaga: Changing Feminisms, Changing Responses to Virginia Woolf”
Abby Mooney, McGill University
“‘Your First Book Started It’: A Room of One’s Own and The Note Books of a Woman Alone”
Ella Ophir, University of Saskatchewan
“Translating Canons, Canonical Translation: Virginia Woolf in Taiwan”
Ken-fang Lee, Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation, Taiwan
COMMUNITY FORUM 2: SATURDAY 3:30-4:30pm
Addressing the Legacy of Sexual Violence
Moderator: Marie Green (Women's Studies Research Unit, University of Saskatchewan)
Elizabeth Geti, Coordinator of Youth Programs, Saskatoon Open Door Society
Don Meikle, Director of EGADZ
Bruce Wood, Saskatoon Men's Resource Centre

PLENARY 4: SATURDAY 4:45-5:45pm
“The most unaccountable of machinery’: The Orlando Project Produces a Textbase of One’s Own”
Susan Brown, Orlando Project Director; Associate Professor, School of English and Theatre, University of Guelph
Patricia Clements, Orlando Project Creator; Professor Emerita of English, University of Alberta
Isobel Grundy, Orlando Project Creator; Professor Emerita of English, University of Alberta
Introduction: Lisa Vargo (University of Saskatchewan)

RECEPTION AND CONFERENCE BANQUET: SATURDAY 6:30 – 11:00pm
Delta Bessborough Hotel, Saskatoon

IVWS Reception: 6:30-7:15
Address by Peter Stoicheff, Dean of Arts and Science, University of Saskatchewan

Banquet: 7:15-11:00pm
“On Not Knowing Greek and On Not Knowing Greek Insolvency”
Len Findlay, Department of English, University of Saskatchewan

Readings by the IVWS Players
Performance of “Interpretation of ‘Professions for Women’” by students from Walter Murray Collegiate: McKenna Ramsay, Zaq Kent, Mackcilla Madraga,
Michelle McGaffin, Taylor Stern, Zabrina Ferrier, Joel Reimer, Bronwyn Edwards

SUNDAY 10 JUNE

SESSION 8: SUNDAY 9:00-10:30am
37. Non-Causal Connections
Chair: Ella Ophir (University of Saskatchewan)
“Things Fall Together: Synchronicity and Virginia Woolf”
Elizabeth Winkler, Stanford University
“The Meaning of ‘Meanwhile’: Depicting Simultaneity in The Voyage Out and The Years”
Emily Fridlund, University of Southern California
“Mrs. Dalloway’s Colours”
Alyson Brickey, University of Toronto
38. Modernist Contexts, Conversing Modernists
Chair: Kathryn Holland (MacEwan University)
“‘Vociferating through the megaphone’: Performing the Sitwells in Between the Acts”
Gyllian Phillips, Nipissing University
“Virginia Woolf and the Flying Princess”
Evelyn Haller, Doane College
“Imaging Persia: Photography in Vita Sackville-West’s Twelve Days: An Account of a Journey through the Bakhtiari Mountains of South-Western Persia”
Kathryn Holland, MacEwan University
“The Change?: Examining Intersex and Eugenics in Virginia Woolf’s Orlando”
Katelyn Dykstra Dykerman, University of Manitoba

39. Religion and Secularity
Chair: Jeanne Dubino (Appalachian State University)
“Virginia Woolf and Sacred Experience”
Gabrielle McIntire, Queen’s University
“Challenging the Family Script: Woolf, the Stephen Family and Victorian Evangelical Theology”
Jane de Gay, Leeds Trinity University College (presented by proxy)
“Sensibility and Parochiality: Reading Woolf with Spivak and Mahmood”
Benjamin D. Hagen, University of Rhode Island

40. Publishing Woolf
Chair: Shakti Brazier-Tompkins (University of Saskatchewan)
“The Believers: Writers Publishing for Readers”
Aurelea Mahood, Capilano University
“Redefining Woolf for the 1990’s: Producing and Promoting the Definitive Collected Edition”
Elizabeth Willson Gordon, Simon Fraser University

PLENARY 5: SUNDAY 11:00-12:00noon
“A variable breeze': Virginia Woolf and the Climates of Literature”
Alexandra Harris, Lecturer and Director of Graduate Studies, School of English, University of Liverpool
Introduction: Maggie Humm (University of East London)

KEYNOTE ROUNDTABLE 2: SUNDAY 1:30-3:00pm
Interdisciplinarity and Pedagogical Practices
Moderator: Kathryn Holland (Grant MacEwan University)
Pamela L. Caughie, Professor and Graduate Program Director, English Department, Loyola University, Chicago
Jeanne Dubino, Professor, Department of English and Women’s Studies and Global Studies, Appalachian State University
Aurelea Mahood, Assistant Professor, Department of English and Liberal Studies Degree Convener, Capilano University
Allan Pero, Associate Professor and Chair of Undergraduate Studies, Department of English, University of Western Ontario
Jane Goldman, Reader in English Literature, University of Glasgow
Helen Wussow, Associate Professor of English and Dean of Continuing Studies, Simon Fraser University

AN EVENING OF MUSIC AND FILM: 7:00-10:00pm
Broadway Theatre, Saskatoon

The Jared Tehse Trio: 7:00-7:45pm
Jared Tehse—piano
Nevin Buehler—bass
Mackenzie Usher—drums

Introduction to Sally Potter’s Orlando: 8:00-8:15pm
Allan Pero, University of Western Ontario

Orlando: 8:15-9:50pm
Angel in the House

a play by Eureka

directed by Charlie Peters

with
Pamela Haig Bartley
and
Bob Wicks

5-9 June, 2012
Emrys Jones Theatre
UofS Campus

Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Woolf

7-10 June, 2012 - University of Saskatchewan