

Virginia Woolf Miscellany

NUMBER 101

Fall 2023

To the Readers:

Woolf's Twenty-First-Century Academia

This issue emerges from the International Virginia Woolf Society panel with the same title at the 2022 MLA convention and offers feminist pedagogical interventions into our current and future undergraduate classrooms. As academics, we have an opportunity to create what Woolf envisioned in *Three Guineas* [TG] as a totally novel version of higher education in the twenty-first century, that of “an experimental college, an adventurous college” (TG 43):

It should teach the art 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 specialise, but to combine. It should explore the ways in which mind and body can be made to cooperate; discover what new combinations make good wholes in human life. (TG 43)

Woolf's humanistic perspective on life and art is emulated in many of our approaches to teaching; she encourages collaborative discovery and meaning-making when it comes to future social outcomes of art and education. Woolf's work also suggests a new lens through which we might view the ever-evolving field of literary modernism. Strictly canonical Modernism engages in the predominant ‘master narratives’ of early twentieth-century transatlantic history which reinforce gender, race, sexuality, and class conventions. Yet this is only a part of a wider, richer, more innovative, increasingly interdisciplinary—and thereby potentially accessible and relevant—story of modernism that continues to be told. The essays in this special topic explore an impressive assemblage of activist feminist learning strategies that are mutually generative for instructors, common readers, professors, scholars, and students alike—offering us those “new combinations [that] make good wholes in human life” (TG 43).

Further, this selection of essays seeks to extend Woolf's insights into our own pedagogical practices, building on the ideas of such scholars and writers as Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, Asali Solomon, Madelyn Detloff, Zadie Smith, Paulo Freire, Jane Marcus, Natasha Brown, Sara Ahmed, Susan Stanford Friedman, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and bell hooks, among others. The issue emphasizes Woolfian pedagogy, and, in so doing, the essays propose a renewed pedagogy that opens us to possible ways of moving forward—whether that be from places of precarity or positions of privilege—to envision a new kind of higher education. Many essays here discuss how we can create more inclusive and collaborative learning spaces which resist the types of authoritative preaching that Woolf



You can access all issues of the
Virginia Woolf Miscellany
online in PDF format on WordPress at
<https://virginiawoolfmiscellany.wordpress.com/>

Virginia Woolf Miscellany
Editorial Board and Editors
page 5

VWM Guidelines for Submissions and
Editorial Policies
page 7

INTERNATIONAL VIRGINIA WOOLF
SOCIETY COLUMN
page 76 (continues on page 75)

IVWS OFFICERS AND
MEMBERS-AT-LARGE
2024-2026
page 75

Table of Contents
page 17

33rd Annual Conference on
Virginia Woolf
Woolf, Modernity, Technology
California State University, Fresno
Organizer: J. Ashley Foster
6-9 June 2024
page 6

CFPs for the *VWM*:
Issue 103
Virginia Woolf and George Eliot
Fall 2024
Guest Editor: Charlotte Fiehn
page 13

Issue 104
Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence
Spring 2025
Guest Editor: Benjamin Hagen
page 13

Issue 105
Virginia Woolf and Failure
Fall 2025
Guest Editor: Mary Wilson
page 13

To propose a special topic or
request copies, please contact
Vara Neverow at
neverow1@southernct.edu



condemns yet are still often found in academe. As Beth Rigel Daugherty reminds us in her plenary from the virtual 2022 Woolf Conference organized by Amy Smith, Woolf “cared about education, teaching, learning, reading, and writing, and she modeled a pedagogy, one we might call ethical” (“On the Ethics”).

The writers in this collection consider how to blend the personal and the professional in a manner that describes the ethics of teaching at the college level from a Woolfian feminist perspective. Accordingly, “Woolf's Twenty-First-Century Academia” speaks to how we might put feminism into practice through our scholarly and pedagogical work. Woolf's thoughts on pedagogy anchor this issue, although the essays provide further discussion about how and why we teach feminist and modernist works in our humanities classes at various types of institutions with various undergraduate audiences while at various stages of our careers in the profession. The essays address topics such as: the reconsideration of Woolfian-inspired pedagogies; the Society of Outsiders; feminist, ethical, anti-racist, and anti-fascist commitments beyond elite academia; teaching first-generation college students and students with disabilities; teaching non-English majors in STEM-focused institutions; the feminist knowledge commons for common readers; Woolfian communities; and intersectional approaches to teaching feminism and modernism.

Our first essay is Beth Rigel Daugherty's “Taking Virginia Woolf Seriously: What Do/Should We Do?” (18). Here she has gathered apt examples of teachers and professors who work to take seriously the pedagogical ideas Woolf suggests in her essays. As a recently retired professor, Daugherty has been thinking about how Woolf's pedagogy permeated her teaching, no matter the course or student population. This essay weaves together highlights of collaborative experiments and practices our forerunners and colleagues have tried in the past; resources and challenges provided by current innovative projects; and lessons Woolf taught her during her teaching journey. Ultimately, Daugherty points toward a practical proposal for how we might make future collaborations and combinations more productive as we work together to envision and build a new college.

The second piece is Alice D. Keane's “Virginia Woolf, Race and ‘Restorying’ in the Twenty-First-Century Classroom,” which examines “how a cross-generational and intersectional lens that draws upon the recent work of transatlantic Black Anglophone women writers has the potential to offer new perspectives on Bloomsbury's modernism” (20). The texts Keane examines center Black characters, and thereby interrogate, disrupt,

and repair the aporias of Bloomsbury's canonical narratives, decolonize modernist culture, and present opportunities for more inclusive, culturally relevant ways of teaching modernism in the twenty-first-century classroom.

Next, Erica Gene Delsandro and Jennifer Mitchell in "The Uses of Anger...in Pedagogy: Reading Woolf through Lorde" take their own intersectional development as Woolfians as a case study for thinking about feminist pedagogy. They ask how we might reframe Woolf's relevance and activism in our classrooms today and in the future, where students are "more attuned to intersectional concerns and racial politics than we were during our early feminist coming of age" and thus find Woolf to be "cautious and short-sighted, born of privilege and colonialism; her polite disagreements leave our students cold" (22). Part of their answer is to incorporate Audre Lorde's bolder political and personal analyses. Pairing Woolf and Lorde not only approaches Woolf anew, but it also reconfigures her ongoing pertinence while centralizing Lorde in the feminist canon.

In "Teaching CRT with the *Dreadnought Hoax* and *Orlando*," Rachel V. Trousdale takes a cue from Jane Marcus's *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race* in order to teach Critical Race Theory in her sophomore-level literary theory class. Here she offers "a recipe for classroom conversations" (24) which simultaneously serve three vital purposes: "introducing students to a major body of theory; teaching them how to use theory to analyze literature; and giving them tools to talk about issues of race and racism more broadly." Drawing together important CRT texts and concepts with an exploration of *Orlando*, Trousdale is able to "model the importance of Critical Race Theory in reading white authors, and contest the idea that whiteness is somehow race-neutral" (26).

What follows is Dominique Townsend's essay, "A Modernist Pedagogy for the Twenty-First Century: Embracing Woolf's Unorthodoxy and Student Agency." Here Townsend claims that:

Woolf's model for using 'unauthorized' and unorthodox sources to find the 'truth' of human experiences, [...] can help us create a more inclusive environment for all, and more effectively interject modernism into this moment of DEI debates, academic precarity, and the resurgence of global fascism. (27)

If we are to continue to teach modernism in the twenty-first century, we will have to try new methods of instruction that account for the ways in which contemporary students gather information from and experience the world. Thus,

by allowing our students more instrumentality in their education, and being willing to probe texts still considered 'unreliable' and 'non-academic' [...], we may yet be able to shape a new pedagogy [...] and reveal the relevance of the revolutionary modernist spirit for our current moment. (28)

In Erin Elizabeth Greer's essay, "Outsider Pedagogy and its Paradoxes," she articulates an outlook on working in twenty-first-century academia (see Channing 11) which strives to create inclusive, collaborative, democratic, and communitarian learning spaces, resisting the competitive and self-promoting ethos Woolf condemns. Greer elucidates the paradoxes that current and future instructors must contend with by connecting strands of critical university studies to a brief reading of Zadie Smith's novel *On Beauty* and concludes on an optimistic note. She claims that, by creating classroom collaboration in provisional "dwelling-places" (*The Waves* [TW] 228), we can transform institutions constituted by exclusions.

Next, we have Christopher Westrate, with "Common Reader, Common Classroom." His essay is informed both by research and by personal reflection on his two decades serving as unconventional teacher and executive director for an experimental private non-profit educational

organization. Here he delineates his own experiences in creating a "common classroom" in order to "provide principles for building a more humane and equitable pedagogy" (31) through engagement with Woolf. He explores the perennial and practical challenges faced by those who seek to facilitate alternatives to institutional education in the spirit of Woolf's ideals. Westrate also ends hopefully, arguing that, "The Common Classroom of common readers is a monument to a deeply relational and person-centered pedagogy, crowning each participant with agency and voice, elevating all voices to a meaningful harmony" (34).

Tonya Krouse's piece, "What Is a Woolfian? Teaching Woolf at 'The End of the English Major,'" follows. She suggests that Woolf's ideas about education, pedagogy, and a life of the mind show English Studies practitioners how to imagine a future for the study of literature that extends beyond departments of English and the major in English. For Krouse, the future of Woolf studies depends on attracting a generation of readers to Woolf who are more likely to pursue careers in professional writing, health, the sciences, technology, or other pre-professional fields than to follow in our footsteps as Woolfians. As a meditation on today's higher education landscape, Krouse turns to Woolf herself to escape the limiting orthodoxies of Woolfianism.

And finally, Laura Tscherry addresses Woolf's relationship to spaces and what it can teach us about the ethics and conditions of inclusive access in their essay, "No Gate, No Lock: Closed Doors in *A Room of One's Own*." Tscherry argues that today the anecdotes in *A Room of One's Own* reverberate through discussions of the 'hidden curriculum,' the "set of implicit academic and social practices, rules, and expectations that structure all learning and fundamentally shape academic achievement" (37) that disproportionately affects students from minoritized backgrounds and erects barriers to their full participation in academic spaces. Tscherry relies on feminist disability studies to argue that Woolf teaches us the importance of unlocking doors and creating spaces that are open to all.

In "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf speaks to the matrixial linkage between all of humanity, accessible through our participation in the arts and humanities: "From this I reach what I might call a philosophy [...] that we—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 [...] we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself" ("A Sketch of the Past" 73). This "philosophy" feels especially helpful to contemplate at this particularly precarious moment—an age where prejudice, racism, and fascism are on the rise around the globe. As this quote suggests, Woolf views aesthetics as a catalyst for equitable social action that might bring about harmony—even in the face of doubt or disempowerment, fear or fragmentation. If we engage deeply with the art we encounter and co-create, then we can continually reveal their power to make us see, think, and feel in new ways. If we can imagine the experience of another person by reading a novel, say, then this desire to bridge that gap between selves might be extended into our everyday interfaces with difference. Literature, then, helps us to become more empathic humans. The arts and humanities not only open individuals to the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of life, but also to the fact that we are always already living a common human experience. And as Woolf alludes to in this quote, as well as in her other writings, considering the ethical and aesthetic questions in which we engage today presents potent possibilities for understanding our shared past and, more importantly, our shared future.

We hope that this collection also inspires readers to think about Woolfian implications beyond undergraduate teaching, or link that to other kinds of teaching and power relations within academe. For instance, how might the feminist university respond to contemporary strains of fascism, war, or economic competition (within and beyond conventional universities)? What kinds of constraints and necessities emerge from the tension between Woolf's feminist vision of education and the available material supports for higher education? These are some of the questions

we hope readers will ponder and then organize their own ongoing academic pursuits around within their own spheres of influence. For now, please enjoy our version of “the thing itself”—this truly special collection on “Woolf’s Twenty-First-Century Academia”!

Emily M. Hinnov
Great Bay Community College

Works Cited

- Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006.
- Brown, Natasha. *Assembly*. New York: Little, Brown, 2021.
- Channing, Jill. “Woolf in the Community College.” *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 73 (2008): 11-14.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989.1 (1989): 139-67.
- Daugherty, Beth Rigel. “On the Ethics of Teaching: Virginia Woolf’s Essays.” “Virginia Woolf and Ethics. 31st Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf. 12 June 2022. Lamar University, Beaumont, TX. Virtual address.
- . *Virginia Woolf’s Apprenticeship: Becoming an Essayist*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2022.
- Detloff, Madelyn. “Iconic Shade and Other Professional Hazards of Woolf Scholarship.” *Women Making Modernism*. Ed. Erica Gene Delsandro. Gainesville: U of Florida P, 2020. 203-19.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary ed. New York: Continuum, 2000.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. “Virginia Woolf’s Pedagogical Scenes of Reading: *The Voyage Out*, *The Common Reader*, and Her ‘Common Readers’.” *Modern Fiction Studies* 38.1 (1992): 101-25.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Lorde, Audre. “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House.” *Sister Outsider*. 1984. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984/2007. 110-13.
- Marcus, Jane. *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race*. Rutgers: Rutgers UP, 1994.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992.
- Smith, Zadie. *On Beauty*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005.
- Solomon, Asali. *The Days of Afreketete*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One’s Own*. 1929. Annotated and with an Introduction by Susan Gubar. New York: Harcourt, 2005.
- . “A Sketch of the Past.” *Moments of Being*. 2nd ed. Ed. Jeanne Schulkind. Orlando: Harcourt, 1985. 61-158.
- . “The Art of Biography.” 1939. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Vol. 6: 1933-1941*. Ed. Stuart N. Clarke. London: The Hogarth Press, 2011. 181-89.
- . *The Second Common Reader*. 1929. New York: Harcourt, 1986.
- . *The Waves*. 1931. New York: Harvest, 1978.
- . *Three Guineas*. 1938. Annotated with an Introduction by Jane Marcus. Gen. ed. Mark Hussey. Orlando: Harvest/Harcourt, 2006.



Contributor Biographies

~ Retired from Otterbein University, Beth Rigel Daugherty taught there for 36 years where her courses included modernist English literature, Virginia Woolf, Appalachian literature, and general education courses thematically focused on reading for life and on Appalachian and Native American literature and culture. She co-edited, with Mary Beth Pringle, the MLA volume on teaching *To the Lighthouse* and has published on Virginia Woolf’s essays in edited collections, the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, and *Woolf Studies Annual*. Her *Virginia Woolf’s Apprenticeship: Becoming an Essayist* (Edinburgh UP) came out in

2022, and she is now hard at work on its sequel, *Virginia Woolf’s Essays: Being a Teacher*.

~ Erica Gene Delsandro is an Associate Professor in the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies at Bucknell University, where she teaches courses such as introduction to women’s and gender studies, Modernism on the Margins, History of Sexuality, and feminist literary theory. Her research interests include modernist women writers, feminist and gender studies, the gender politics of authorship, gender and lifewriting, as well as the gender politics of literary studies.

~ Erin Elizabeth Greer is an Assistant Professor of literature at the University of Texas at Dallas. She teaches and writes about modern and contemporary British and Anglophone literature, ordinary language philosophy, political philosophy, feminist theory, and critical new media studies. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Contemporary Literature*, *JML: Journal of Modern Literature*, *Camera Obscura*, and *Salmagundi*. Her first book, *Fiction, Philosophy and the Ideal of Conversation*, was published in 2023 by Edinburgh University Press.

~ Emily M. Hinnov is a Professor of English and the English program coordinator at Great Bay Community College, where she teaches college writing, literary modernism, gender and women’s studies, film studies, and British literature from *Beowulf* to Virginia Woolf. Her monograph, *Encountering Choran Community: Literary Modernism, Visual Culture, and Political Aesthetics in the Interwar Years*, was published in 2009. Her second book is a volume co-edited with Laurel Harris and Lauren M. Rosenblum called *Communal Modernisms: Teaching Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture in the Twenty-First-Century Classroom* (2013). She has published journal articles and book chapters on various modernist writers and artists, as well as pedagogy, and her most recent publications look at World War II era feminist resistance in the work of Woolf, Jessica Dismorr, and Elizabeth Bowen.

~ Alice D. Keane earned her Ph.D. in English Language and Literature from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 2014. Since 2015, she has been an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Queens College, CUNY. Her recent publications include: “‘Miserably Devaluated Currency’: Language, Economy, and Fascism in Christopher Isherwood’s *The Berlin Stories* and Virginia Woolf’s *The Years*,” published in the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*; “Love, Trauma and Memory in Recent Toni Morrison Scholarship,” published in *Orbit: A Journal of American Literature*; and “Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, and Art Between the Wars,” published in *Revista PHILIA | Filosofia, Literatura & Arte*.

~ Tonya Krouse is a Professor of English at Northern Kentucky University and serves as the Director of the Transformational Thinking for Community and Career Certificate Program, a humanities-focused pathway through general education that targets students pursuing pre-professional majors in STEM, health professions, and business. Her recent publications include the co-authored *Introducing English Studies* (Bloomsbury, 2020) and “Virginia Woolf in the Canon of Women’s Literature: Narrative Futures of the Feminist Novel” in *The Oxford Handbook of Virginia Woolf* (Oxford UP, 2022). She teaches courses in modern and contemporary literature, critical theory, and composition.

~ Jennifer Mitchell is currently Assistant Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Union College where she’s also an Associate Professor of English and Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies. At Union, she teaches courses including literature and sexuality, queer theory, global modernisms, Experimental Texts, Sex and Power, and Confronting the Canon: The Modernist Edition. She is currently working collaboratively on a book about reading postures, gender, and the academy. Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, she has two very charming cats and one not-so-charming-but-still-very-lovable cat.

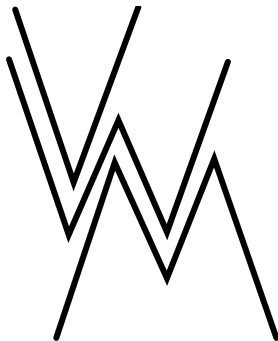
~ Dominique Townsend is a Ph.D. candidate in English at the University of Rochester. Her specialty is twentieth-century British and

Anglophone (African, Caribbean, South Asian) literature, which she examines for how representations of Black women haunt the text to inform our sense of the interconnectivity between past, present, and future and provide possible alternatives to the white time of modernity in which we live. She also teaches courses such as Gender and Anger, Studies in British Literature, and Women Rising: Global Women's Activism, as well as an introductory writing course, What Is Race?

~ Rachel V. Trousdale is a Professor of English at Framingham State University in Massachusetts. Her teaching and research interests include: British Literature since 1900, Transnational Fiction, Modernism, Comics, Science Fiction, and Fantasy. Her most recent publication is a book titled *Humor, Empathy, and Community in Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (Oxford UP, 2021).

~ Laura Tscherry is an international Ph.D. candidate and they teach undergraduate students at Indiana University. They have designed and taught writing courses on urban and domestic spaces, intimacy, and the politics of food, as well as literature courses on global short stories, life writing, and existentialism. Though they teach mostly non-majors, the courses include modernist texts in as many courses as possible. They always make space for teaching the hidden curriculum to all of their students.

~ Christopher Westrate is a doctoral student at the University of New Hampshire. He holds an M.A. from the University of Massachusetts, Boston where he studied Vladimir Nabokov's fiction. Chris taught literature and writing for many years at the secondary level and enjoyed serving as executive director of his program for over a decade. Interested in cultural flux, Chris studies modernist writers and culture. He is interested in how narrative writers spearhead societal shift during iconoclastic periods as well as how they repurpose outgoing semiotic systems to explore new vistas. His other interests include: rambles via paths and pavement, public coffee drinking, nonprofit leadership, teaching, and amateur snowboarding.



Many thanks to the International Virginia Woolf Society for its generous and continuing support of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*.



Be sure to check Paula Maggio's *Blogging Woolf* for the history of many, many things Woolfian and for much up-to-date information.
bloggingwoolf.wordpress.com

The Virginia Woolf Miscellany Online

All issues of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* are available at:
virginiawoolfmiscellany.wordpress.com

All issues are fully searchable in PDF format.

The current editorial guide to formatting for the *Miscellany* as well as the most recent issue are available directly on the website. All previous issues can be accessed through the links to the archives.

Two indexes of the *Miscellany* can be accessed at:
<https://virginiawoolfmiscellany.wordpress.com/indexes-of-the-virginia-woolf-miscellany/>

If you have questions, see an error, or wish to acquire a print version of an issue, please contact Vara Neverow at
neverowv1@southernct.edu

All issues to the present as well as those from Fall 1973 to Fall 2002 should be available in digital format through EBSCOhost's

Humanities International Complete and Literary Reference Center.

More recent issues are also available through

ProQuest Literature Online (LION) and Gale Group/Cengage.

Please do not republish, replicate, copy, or post any of the essays, poems, illustrations or images from the *Miscellany* without explicit permission from the Editors and the author.

If you are the author, then you are free to post and share your work (but you should not republish it elsewhere without notifying the Editors).



VIRGINIA WOOLF MISCELLANY

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS

Kristin Czarnecki, Independent Scholar
keczarnecki@gmail.com

Jeanne Dubino, Appalachian State University
dubinoja@appstate.edu

Lesley Higgins, York University (Toronto)
19higgins55@gmail.com

Mark Hussey, Pace University (Emeritus)
mhussey.emeritus@pace.edu or
markh102@gmail.com

Vara Neverow, Southern Connecticut State University
neverowv1@southernct.edu

EDITORS

Vara Neverow, Managing Editor
neverowv1@southernct.edu

Martin Brick
brickm@ohiodominican.edu

Charlotte Fiehn
cfiehn@utexas.edu

Celiese Lypka
celiese.lypka@umanitoba.ca

Patrizia Muscogiuri
p.muscogiuri@gmail.com

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

Karen Levenback
[kllevenback@att.net](mailto:klevenback@att.net)



MLA 2024
Philadelphia, PA
4-7 January 2024

57 - Rethinking Woolf and Race
Thursday, 4 January 2024
1:45 PM - 3:00 PM

Allied Organization: International Virginia Woolf Society
Presentations

Danell Jones, independent scholar,
“How Should One Read a Prank? Race and the *Dreadnought* Hoax”

Alice D. Keane, Queens C, City U of New York
“‘Restoring’ Virginia Woolf: Bloomsbury, Race,
and the Critical Reimagining of Woolf Studies”

Ryan Tracy, Knox C
“‘Inky Blackness’: Race and Writing in *Orlando*”

Rachel V. Trousdale, Framingham State U
“Teaching Critical Race Theory with *Orlando*
and the *Dreadnought* Hoax”

563 - One Hundred Years of “Mrs. Brown”: Revisiting Virginia Woolf’s “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown”

Saturday, 6 January 2024
3:30 PM - 4:45 PM
Special Session

For related material, visit mrbennettandmrsbrown.mla.hcommons.org/
Presider

Mary E. Wilson
U of Massachusetts, Dartmouth
Presentations

Mary E. Wilson, U of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, “‘A Season of Failures and Fragments’: Virginia Woolf, ‘Mrs. Brown,’ and the Queer Art of Failure”

Pamela Weidman, U of California, Berkeley, “Minimalist Character, Modernist Type: ‘Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown’ and ‘The Little Man at Chehaw Station’”

Matthew Cheney, Plymouth State U, “Mrs. Brown in a Spaceship: Woolf, Le Guin, and the Character of Fiction”

Beth Rigel Daugherty, Otterbein U, “Time Passes: Revisiting ‘The Whole Contention between Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Woolf, Revisited’”

Panels with Individual Papers on Virginia Woolf:
75 - Reading Matter: The Labor of Textual Analysis and Interpretation

Thursday, 4 January 2024
3:30 PM - 4:45 PM
Special Session

Paresh Chandra, Williams C, “Subjects by Negation: Premchand’s *Rangbhoomi* and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*”

86 - The Time of Festival in the Nineteenth Century

Thursday, 4 January 2024
3:30 PM - 4:45 PM

Marriott - Franklin 6 (Level 4)

Forum: *CLCS Romantic and 19th-Century*

Rachel Kravetz, U of Virginia, “Wreaths, Seasons, Cycles: Walter Pater and Virginia Woolf”

622 - Dramatic Expressions:
Theater as Celebration and Revolution in the Novel

Saturday, 6 January 2024
5:15 PM - 6:30 PM (virtual)
Special Session

Mark Deggan, Simon Fraser U, “‘The Voice That Was No One’s Voice’: Virginia Woolf’s Final Novel and the Performance of Fiction”



51th Annual Louisville Conference
on Literature and Culture Since 1900
February 20-21, 2024 (virtual) and February 23-25, 2024 (in person)
<https://www.thelouisvilleconference.com/home>

The International Virginia Woolf Society Panel

Monday, 19 February 2024
12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. (EST)

Chair: Matthew Biberman, University of Louisville

Amrita Chakraborti, Jadavpur University, Kolkata,
“Anti-Work Woolf: Virginia Woolf and Critiques of Waged Labor”

Meghna Dutta, Independent Scholar
“Women with Diamond Minds”: A Study of the Inter-generational Evolution of Creative Women in *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf and *Subornolota* and *Bokulkotha* by Ashapura Devi”

Tetyana Kasima, University of Tartu,
“Windows as Heterotopic Thresholds in Virginia Woolf’s Short Stories Collection, *A Haunted House*”

Amar Roy, Presidency University, Kolkata
“Finding Mrs. Brown: Memory, Emotion, and Narratives in Virginia Woolf’s Approach to Art”



**Call for Submissions for
the International Virginia Woolf Society
Annual Angelica Garnett Undergraduate Essay Prize**

The International Virginia Woolf Society is pleased to host the Annual Undergraduate Essay Competition in honor of Virginia Woolf and in memory of Angelica Garnett, writer, artist, and daughter of Woolf’s sister, Vanessa Bell.

For this competition, undergraduate essays can be on any topic pertaining to the writings of Virginia Woolf. Essays should be between 2000 and 2500 words in length, including notes and works cited, with an original title of the entrant’s choosing. Essays will be judged by the officers of the International Virginia Woolf Society: Benjamin D. Hagen, President; Amanda Golden, Vice-President; Susan Wegener, Secretary-Treasurer; and Catherine Hollis, Historian-Bibliographer. The winner will receive \$400 and have the essay published in a subsequent issue of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*.

Please send essays in the latest version of Word.

All entries must be received by 1 July 2024.

To receive an entry form, please contact Ben Leubner at leubnerb@gmail.com



**Call for Proposals: Annotated Woolf
Clemson University Press**

Molly Hoff’s annotated guide to *Mrs. Dalloway* (Clemson, 2009) offers multiple entry points for students first approaching Woolf’s celebrated and often misunderstood novel. Hoff’s masterful annotations provide a guide for in-class student readings as well as points of departure for new scholarship.

Clemson University Press seeks proposals for complementary annotated guides to *Jacob’s Room*, *The Waves*, and *A Room of One’s Own*, works that are commonly taught at the undergraduate level.

For additional details or to propose an annotated guide, please contact Alison Mero (amero@clemsun.edu), director of Clemson University Press.



“Woolf, Modernity, Technology”

The 33rd Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf

Organized by J. Ashley Foster

woolf2024@mail.fresnostate.edu

California State University, Fresno

June 6-9, 2024

REGISTRATION:

Registration for the 33rd International Conference on Virginia Woolf: Woolf, Modernity, Technology is now live! To register to attend the conference, please go to: fresnostate.edu/woolf2024.

Early-bird rates apply through March 15. On March 16, rates go up. And...if you cannot travel to Fresno, you still can catch the keynote addresses and plenaries on Zoom! To register to view the Zoom sessions, check out our Zoom registration category at the conference website. You can register for individual plenaries at \$15 each or for all five plenaries at \$60.

In-person registration for the conference closes May 1.

Online registration for Zoom sessions closes June 1.

THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

- Jean Moorcroft Wilson (in conversation with Catherine Hollis, Vara Neverow, and Drew Shannon)
- Sonita Sarker
- Ane Thon Knutsen
- Jane Goldman
- Fresno University State poets, Brynn Saito and Mai Der Vang
- Paul Saint-Amour
- Emelia Raczkowska

FEATURED EVENTS:

- Modernist Technologies, a digital humanities and multi-modal student exhibition, in the center of downtown Fresno and Art Hop.
- Kew Gardens: The Poetics of Technê, an interactive performative evening and cocktail party featuring Ane Thon Knutsen's art installation *Kew Gardens*, Jane Goldman's keynote address, and poetry by Brynn Saito and Mai Der Vang.
- The Saturday night banquet, featuring good food, comradery, and the Woolf Society Playsers.

THE EXCURSIONS:

Note: All excursions are booked on a “first-come, first served” basis. Seats for Yosemite and Grant Grove are limited, so register soon!

Pre-conference: Yosemite National Park (June 5)

Located in the central Sierra Nevada Mountains, the park is internationally recognized for its waterfalls. Yosemite is nearly 1,200 square miles of deep valleys, grand meadows, ancient sequoias, vast wildernesses, and much more. We will leave from Fresno State at 8:00 am and return at 7:00 pm. We will spend the day touring, and exploring the wonderful scenic views the park has to offer. Please register online.

Two Tastings at the Fresno State Winery

The Fresno State Winery is the nation's first full-production, commercially bonded university winery. It's a learning lab for Enology students at Fresno State and is a trusted brand for locally produced wine. The winery's fruits are mostly donated from highly acclaimed vineyards in Napa, Sonoma, and Amador Counties. All of Fresno State's wines are student-crafted right on the university's campus. A portion of the wine sales goes to support Fresno State Agriculture and the hands-on student learning on campus.

Post-conference: General Grant Grove (June 9)

Our post-conference excursion will include a half day trip to General Grant Grove, a section of the greater Kings Canyon

National Park located in Fresno County, California. It is one of the main attractions of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and is home to the second largest tree in the world. Over 1,500 years old, the General Grant Tree is one of the world's largest living trees, it was proclaimed “The Nation's Christmas Tree” by President Coolidge in 1926. Grant Grove offers a variety of trails that provide visitors with the opportunity to view these giant trees up close, enjoy walks through quiet meadows and creeks, and explore mixed conifer and sequoia forest.

TRAVEL AND LOGISTICS:

Please check out the travel and housing page at fresnostate.edu/woolf2024.

Conference goers can stay on campus for \$50 a night or at the Hilton Garden Inn for \$149 per night.

To register to stay on [campus](#), go to: https://commerce.cashnet.com/cashnet/static/storefront/fresnoem_english/catalog

To get the conference rates at the hotel, go to the housing website and reserve a room through the [blue reservation button](#) under the travel and housing section of the page.

Hope to see in you Fresno!



A Quick Overview of Publishing, Teaching, Reviewing, and Advertising with the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*

You can peruse previous issues of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* at: <https://virginiawoolfmiscellany.wordpress.com/>. The website provides access to all previous issues of the *Miscellany* in PDF format. All issues are searchable and can be downloaded.

Call for Submissions

You can submit a “Truly Miscellaneous” essay, poem, or drawing.

Writing a Book Review for the *Miscellany*

If you are interesting in writing a book review or recommending a book to review, you can contact Karen Levenback, the Book Review Editor, at kllevenback@att.net.

Teaching Woolf with the *Miscellany*

If you are interested in teaching using copies of the *Miscellany*, a number of issues are available in print format and can be mailed to you for free.

Sharing Notifications about Upcoming Events and Publications

If you want to alert Woolfians of events or share CFPs for conferences and the like, provide the information at least three months in advance if possible.

Advertising in the *Miscellany*

If you are interested in promoting something (a book or a business, for example), you can advertise in the *Miscellany* for free if you donate to the International Virginia Woolf Society at <https://v-woolf-society.com/membership/> and provide documentation for the donation.

For further information or if you have questions about these options, please contact Vara Neverow at neverow1@southernct.edu



Virginia Woolf Miscellany
GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS
AND EDITORIAL POLICIES

The *Miscellany* gladly considers very short contributions including scholarly articles, essays, poems, fiction, notes and queries as well as line drawings and photographs.

The *Miscellany* considers work that has been previously published elsewhere; however, the editor(s) and guest editor(s) must be notified at the time of submission that a similar or closely related work was published originally elsewhere. The prior publication must also be explicitly cited in the newly published submission. Any permissions to republish must be provided by the author.

CFPs

If you are responding to a call for papers for a themed issue, the submission should be sent directly to the Guest Editor.

Miscellaneous Submissions

Even when individual issues are themed, the *Miscellany* accepts submissions unrelated to the theme for the section titled "Truly Miscellaneous." Such submissions should be sent to the Managing Editor, Vara Neverow (rather than to the Guest Editor) at neverowv1@southernct.edu.

Guidelines for Submissions

Submissions should be no longer than 2500 words at maximum and shorter articles are strongly preferred. Articles should be submitted electronically, in .doc or .docx MS Word format in the style of the 7th edition of the MLA Handbook published in 2009 (and not subsequent iterations). For a copy of the current *Miscellany* style guide, go to the online version of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*. Note that, while previously published work may be submitted for consideration, the original publication must be acknowledged at the time of submission (see above).

Editing Policies

The Editors reserve the right to edit all submissions for length and to correct errors. If time permits, contributors will be consulted about changes. Note that once a submission has been accepted, it cannot be withdrawn and belongs to the *Miscellany*.

Permissions

Contributors are responsible for obtaining permissions related to copyrights and reproductions of materials. Contributors must provide the Editors with original written documentation authorizing the publication of the materials.

Reimbursement for Permissions

The Editors will assist contributors to the best of their ability with regard to permissions for publication, including costs of up to \$50 per item. However, the Editors have the option to decline to publish items or to pay for items. The Editors will consider requests to publish more than one item per article or more than five items per issue but will be responsible for funding items only at their own discretion.

Publication Policies

Submissions accepted for publication may be published in both print format and electronic format.

Note: The Editors and the Editorial Board take no responsibility for the views expressed in the contributions selected for publication.

Rights of Publication

The *Miscellany* retains all rights for future uses of work published herein. The contributor may, with the express permission of the Editorial Board of the *Miscellany*, use the work in other contexts. The contributor may not, however, sell the subsidiary rights of any work the contributor has published in the *Miscellany*. If the contributor is granted permission and does use the material elsewhere, the contributor must acknowledge prior publication in the *Miscellany*.



THE IVWS & VWS ARCHIVE INFORMATION

<http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/special/F51ivwoolfsocietyfonds.htm>
http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/collections/special_collections/f51_intl_v_woolf_society/

The archive of the IVWS and the VWS has a secure and permanent home at E. J. Pratt Library, Victoria University, University of Toronto.

Below is the finding aid for the IVWS archival materials:

<http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/special/F51ivwoolfsocietyfilelist.htm>

[As a lexical point of interest, professional archivists use the term "archival" to describe records that have been appraised as having enduring value or the storage facility where they are preserved. For example, when we call a record "archival," we generally refer to where it is housed; depending on context, the term may be used to refer to the valuation ("enduring value") of such a record.]

With regard to such items as correspondence, memorabilia, and photographs,

contact the Archival Liaison,
Karen Levenback,
either at klevenback@att.net
or by surface mail:

Karen Levenback, Archival Liaison/IVWS Archive,
304 Philadelphia Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912.



The Woolf Salon Project

<https://sites.google.com/view/woolfsalonproject/home>

Founded in 2020 and hosted by Benjamin Hagen, Shilo McGiff, Drew Shannon, and Amy Smith, the Salon features discussions about Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury and other related matters.

Proposals for future Woolf Salons can be posted using the following webpage:

<https://sites.google.com/view/woolfsalonproject/call-for-hosts>

The email address for the Salon is:
woolfsalonproject@gmail.com

You can follow the Salon on Instagram: [@woolfsalonproject](https://www.instagram.com/woolfsalonproject)



How to Join the International Virginia Woolf Society

<http://sites.utoronto.ca/IVWS/>

or

<https://v-woolf-society.com/>

To join, update membership, or donate to the International Virginia Woolf Society, you can use the PayPal feature available online at the IVWS website at <http://sites.utoronto.ca/IVWS/how-to-joindonate.html>

or

<https://v-woolf-society.com/membership/>

(you can also download the membership form from the IVWS website and mail to the surface address provided).

Regular 12-month membership:

\$35

Student or part-time employed 12-month membership:

\$15

Regular five-year membership:

\$130

Retiree five-year membership:

\$60

Members of the Society receive a free subscription to the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* and updates from the IVWS Newsletter. Members also have access online to an annual Bibliography of Woolf Scholarship. The electronic IVWS distribution list provides early notification of special events, including information about the Annual (International) Conferences on Woolf and MLA calls for papers, as well as access to electronic balloting and electronic versions of newsletters.

The IVWS is now registered as a U.S. non-profit organization. U.S. members' dues and donations are tax-deductible.



VIRGINIA WOOLF SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Membership Information:

virginiawoolfsociety.org.uk/membership/

Membership of the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain entitles you to three free issues annually of the *Virginia Woolf Bulletin*, free regular email updates with news and information, and priority registration and discounts on events such as:

Birthday Lecture—AGM (free to members only) with Conference—Study Days and Weekends—Online Talks (free to members only)

Subscriptions for the year ending 31 December 2024 are:

£10 for UK-based students

£15 outside Europe

£25 UK, £30 Europe and £35 outside Europe

Five-year memberships £100 UK, £130 Europe and £150 outside Europe

Lifetime membership (beginning 2024)

£350 UK

£450 Rest of World

Memberships starting part-way through the year and continuing until December of the following year are also available

The Society is always delighted to welcome new members.

If you wish to join, please email Lindsay Martin at membershipvwsbg@gmail.com for a membership form and information about how to pay, or write to:

Membership Secretary

Lindsay Martin

membershipvwsbg@gmail.com

or post it to him at:

12 Elm Park Road, London N21 2HN.

(PLEASE WAIT FOR A REPLY BEFORE PAYING.)

Web: virginiawoolfsociety.org.uk

Facebook: @VWSGB

Twitter: @VirginiaWoolfGB

Instagram: @virginiawoolfsociety



Société d'Études Woolfiennes

The Société d'Études Woolfiennes (SEW) is a French society which promotes the study of Virginia Woolf, the Bloomsbury Group and Modernism. It was founded in 1996 to develop Woolf studies in France and to create further links between French specialists and their counterparts abroad. It welcomes academics and students in the fields of English and Comparative Literature who share a strong interest in the different aspects of Virginia Woolf's work (the canonical as well as the lesser known works).

Over the years, the SEW has aimed to create a rich working atmosphere that is both warm and generous to all involved, intellectually vibrant and challenging. We are keen to maintain this complementary association of academic poise and spontaneous enthusiasm, so that members, potential members and passing guests all feel welcome and valued.

The dedication of its founding members and more recent participants has enabled the SEW to make its mark in French academic circles, convening high quality international conferences every two years and publishing a selection of the proceedings in peer-reviewed journals, as well as organizing more informal annual gatherings and workshops.

Since the foundation of the SEW in 1996, international conferences have focused on:

- "Métamorphose et récit dans l'œuvre de Woolf" (1997)
"Metamorphosis and narrative in Woolf's works"
- "Things in Woolf's works" (1999)
- "Le pur et l'impur" (2001)
"The pure and the impure"
- "Conversation in Woolf's works" (2003)
- "Woolf lectrice / Woolf critique" (2006 / 2008)
"Woolf as a reader / Woolf as a critic"
- "Contemporary Woolf" (2010)
- "Woolf among the Philosophers" (2012)
- "Outlanding Woolf" (2013)
- "Translating Woolf" (2015)
- "Quel roman! Photography and Modernism's Novel Genealogies, Virginia Woolf to Roland Barthes" (2016)
- "Virginia Woolf, Still Life and Transformation" (2018)
- "Virginia Woolf and the Writing of History" (2018)
- "Recycling Woolf" (2019)
- "Virginia Woolf, Lectures Françaises" (2022)
- "Virginia Woolf: For a Poetics and Politics of Intimacy" (2023)
- "Leslie Stephen: Thinking with and Against His Time" (2024)

Information concerning past and forthcoming conferences and publications is available on our website: <http://etudes-woolfiennes.org>.

We would be very pleased to welcome new members. If you wish to join the SEW, please fill in the membership form available on our website ("adhérer") or send an email to claire.davison@univ-paris3.fr and marie.laniel@gmail.com, indicating your profession, address and research interests.

The annual subscription is 25€ (15€ for students).

Cheques made out to SEW should be sent to:

Nicolas Boileau, 12 Traverse du Ricm, 13100 Aix-en-Provence, FRANCE

If you wish to join the SEW's mailing list, please send an email to

marie.laniel@gmail.com



Ane Thon Knutsen is a Graphic Designer & Artist
living and working in Oslo, Norway.

She works from her private letterpress studio and as Associate
Professor at Oslo National Academy of the Arts.

She does freelance lecturing, workshops, and exhibits work
internationally. In June 2019 she defended her PhD:
A Printing Press of One's Own.

Her expertise spans the wondrous possibilities of experimental
printing, moveable type, artistic research, literature, book making,
tools, rooms, feminism & Virginia Woolf.

For any requests, please get in touch!
anethonknutsen@gmail.com

+47 98 89 42 39

<https://cargocollective.com/anethonknutsen>
<https://www.instagram.com/anethonknutsen/>

JON S. RICHARDSON
RARE BOOKS
yorkharborbooks@aol.com



<https://www.secondwindbks.com/>

Jojo Karlin is a New-England-born visual artist and
academic living in NYC. Drawing from her roots in the theater
and her role as Digital Scholarship Specialist at NYU Libraries,
she observes and illustrates (mostly in pen and watercolor)
the performance of academic research, often live sketching
conferences (#jojodoodles).

She has worked as artist in residence for NYU's Institute of
Public Knowledge and the Book History and Print Culture
Colloquium, and her artwork is featured as part of the CUNY
1969 Project.

Her illustrated monograph, *Yours Sincerely, Virginia Woolf*, will
be forthcoming from Columbia University Press.

For more, visit her website, jojokarlin.com, and follow her
[@jojokarlin](https://www.instagram.com/jojokarlin) on Instagram.



WWW.HONEYANDWAXBOOKS.COM

Louisa Amelia Albani

is an artist and small press publisher who has lived
and worked in London all of her life.

Inspired by the printing press publishing
ventures of Virginia and Leonard Woolf and William Blake,
she illustrates, designs and publishes pamphlets which use visual
storytelling to engage with literary and artistic narratives from the past.

Her artworks are created using mixed media: inks,
acrylics, collage, gold leaf and metallic threadwork.

She has published a trilogy of pamphlets inspired by the life and
work of Virginia Woolf: *A Moment in the Life of Virginia Woolf* (now out
of print); *The Journey to My Sister's House*, and *The Sea Blazed Gold*.

Her pamphlets are sold at Charleston and Much Ado Books
in East Sussex, as well as St Ives Booksellers in Cornwall
and London Review Bookshop in Bloomsbury.

To find out more, please do visit her website:
<https://www.nightbirdpress.com/>

Or email:
louisa.albani@gmail.com

MARIA POPOVA and THE MARGINALIAN

<https://www.themarginalian.org/about/>

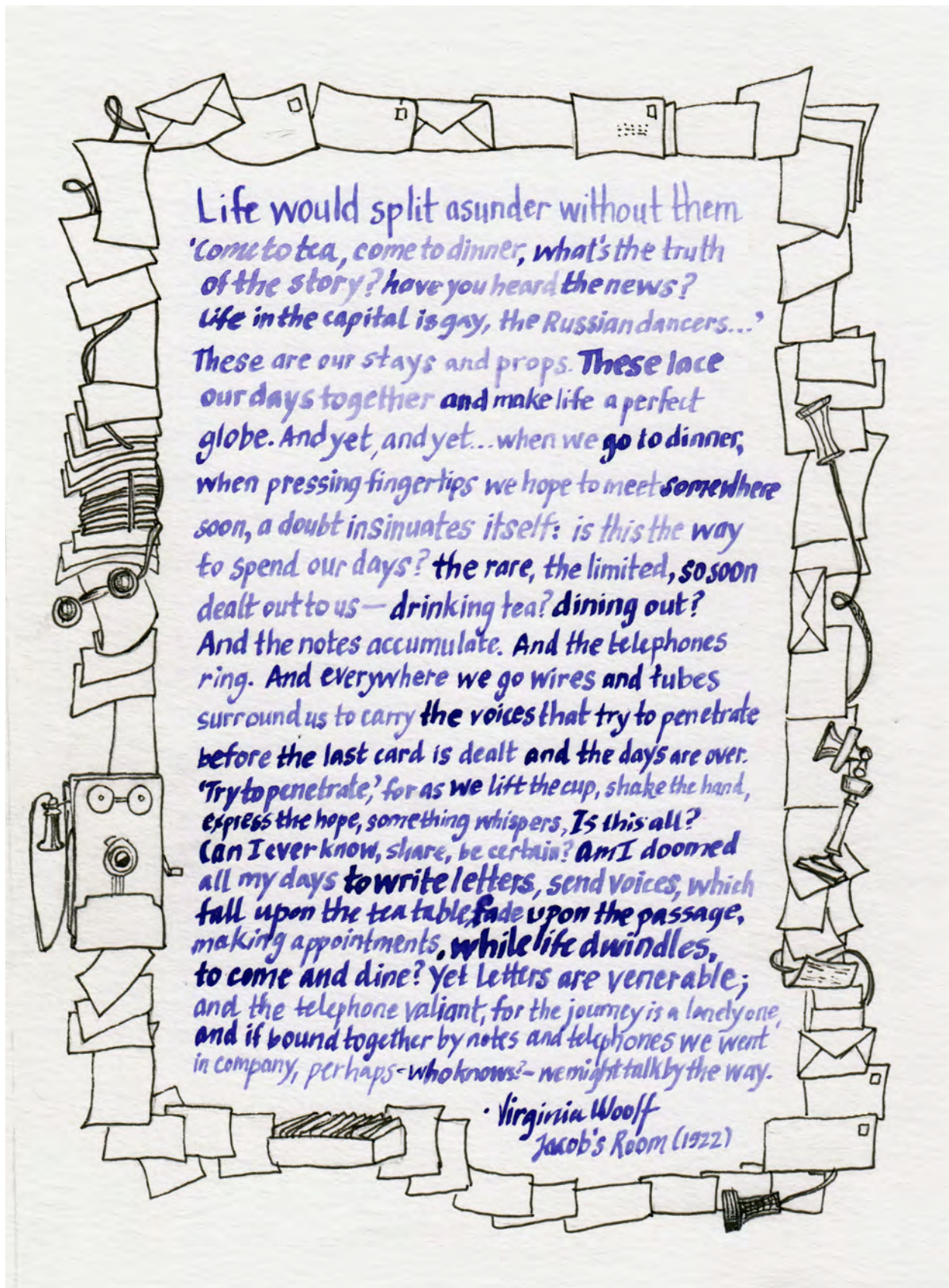
MRB began in 2013 as a review of books focusing on history
and religion, and since 2017 has provided a new digital
commons for conversation about the most important subjects,
from science and history to art and religion. Marginalia is a
charitable organization and magazine for the public good.

The staff is all volunteer, has never been paid, and we
need your support to keep Marginalia freely available to
all. If you care about science and depth in the digital age,
please support us and become part of our mission!

The legacy site (in transit to the new site):
<https://themarginaliareview.com/about/>

The new site:
<https://www.themarginalian.org/>





Life would split asunder without them
'Come to tea, come to dinner, what's the truth
of the story? have you heard the news?
Life in the capital is gay, the Russian dancers...'
These are our stays and props. These lace
our days together and make life a perfect
globe. And yet, and yet... when we go to dinner,
when pressing fingertips we hope to meet somewhere
soon, a doubt insinuates itself: is this the way
to spend our days? the rare, the limited, so soon
dealt out to us — drinking tea? dining out?
And the notes accumulate. And the telephones
ring. And everywhere we go wires and tubes
surround us to carry the voices that try to penetrate
before the last card is dealt and the days are over.
'Try to penetrate,' for as we lift the cup, shake the hand,
express the hope, something whispers, Is this all?
Can I ever know, share, be certain? Am I doomed
all my days to write letters, send voices, which
fall upon the tea table, fade upon the passage,
making appointments, while life dwindles,
to come and dine? Yet letters are venerable;
and the telephone valiant, for the journey is a lonely one,
and if bound together by notes and telephones we went
in company, perhaps - who knows? - we might talk by the way.

• Virginia Woolf
Jacob's Room (1922)

“Life Would Split Asunder”
from Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*
by Jojo Karlin



THE MODERNIST ARCHIVES PUBLISHING PROJECT

[HTTPS://MODERNISTARCHIVES.COM/](https://modernistarchives.com/)

Co-Directors:

Claire Battershill, Matt Hannah, Helen Southworth, Alice Staveley, Elizabeth Willson Gordon and Nicola Wilson.

Do you want to know more about the Woolfs and the hundreds of works published by the Hogarth Press?

Welcome | Modernist Archives Publishing Project

Welcome to The Modernist Archives Publishing Project (MAPP), a critical digital archive of early twentieth-century publishers, beginning with Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press (est. 1917).

Search for Hogarth Press authors, illustrators, editors, book jackets and archival objects—including correspondence, publishing notes, production schedules, advertisements and ephemera.

MAPP brings together materials relating to the Woolfs and the Hogarth Press from University of Reading Special Collections, Smith College Special Collections, Harry Ransom Center, the E. J. Pratt Library (University of Toronto), Bruce Peel Special Collections (Alberta), and in the future will also contain material from the University of Sussex Special Collections and the Berg at NYPL.

We are working with our cultural heritage partners to include material relating to other presses, including the Knopfs, Harcourt Brace, Nancy Cunard's The Hours Press, and Allen & Unwin.

We are always looking for collaborators! For more about MAPP, to contribute a biography, and/or to get in touch, contact us at <https://www.modernistarchives.com/contact> if you are interested.

We look forward to hearing from you.



Woolfian Resources Online

Virginia Woolf Miscellany:

Issues of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* are available in PDF format at <https://virginiawoolfmiscellany.wordpress.com/>. The editorial guide to formatting and the current issue are listed separately, while archived issues are listed in separate sections. Please contact Vara Neverow at neverowv1@southernct.edu if you want to acquire a print copy of an issue.

Facebook:

The International Virginia Woolf Society is on Facebook! You can become a fan and friend other Woolfians at <https://www.facebook.com/International-Virginia-Woolf-Society-224151705144/>.

The Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain has a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/VWSGB/> and is on Twitter: @VirginiaWoolfGB and on Instagram: @virginiawoolfsociety.

And Virginia Woolf has other multiple Facebook pages that are not related to specific societies.

Blogs:

Visit Paula Maggio's "Blogging Woolf" at bloggingwoolf.wordpress.com/ for a broad range of valuable information such as key Woolfian resources, current and upcoming events, and an archive of Woolfian doings now past.

Anne Fernald says she is "writing from a kitchen table of my own on the Jersey side of the Hudson." Contact information: fernham [at] gmail [dot] com. The blog is located at <https://anne-fernaldd.squarespace.com/home/>.

Scholarly Resources:

Modernist Archives Publishing Project (MAPP)

(<https://www.modernistarchives.com/>)

The website is a critical digital archive of early twentieth-century publishing history. The goal of this site is to display, curate, and describe the documents that go into the making of a book. As of fall 2021, the site will include the digitalized version of Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* reading notebooks held at the Keep at the University of Sussex. (The digitalized reading notebooks were previously available via a website at Southern Connecticut State University but now have been relocated to MAPP).

Woolf Online

(<http://www.woolfonline.com/>)

This beautifully crafted website offers a digital archive of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. Access to the site is free. The material is excellent for scholars but is also highly teachable. One hopes this type of website will inspire other digital Woolfian texts online. The project began with the digital archive of "Time Passes." As the website notes, "The initial idea and overall organization of this project was the work of Julia Briggs (1943-2007), in whose memory the project has been completed" (<http://www.woolfonline.com/timepasses/?q=about>).

E-books:

Many of Woolf's works have now come out of copyright in various countries and can be accessed online, and some current publications are also available.

A Vision of Beauty: A Biography of Julia Duckworth Stephen:

Marion Dell's biography of Virginia Woolf's mother is now available online in PDF format at: <https://theelusivejuliastephen.com/>

Also, the Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/>) is a particularly useful resource for online materials. Creating a free account provides access to many works.

Woolfian Google Alerts:

Have you signed up for Google Alerts? Did you know you could be totally up-to-date on the latest developments in the Woolfian and Bloomsburian world with just a few keys? Check it out! It's simple, fast and very rewarding.

VWoolf Listserv:

The VWoolf Listserv is open to one and all. To join the VWoolf Listserv please go to <https://lists.osu.edu/mailman/listinfo/vwoolf/> and click on it. Then, follow the instructions.



A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF INDEPENDENT BUT AFFILIATED ENTITIES RELATED TO WOOLF STUDIES

The *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* is an independent publication that has been housed at Southern Connecticut State University since 2003. Founded in 1973 by J. J. Wilson, Lucio Ruotolo, Peggy Comstock, Rebecca Davison, and Ellen Hawkes Rogat, the publication was hosted by Sonoma State University for 30 years under J. J. Wilson's auspices. The publication has always received financial support from the International Virginia Woolf Society. Issues are available online in PDF format at <https://virginiawoolfmiscellany.wordpress.com>. If you have questions or need a print copy of an issue, please contact Vara Neverow at neverowv1@southernct.edu.

The **Interational Virginia Woolf Society** was founded in 1976 as the Virginia Woolf Society. The society has a direct affiliation with the Modern Language Association and had for many years the privilege of organizing two sessions at the annual MLA Convention held between Christmas and New Year's Eve. In 2010, MLA transitioned to a new format, with the Convention being held in early January, and the affiliated organizations having just one guaranteed panel but being able to co-host one or more additional panels.

The **original IVWS website** (<http://sites.utoronto.ca/IVWS/>) was launched by Melba Cuddy-Keane, a Past President of the International Virginia Woolf Society, and she continues to oversee that site. It is hosted by the University of Toronto. The new International Virginia Woolf site can be accessed at: <https://v-woolf-society.com/>.

The **VWoolf Listserv** was founded by Morris Beja in 1996 and is hosted by the English Department at Ohio State University. The current list administrator is Elisa Kay Sparks. Anne Fernald oversaw the list for many years. To join the list, you must send a message to the following address: <https://lists.osu.edu/mailman/listinfo/vwoolf>. In the body of the email, you must write: "subscribe VWOOLF Your first name Your last name" (but with no quotation marks). You will receive a welcome message with further information about the list. To unsubscribe, please send a message *from the exact account that you originally subscribed with* to the same address: <https://lists.osu.edu/mailman/listinfo/vwoolf>. In the body of the email, write: unsubscribe VWOOLF.

Materials from most sources that are mentioned above are included in the **IVWS/VWS archive** at the E. J. Pratt Library, Victoria University, University of Toronto even though they are entities separate from the Society itself. Individuals who have materials that may be of archival significance should consult Karen Levenback at kllevenback@att.net.

The **Blogging Woolf** site was founded by Paula Maggio in 2007. The site provides news, alerts about upcoming events, and book listings as well as "Woolf Sightings" and offers many other informative and engaging features.

The **Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf** (also sometimes titled the International Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf) is an independent entity. Envisioned by Mark Hussey, the first conference was held in 1991 at Pace University. The conference is overseen by a Steering Committee consisting of the previous conference organizers. Permission to host a Woolf conference is authorized by Mark Hussey, who chairs the Steering Committee. Those interested in hosting the conference should contact Mark Hussey at markh102@gmail.com. Each annual conference is organized by one or more individuals associated with one or more host institutions. The host institution finances the event and uses the registration fees of attendees to offset the costs of the event. The Annual Conference has no formal association with the International Virginia Woolf Society or the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain or any other Woolf society. For a history and documentation of the ACVW, please see Issue 98 of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*.

SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON VIRGINIA WOOLF
Pace University Press

Selected Papers from Conferences 1-10 (1991-2000)

Launched by Mark Hussey, the first volume featured all the papers from the 1991 conference and was published in 1992. The subsequent

volumes were compilations of selected papers. Nine additional volumes were published by Pace University Press under Mark Hussey's auspices. The last volume, published in 2001, was from the conference held in 2000. A variety of editors have overseen the collections during the publishing process. While early volumes of the *Selected Papers* are out of print, a number of the more recent ones are still available from the press at <https://press.pace.edu/> and in PDF format on JSTOR (but access depends on the institutional subscriptions).

Clemson University Digital Press (now Clemson University Press)
Selected Papers from Conferences 11-18, excluding 12 and 14 (2001, 2003, 2005-2017)

These volumes—initially starting with the papers from the 2003 conference—were published by Clemson University Digital Press under the auspices of Wayne Chapman. The papers from the 2001 conference were not published until 2011. The Clemson University Press altered its structure and now is affiliated with Liverpool University Press. John Morgenstern took over Wayne Chapman's position after Wayne Chapman retired. John Morgenstern stepped down in 2022, and Alison Mero is now the director. Up until the publication of *Virginia Woolf, Europe, Peace* from the Kent, UK, conference in 2018, all volumes consisted of the short selected papers from the conference. These chapters were longer and were published in two volumes. The papers from the 2019 conference on Virginia Woolf and Social Justice have not yet been published, and the plan is to transition from print versions to digital-only volumes that will be published in a collaboration between Clemson University Press and the International Virginia Woolf Society and accessed through the IVWS website.

The electronic versions of the Selected Works from the 13th Annual International Conference (*Virginia Woolf and the Art of Exploration*) and the 15th International Annual Conference (*Woolf in the Real World*), are available in downloadable PDF format online at http://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cudp_woolf/

California State University—Bakersfield

The Selected Papers from Conferences 12 and 14 (2002, 2004)

The *Selected Papers* from the **12th conference**, "Across the Generations" (organized by J. J. Wilson and held at Sonoma State University in 2002) and the **14th conference**, "Back to Bloomsbury" (organized by Gina Potts and Lisa Shahriari and hosted by the University of London in 2004) were both published by Merry Pawlowski through her own university. These volumes are available exclusively as PDF versions and can be viewed, searched, and downloaded on the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* website. (Note: the Palgrave editions *Virginia Woolf's Bloomsbury*, Volumes 1 and 2, edited by the conference organizers Gina Potts and Lisa Shahriari, also drew on the conference presentations.)

The most recent developments in Woolf organizations and entities emerged from the pandemic. In June 2020, the first online "**Woolf drop-in**" event was held on the day that the 30th Annual Conference, Virginia Woolf: Performance and Professions, planned by Benjamin Hagen, would have begun. (The conference had to be postponed to the 2021 and was held virtually, as was the 31st conference in 2022.) The Woolf drop-in continues at intervals, as does the **Woolf Salon Project**, also launched in 2020.

Unlike the growing number of other Woolf societies globally that offer a range of activities all clustered within the same organization, these entities are independent. These other societies include: the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain, the *Société d'Études Woolfiennes*, the Italian Virginia Woolf Society, the Virginia Woolf Society of Japan, the Virginia Woolf Society of Korea, and, most recently, the Virginia Woolf Society of Türkiye.



Issue 103 of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*
Special Topic: Virginia Woolf and George Eliot
Fall 2024

Guest Editor: Charlotte Fiehn
Submissions should be no longer than 2,500 words.
Please send submissions to: caf9414@nyu.edu
Deadline: 15 June 2024

The special topic for Issue 103 of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* will focus on the literary, biographical, and critical intersections of Virginia Woolf and George Eliot. Woolf, in preparation for her article on the centenary of Eliot's birth in November 1919, claims to have read all of Eliot's works, and numerous critics noted Eliot's influence on Woolf's fiction. Although Woolf's centenary article was largely scathing, suggesting that Eliot was old-fashioned and even somewhat ridiculous, Woolf insisted that she greatly admired Eliot. Her comment about *Middlemarch* as "one of the few novels written for grown-up people" remains a definitive assessment. Woolf receives credit for reviving Eliot's reputation in the early 20th century.

Suggested topics include (but are by no means limited to) the influence of Eliot on Woolf's work and Woolf's role in shaping Eliot's reputation in the early twentieth century; comparisons of Eliot and Woolf's works (e.g., *Middlemarch* and *Night and Day*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *To the Lighthouse*, or "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" and *A Room of One's Own*); biographical connections (e.g., familial relationships, experiences of education, and the respective roles of George Henry Lewes and Leonard Woolf); and Woolf's and Eliot's critical reception.



Issue 104 of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*
Spring 2025

Special Topic: Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence
Please submit article proposals of approximately 300 words by
15 January 2025

Article drafts (no more than 2,500 words including Works Cited)
are due by 15 October 2024

Guest Editor: Benjamin D. Hagen
Please send your submissions to: Benjamin.Hagen@usd.edu

In October 1932, over two years after D.H. Lawrence's death, Virginia Woolf reads, "with the usual sense of frustration," an edition of Lawrence's letters published the previous month, an edition edited and introduced by Aldous Huxley (D 2 126). We could take her critical inventory here as a summation of her assessment of Lawrence's writing: his "repetition of one idea"; his poor "explanations for what he sees"; the "panting," "gasping," and "preaching" tone of his sentences; and his diction ("English has one million words: why confine yourself to 6? & praise yourself for so doing" (126). She ends her diary entry wondering, "Why all this criticism of other people [in the letters]? Why not some system that includes the good? What a discovery that would be—a system that did not shut out" (127).

Though several scholars have written on both Woolf and Lawrence—too many to list here—the pairing of these two writers nonetheless continues to surprise literary scholars, especially those working in modernist studies. In my book, *The Sensuous Pedagogies of Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence*, I explore how *pedagogy* and *feeling* preoccupied both writers across their lifespans. In this special issue, I invite proposals for articles that expand our critical knowledge of the concepts and contexts in which we might reconsider the relation—and persistent non-relation—between these modernist writers. Both Woolf and Lawrence are famous for their letters, their essays, and their fiction, but their legacies and receptions are far from equitable: Woolf has become an icon whose work is reissued again and again and adapted repeatedly into other media while much of Lawrence's writing remains out of print and unrecognized by the very field that might benefit from his wide travels, his interest in Indigenous people, and much more. Where might we locate resonances between these important early twentieth-century figures? How might Lawrence help us see or see anew aspects of Woolf's thought? How might Woolf—despite her own judgments of his writing—aid us in better assessing and understanding those very features of his work that frustrated her. And why might it be important to locate such resonances here and now?



Issue 105 of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*
Special Topic: Woolf and Failure
Fall 2025

Guest Editor: Mary Wilson
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
Submissions should be no longer than 2,500 words.
Submissions are due by August 31, 2025
Please send submissions to:
mwilson4@umassd.edu

For this special topic of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, you are invited to think about, analyze, expose, and otherwise wallow in failure. While we can readily credit our later successes to lessons learned from earlier failures, we often experience failure in less linear and more cyclical ways. Failure surfaces at different points in our lives and work, and fears of failing and the risks involved in achieving anything other than success recur in sometimes unexpected situations. Failure is ordinary, not extraordinary—and when we recognize failure's ordinariness, its significance in Woolf's work may take on new meaning.

Failure circulates throughout Woolf's work, and carries with it many meanings. Fears of failing or of being a failure characterize many key characters' psyches; narratives are built on incomplete, unrealized, or failed artistic projects. Failure is also a central presence in many of Woolf's essays; it has a particular role in her review work, but also forms the foundation of "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." That generation-defining essay is founded on Arnold Bennett's assessment that Woolf failed to create real characters in *Jacob's Room*, and contains within it Woolf's assertion of her own failure to capture "Mrs. Brown" in telling her story. That sanguine expression of failure in the essay jars against the fears of failing to achieve her artistic vision that Woolf records in her personal writings. Even as Woolf explores her own worries and points out the failures of others—such as Charlotte Brontë's anger marring *Jane Eyre*—she also exposes and questions the structures of expectation and the norms (both social and fictional) that determine failure and success.

And yet failure need not be a bummer—nor need this special issue. As Jack Halberstam argues in *The Queer Art of Failure*, "under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world" (2-3). In what ways might Woolf's work offer examples of this mode of failing or this way of understanding what failure offers?

Lastly, since each of us contends with failure in our own lives in and out of the classroom, this special issue also welcomes personal reflections on the experience of failure. Where do our understandings of failure intersect with our work with Woolf? How have our failures shaped us, and continue to shape our scholarship and teaching?

Possible approaches might include:

- * Defining failure in or through Woolf
- * Representations of failure in Woolf's novels, short stories, and essays
- * Failure in Woolf's personal writings
- * Failure as action (failing) or identity (being a failure)
- * Reading Woolf's work through theories of failure, such as Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure*
- * Woolfian aesthetics of failure
- * Failures of imagination and/or execution
- * Political, social, and ethical failures
- * Failed identities
- * Examinations of Woolf's failed projects
- * Woolf's assessments of her own failures and those of others
- * Woolf and other women writers: does Woolf's success at infiltrating the canon mean others' failure? Our own experiences of failure as students, scholars, and teachers of/with Woolf





**“Talland House at St. Ives”
by Louisa Albani**



**“The Final Boat Scene in *To The Lighthouse*”
by Louisa Albani**



**“Virginia Woolf Reading the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*”
by Jojo Karlin**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p>EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION</p> <p><i>Special Topic:</i> Woolf's Twenty-First-Century Academia <i>Emily Hinov</i></p> <p>EVENTS, CFPS AND INFORMATION</p> <p>Thanking the IVWS for Continuing Support Paula Maggio's "Blogging Woolf" The <i>Virginia Woolf Miscellany</i> Online The <i>VWM</i> Editorial Board MLA 2024 Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture CFP: IVWS Annual Angelica Garnett Undergraduate Essay Prize Call for Proposals, Clemson UP: Annotated Woolf The 33rd Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf A Quick Overview of Publishing, Teaching, Reviewing, and Advertising with the <i>VWM</i> <i>VWM</i> Guidelines for Submissions and Editorial Policies The IVWS and VWS Archive Information The Woolf Salon Project How to Join the International Virginia Woolf Society How to Join the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain <i>Société d'Études Woolfiennes</i> Jon S. Richardson Rare Books (advertisement) Second Wind Books (advertisement) Honey & Wax Booksellers (advertisement) Maria Popova's website, <i>The Marginalia</i> (advertisement) "Life Would Split Asunder" from <i>Jojo Karlin</i> Virginia Woolf's <i>Jacob's Room</i> (artwork) The Modernist Archives Publishing Project Woolfian Resources Online A Brief Overview of Independent, Affiliated Woolf-Related Entities Calls for Papers for the <i>Virginia Woolf Miscellany</i> Ane Thon Knutsen, Graphic Designer (advertisement) Louisa Albani, Graphic Artist (advertisement) Jojo Karlin, Graphic Artist (advertisement) "Talland House at St. Ives" <i>Louise Albani</i> (artwork) "The Final Boat Scene in <i>Louise Albani</i> <i>To The Lighthouse</i>" (artwork) "Virginia Woolf Reading the <i>Miscellany</i>" <i>Jojo Karlin</i> (artwork)</p> <p>TABLE OF CONTENTS</p> <p>SPECIAL TOPIC:</p> <p>"Taking Virginia Woolf Seriously: What Do/Should We Do?" <i>Beth Rigel Daugherty</i></p> <p>"Virginia Woolf, Race, and 'Restorying' in the Twenty-First-Century Classroom" <i>Alice D. Keane</i></p> <p>"The Uses of Anger... <i>Erica Gene Delsandro & Jennifer Mitchell</i> in Pedagogy: Reading Woolf Through Lorde"</p> <p>"Teaching Critical Race Theory <i>Rachel V. Trousdale</i> with <i>Orlando</i> and the <i>Dreadnought Hoax</i>"</p> <p>"A Modernist Pedagogy <i>Dominique Townsend</i> for the Twenty-First Century: Embracing Woolf's Unorthodoxy and Student Agency"</p> <p>"Outsider Pedagogy and Its Paradoxes" <i>Erin Elizabeth Greer</i></p> <p>"Common Reader, Common Classroom" <i>Christopher Westrate</i></p> <p>What Is a Woolfian? Teaching Woolf at the End of the English Major <i>Tonya Krouse</i></p> <p>No Gate, No Lock: <i>Laura Tscherry</i> <i>A Room of One's Own</i> as Complaint</p>	<p>1</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>5</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p> <p>7</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>8</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>9</p> <p>9</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>13</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>18</p> <p>20</p> <p>22</p> <p>24</p> <p>26</p> <p>26</p> <p>28</p> <p>31</p> <p>34</p> <p>36</p>	<p>The 2023 Angelica Garnett Undergraduate Prize Essays</p> <p>"Time in the Margin: <i>Cailyn Mickelsen</i> Queer Temporalities in <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>"</p> <p>"If discordant, producing harmony": <i>Audrey Campbell-Eby</i> Wholeness from Antithesis in Virginia Woolf's <i>Between the Acts</i>"</p> <p>TRULY MISCELLANEOUS</p> <p>"What Does Harry Want?" <i>Anthony Rudolf</i></p> <p>Afterword from Leonard Woolf's <i>De wijze maagden</i> (Dutch translation of <i>The Wise Virgins</i>)</p> <p>"<i>Orlando</i>: Reflections <i>Stefano Rozzoni</i> on Neil Bartlett's Adaptation, Staged by Michael Grandage at Garrick Theatre, London"</p> <p>"Political Influences and Intersections: <i>Joanne H. Wright</i> Virginia Woolf and Margaret Cavendish on Gender, Citizenship, and War"</p> <p>"Into the Orchid House with Virginia Woolf" <i>Jane Goldman</i></p> <p>"A Fossil from the Waves" <i>Sovay Muriel Hansen</i></p> <p>"In Conversation: <i>Wendy McGrath</i> <i>Conversations with Friends</i> and <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> as Internet Novels"</p> <p>"Thunder (and Reckoning) at Wembley: <i>Marielle O'Neill</i> Virginia Woolf's Anti-Imperialist Activism Against the British Empire"</p> <p>BOOK REVIEWS</p> <p>How to Contact the Book Review Editor</p> <p>Call for Reviewers</p> <p>REVIEW <i>Jeanne Dubino</i> <i>Virginia Woolf's Apprenticeship: Becoming An Essayist</i> by Beth Rigel Daugherty</p> <p>REVIEW <i>Jeanette McVicker</i> <i>Sentencing Orlando: Virginia Woolf and the Morphology of the Modernist Sentence</i> edited by Elsa Högberg and Amy Bromley.</p> <p>REVIEW <i>Kristin Czarnecki</i> <i>Modernist Intimacies</i> edited by Elsa Högberg</p> <p>REVIEW <i>Todd Avery</i> <i>A Comic Absurdity Entitled: A Society by Virginia Woolf</i> by Leslie Kathleen Hankins</p> <p><i>A Room of Your Own: A Story Inspired by Virginia Woolf's Famous Essay</i> by Beth Kephart; illustrated by Julia Breckenreid</p> <p>REVIEW <i>Todd Avery</i></p> <p><i>Mr Keynes' Revolution</i> by E. J. Barnes</p> <p><i>Mr Keynes' Dance</i> by E. J. Barnes</p> <p><i>Firebird: A Bloomsbury Love Story</i> by Susan Sellers</p> <p><i>The Guest Lecture</i> by Martin Riker</p> <p>REVIEW <i>Anne Byrne</i> <i>Two Seasons</i> by J. D. Engle</p> <p>REVIEW <i>Peter Stansky</i> <i>The Girl Prince: Virginia Woolf, Race and the Dreadnought Hoax</i> by Danell Jones.</p> <p>"Thank you, Suzanne Bellamy, from Karen Levenback" <i>Karen Levenback</i></p> <p>List of the IVWS Officers and Members-at-Large</p> <p>The Society Column <i>Benjamin Leubner</i> (continues on page 75)</p>	<p>38</p> <p>40</p> <p>42</p> <p>44</p> <p>46</p> <p>50</p> <p>54</p> <p>58</p> <p>60</p> <p>65</p> <p>65</p> <p>65</p> <p>65</p> <p>67</p> <p>69</p> <p>71</p> <p>73</p> <p>74</p> <p>74</p> <p>75</p> <p>76</p>
--	--	--	---

Woolf's Twenty-First-Century Academia



Edited by
Emily Hinnov



Taking Virginia Woolf Seriously: What Do/Should We Do?

In my elderhood, I no longer teach, but I have hardly retired from thinking about teaching. Or about Virginia Woolf, her essays, the essay. Both my age and the essay genre permit wandering amongst books and memories as I write, but conviction threads its way through these forays: taking Virginia Woolf seriously means paying attention to her essays, to what and how they teach. My rambles here lack elaboration, but perhaps my last proposal will contribute to our ‘wherefore academy?’ conversation.

Scholars, cultural critics, and excellent practitioners aside, the essay occupies an odd place in English studies. Straddling composition, journalism, creative writing, and literary study, it is often absent or an afterthought. The essay does not rate a chapter in “Modernist Genres and Modern Media,” for example, in Blackwell’s *Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*. Robert Atwan maintains that “once literature is defined exclusively in imaginative or fictional terms, the essay becomes a troublesome literary species” (211); students may meet it only in composition courses (198-99). Plus, the essay is a mongrel, pushing into other genre rooms, sniffing at forbidden topics, often off leash. It tends to be democratic, permissive, contradictory, skeptical, innately betwixt and between. Graham Good says the essay “usually goes unrecognized either as knowledge (because it is seen as too ‘artistic’) or as art (because it is ‘knowledgeable’ rather than ‘creative’)” (15). Lacking stature and resisting confinement, this paradoxical genre may teach us something.

As essential and experimental to her as her fiction, Woolf’s nonfiction—from private diaries to public criticism—allowed her to talk to herself, friends, and readers. Julia Briggs says Woolf’s desire to be accessible motivated her *Common Readers* (119), but I suspect wanting to directly communicate with readers drove *all* her essays. Her essays affirmed the ‘rights’ of amateurs and common readers who loved literature just as the university moved to professionalize English studies and turn it into a discipline. To generalize, Woolf’s essays expand audience, allow her to discuss a variety of literature, both reading and writing it; her essays assume anyone who can read can join the conversation. Whereas the academy narrows audience, determines who, what, and how to read; it assumes only the university-trained can join the conversation. Both Woolf’s essays and the academy educate, but Woolf resists system, emphasizes exploration, and suggests, whereas the academy requires system, emphasizes method, and concludes. Writing to Julian Bell in 1935, she asks “But why teach English? [...] [A]ll one can do is to herd books into groups,” which leads to “nobody read[ing] with open eyes” (*Letters of Virginia Woolf* [L5] 450).

Woolf Studies and I grew up together in the late 70s and early 80s, when I noticed how many Woolf scholars taught, as I did, in general education

or lit/comp programs. In 2008, Madelyn Detloff noticed “how many innovative, thoughtful, intellectually and ethically committed teachers” (1) she had met at Woolf Conferences, and in 2012, at the 22nd Annual Conference in Saskatoon, I discussed how many scholars wrote about teaching and cited Woolf’s essay guidance. An unscientific search at the time led to my estimating that between 275 to 300 published and presented items focused on Woolf’s pedagogical lessons, Woolf and education, or teaching Woolf. A cursory review of my incomplete, error-ridden conference handout reveals still-valuable lessons for Woolfians teaching at all educational levels, from high school to postgraduate to outside the academy. Since that time, *The Teaching Archive* has appeared with its fascinating study of writers’ and teachers’ reading and teaching notes for courses in which writers like Woolf were on the syllabus, and Woolf scholars have continued to innovate pedagogically as well. To name just a few examples: Madeleine Davies’s joyful work with University of Reading students; Robin Hackett’s creative pairings; Benjamin D. Hagen’s reflective prompts; the Modernist Archives Publishing Project’s extensive investment in students who help research, create, and implement its website. Such work inspires.

Josephine Miles, lyric poet and digital humanities pioneer, appears in *The Teaching Archive* because she taught from 1939-78 in Berkeley’s English Department where she offered “countless sections” of English 1A, the freshman writing course. Asking students to buy *Mrs. Dalloway*, another modern classic, a bestseller, and several current literary magazines, Miles used that literary context to help students become comfortable with “taking a perspective” to shape “unordered” facts, ideas, opinions, and details (154, 168). Her students, considering how *Mrs. Dalloway* worked, read it with David Daiches’s Woolf chapter in *The Novel and the Modern World* where he diagrams its space and time axes (168). As Rachel Sagner Buurma and Laura Heffernan explain,

Encountering Daiches’s argument in the context of their weeks spent analyzing and practicing the taking of perspective on unordered sensory data, the students would have been able then to place their own practice of perspective-taking in a broader social and historical context, in which all modern writers struggle to [...] convincingly shape a whole world through their point of view. (170)

Students in Madeleine Davies’s “Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury” module at the University of Reading in 2018-19 and 2019-20 used a Blackboard Learning Journal to write 500 words a week on something from the text discussed in the seminar; they could respond in whatever way they chose (1). Those reflections became the basis of a collaborative publishing project, *A Room of Our Own: The Virginia Woolf Learning Journals*. The 64-piece collection of student work co-edited by Davies and three students, Libby Bushill, Zoë Kyle, and Maddie Bazin, intersperses analytic, personal, or creative written pieces with Fine Art Department artwork and Department of Typography and Graphic Communication designs. Davies writes of their shared professional experience, “The editors of the book sharpened their editorial skills; the contributors discovered talents they may not have known they possessed; I learnt about the history of typefaces and their importance in terms of book design; students from Fine Art engaged with Woolf’s writing and contributed superb images; colleagues and students developed new friendships” (3).

Robin Hackett engages students who say Virginia Woolf’s writing no longer has relevance by pairing Woolf’s *The Pargiters* with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *A Dialogue on Love* (176-77). Not only do these works reveal their authors’ genre experiments as “tools for non-dualistic thought” (185), they allow Hackett to “encourage discussion of two themes [...]: first, empathy—empathy for one another as readers, empathy for writers whose work they approach, empathy exhibited by writers, and second, the idea of identity as proximity rather than as an expression of immanent qualities” (177). Her approach “invites” students to think through “sociality, public affiliation, and proximity” rather than position themselves negatively against Woolf (177). Hackett details

how her focus shift from sexuality to sociality works, the differences and continuities between the two works/authors, and the intellectual and political implications of “bringing together disparate things,” which she supplements with other possible pairings (185-87).

In *The Sensuous Pedagogies of Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence*, Hagen focuses on their teaching and ours. Moving back and forth between the two, and interspersing readings of numerous texts with prompts asking us to reflect on our own pedagogical relationships with authors, texts, and students, Hagen challenges us not only to see Woolf and Lawrence differently but also to deeply reflect on why, what, and who we teach. Gilles Deleuze and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick form the theoretical underpinning of his three claims:

that Woolf and Lawrence worry a lot about teaching and learning; that they worry about teaching and learning in terms of sensation, intensity, and emotion (that is, in terms of *feeling*); and that this sensuous approach to teaching and learning can encourage us, in turn, to explore problems pertaining to pedagogical practices, failures, effects, and relationships of our own. (3-4)

Thinking about modernist writers as teachers and tutors, he shows, enriches both our reading and teaching.

Students working on the Modernist Archives Publishing Project (MAPP), a website project devoted to publishers of modernist works (starting with Hogarth Press, now expanding), have transcribed letters; found lost or obscure workers; researched and written people’s biographies; scoured archives and libraries for relevant information; gathered bookseller data, put it into spreadsheets, and interpreted it; and tackled other scholarly tasks. Along the way, they have presented and published their work, explaining it to conference goers and periodical audiences. The site’s founders, Claire Battershill, Helen Southworth, Alice Staveley, Mike Widner, Elizabeth Willson Gordon, and Nicola Wilson, aimed to create a “teaching and research project that puts book publishers back into the study of modernism” and “[digitize and contextualize] publishers’ archives in relation to the people involved in the day-to-day business of creating and selling books.” From the 2013 beginning through the present, it has involved students in learning about the massive changes between 1900 and 1950 that publishers had to navigate: in authorship, readership, book-buying, copyright, technology, and distribution.

My own ‘come to Virginia Woolf’ moment occurred during an umpteenth reading of “How Should One Read a Book?” Why, I wondered, if I wanted to encourage majors *and* non-majors to become lifelong common readers, was I not crafting courses and assignments that way? Why was I not taking her suggestions about how we learn to read seriously? They matched my own reading development! Gluttonous reading followed by comparing books, seeing patterns, and *then* analyzing and asking questions leading to criticism and theory. Using a scholarship of teaching and learning project to research my students as readers, I foregrounded reading in course goals—read lots of books, have lots of conversations about them, and find out about more books. I put Woolf’s ideas about reading front and center, used a book club format with some choice, and adopted a jigsaw strategy to generate comparing. As I aligned pedagogy with aim, I began to question our collective purpose. What are we about? Was it just me who had gone astray?

Now I wonder if Woolf’s essays could model what a new academy might do. Help students: 1) increase their joy in reading; 2) explore texts *and* themselves as readers; and 3) write essays tracing journeys toward provisional destinations. I also wonder: might the essay’s paradoxical place and nature model Woolf’s seemingly impossible vision in *Three Guineas* of staying as outsiders while inside? As Woolf, a consummate professional, steadfastly remained an amateur in her essays? Embodying an outsider/insider status, tensions, and contradictions, the essay resists

rigid structures, works against hasty conclusions, and complicates either/ or thinking without falling into formlessness.

Might we who study and teach literature and creative writing learn from the essay and encourage and maintain amateur selves within an increasingly professionalized atmosphere? Might we, constrained as we are, learn from Woolf’s essays and parry surreptitiously? Might we, pressured to mold workers, stealthily liberate readers, explorers, writers, and curious people who ask and try to understand rather than measure and declare?

Might we slowly and steadily create classrooms, curricula, and universities embodying what we really want for our students rather than the replication we seem to want? Might we ask students to read more and analyze less? Might we allow our majors to identify, fall in love, sample, and wallow? Might we hold off a bit before asking them to apply theories, become undergrads in high school, grad students in college, assistant profs in grad school, and critics as assistant profs? What is our rush? Elegant, insightful theories may usefully shape our teaching and be read as philosophy, criticism, literature. But Woolf suggests theorists and critics can only help those who “come to them laden with questions and suggestions won honestly in the course of [their] own reading,” greedy, lavish reading (*The Essays of Virginia Woolf*[E] 5 581).

Reforming the academy will not happen overnight *or* involve burning it down. For institutions, students, and *we* vary widely; one size does not fit all. How work locally with the students we have, not wish we had? How discover what and how they read, how they feel about reading, how their reading has evolved? How encourage more reading, inside and outside the canon, inside and outside the university? How welcome students into the conversation? How remember and nurture what brought us to this calling? So much conspires to snuff out that spark in us, in our students—how keep those embers lit?

Perhaps we might designate a separate online ‘room’ for our numerous presentations, articles, and essays on teaching Virginia Woolf, taking her teaching seriously, and reporting on our teaching journeys. Filled with citations, links, videos, recommendations, syllabi, assignments, reflections. Whatever grounds us in what is important, assures us we are not alone, and helps us generate ideas. Perhaps someone in this community has the technological savvy to build such a room? “The art of writing is difficult,” Woolf says in “Reviewing.” So is the art of teaching. Having “the advantage of coming into touch with a well-stored [repository], housing other [classrooms] and even other [educational venues] and thus other standards” (E 6 203) would be immeasurably valuable. Might we build a new academy by creating an online teaching archive devoted to what we do/should do?

Beth Rigel Daugherty
Otterbein University, Emerita

Works Cited

- Atwan, Robert. “The Essay—Is It Literature?” *Essaying the Essay*. Ed. David Lazar. Gettysburg: Welcome Table P, 2014. 196-214.
- Briggs, Julia. *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2005.
- Buurma, Rachel Sagner and Laura Heffernan, eds. *The Teaching Archive: A New History for Literary Study*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2021.
- Daugherty, Beth Rigel. “Learning from Virginia Woolf: What Teachers Say,” 22nd Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK. June 2012. Address.
- . “Teachers/Critics Who Write about Teaching Woolf, Or, Writers Connected to Teaching VW.” 22nd Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf. University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon: June 2012. Handout list.
- . “‘They Have Loved Reading’: *Mrs. Dalloway* and Lifelong Common Readers.” *Approaches to Teaching Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway*. Ed. Eileen Barrett and Ruth O. Saxton. New York: MLA, 2009. 112-17.

- Davies, Madeleine, Libby Bushill, Zoë Kyle, and Maddie Bazin, eds. *A Room of Our Own: The Virginia Woolf Learning Journals*. Reading, UK: U of Reading, 2020. m.k.davies@reading.ac.uk
- Detloff, Madelyn. Introduction. Woolf and Pedagogy. "Intellectual Liberty Under Pressure to Instrumentalize Knowledge." *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 73, (Spring/Summer 2008): 1-2.
- Good, Graham. *The Observing Self: Rediscovering the Essay*. London and New York: Routledge, 1988.
- Hackett, Robin. "Woolf and...: Teaching Besidedness." *Communal Modernisms: Teaching Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture in the Twenty-First Century Classroom*. Ed. Emily M. Hinnov, Laurel Harris, and Lauren M. Rosenblum. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 176-88.
- Hagen, Benjamin D. *The Sensuous Pedagogies of Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP/Clemson UP, 2020.
- Modernist Archives Publishing Project. <https://www.modernistarchives.com/>
- Woolf, Virginia. "How Should One Read a Book?" *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume 5, 1929-1932*. Ed. Stuart N. Clarke. London: Hogarth, 2009. 572-84.
- . *The Letters of Virginia Woolf: Volume 5, 1932-1935*. Ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979.
- . "Reviewing." *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume 6, 1933-1941*. Ed. Stuart N. Clarke. London: Hogarth, 2011. 195-209.
- . *Three Guineas*. 1938. Annotated with an Introduction by Jane Marcus. Gen. ed. Mark Hussey. Orlando: Harvest/Harcourt, 2006.



Virginia Woolf, Race, and "Restorying" in the Twenty-First-Century Classroom

As Woolf scholars explore feminist pedagogical interventions for the contemporary and future classroom, a cross-generational and intersectional lens that draws upon the recent work of transatlantic Black Anglophone writers and artists has the potential to offer new perspectives on Bloomsbury's modernism. Pairing texts that exemplify the theoretical framework of "restorying," which Ebony Elizabeth Thomas develops in *The Dark Fantastic* (2019), provides new ways for those who teach Virginia Woolf and other modernist writers to facilitate multicultural understanding and foster inclusive learning communities in higher education. For Thomas, restorying is a kind of "critical counterstorytelling" (10) that restores interpretive agency for readers of color who have been excluded from canonical texts, enabling them to "reimagine the very stories themselves" (154).

In African-American writer Asali Solomon's *The Days of Afrekete* (2021), which combines influences from Toni Morrison and Audre Lorde as it "restories" Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, and British writer Natasha Brown's debut novel, *Assembly* (2021), which also restories *Mrs. Dalloway*, Black women writers engage with and deliberately vary Bloomsbury fictional precedents. As they remake and re-envision narratives and tropes that play upon and further the innovative modernist experiments and restore the gaps and omissions of Bloomsbury's canonical novels with respect to race, Brown and Solomon present contemporary readers with important and fruitful new opportunities to better understand and critique the work of Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury in their own time, and to trace intersectional continuities and changes in postmodern and contemporary transatlantic Anglophone literary fiction.

In *The Days of Afrekete*, Solomon foregrounds Black women's experiences. Solomon's characters occupy disparate class positions, navigating economic and professional privilege or its lack and also,

for protagonist Liselle Belmont's former lover, Selena Octave—whose character conflates aspects of both Sally Seton and Septimus Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway*—psychological precarity. Liselle confronts racist and classist expectations of beauty as she supervises preparations for an elaborate dinner party on the eve of her white husband Winn's electoral defeat and pending indictment, even as she feels uncomfortable with Ph.D. candidate and immigration rights activist Xochitl's role as "the help." Mismatched routinely—"Liesl," "Lisa," "Lisette," even "Lysol"—Liselle confronts key questions about identity, love and authenticity after her mother Verity asks: "You want to know if you should throw a party to thank these people who had nothing better to do with their money and time than to help you delude yourselves?" (4).

Like Clarissa Dalloway, Liselle Belmont wonders about and responds to the imagined inner lives of the people she sees, including strangers. For example: "She knew she should be immune to this feeling by now, but the sight of every unhoused, insane, uncared-for Black woman chipped away at her. She both wanted to know and didn't want to know how each one got there. She found herself looking into their faces for Selena" (Solomon 66). At first, Liselle dismisses Winn's Aunt Gladys, but then she questions whether Gladys's agency might have been limited, despite her class and racial privilege, in the context of Winn's patriarchal family. Here, Solomon makes a direct reference to Virginia Woolf:

"I'm glad you like it, Gladys," said Liselle. She tried not to look at the woman's claw, its startling bluish veins. But then her face, its Virginia Woolf hollows, struck Liselle as poignant, though it was emotionally wasteful to feel sorry for rich white women. They made their choices. Or did they? (Solomon 72-73)

Liselle and Selena both want to become writers when they meet in college, but neither can access circumstances that make this possible, at least within the scope of the novel's timeline. When Liselle reflects on her own literary prospects, she realizes that: "She had a better chance of being a writer in the Harlem Renaissance" (89). Meanwhile, Selena, estranged from Liselle after graduation, becomes trapped by economic precarity. Solomon represents Selena Octave as a character who experiences a psychological condition very like Septimus Smith's shellshock in *Mrs. Dalloway*; but for Selena, trauma is traceable to the intersectional violence of her own time.

Both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Days of Afrekete* represent one day in the life of an economically privileged woman. Each novel's protagonist is paired with another character who experiences precarity much more visibly. But here Solomon and Woolf's novels diverge in a significant way. Woolf's Septimus Warren Smith is without Clarissa Dalloway's class status or economic resources, but his mind, traumatized by war, echoes Clarissa's in uncanny ways; they never meet and, unlike Clarissa, Septimus does not survive. Selena Octave, on the other hand, as Solomon's novel closes, is on her way to reconnect with Liselle, thinking back to a shared, chosen symbolic word from Audre Lorde—Afrekete—now knowing that she and Liselle have agency to take Lorde as a model, just at the moment when Winn's house is about to be disrupted: "She thought of the notepad at her mother's house. Afrekete. That's what she herself should have said when she called Liselle's house the last time, when she was falling into a hole" (Solomon 169). *The Days of Afrekete* ends before this potential reunion with ambiguity but also with a note of genuine optimism.

Also published in 2021, Natasha Brown's short, experimental novel *Assembly*, too, uses an intersectional lens to foreground and critique historical and contemporary structural inequities surrounding race, class, and gender. In Brown's restorying of *Mrs. Dalloway*, an unnamed narrator recognizes a dilemma inherent in language itself: "My only tool of expression is the language of this place" (91)—language that is imbricated with inequitable biases and assumptions. She asks herself: "how can I use such a language to examine the society it reinforces?" (94). With fragmentary, stream of consciousness vignettes assembled in a non-chronological sequence, the narrator reflects on a present-time nexus of crisis around work, love, and health. Traumatized by the intersectional violence she has experienced as a Black British woman, the narrator's state of mind most strongly echoes the desperation of Septimus in *Mrs. Dalloway*. But, during a weekend visit to an opulent country house,

she also reflects on the prospect of being invited to step into the role of Clarissa Dalloway by marrying into her white boyfriend's long-established family, one that traces its wealth back to the slave trade.

As *Assembly* opens, we learn that the narrator has achieved early career success in investment banking. But she is becoming acutely aware of its cost: "The financial industry was the only viable route upwards. I traded in my life for a sliver of middle class comfort, for a future" (24). Securing access to this material "future" in the intersectional context of racism, colonialism, classism, and misogyny has required her self-effacement to a brutal degree: "Exist in the negative only, the space around. Do not insert yourself into the main narrative. Go unnoticed. Become the air" (60). On the one hand, she is "everything they've told me to become," and, on the other, she is seen by her racist and sexist coworkers as "not enough" (48).

The narrator's family, part of the Windrush generation, have suffered the inequities of racism and colonialism: "After the war, the crumbling empire sent again for her colonial subjects. Not soldiers, this time, but nurses to carry a wavering NHS on their backs" (50). She recounts their history: "And so we came and built and mended and nursed; cooked and cleaned. We paid taxes, paid extortionate rent to the few landlords who would take us. We were hated. [...] Enoch [Powell], the once-intrepid recruiter, now warned of bloodied rivers if we didn't leave. New laws were drawn up; our rights revoked" (50).

Despite her appearance of success, investment banking is an aversive career for the narrator, who dreads each day at work but explains: "My parents and grandparents had no such opportunities; I felt I could hardly waste mine" (24). As she is spotlighted by her firm for public relations purposes, she recognizes her complicity in perpetuating a myth: "I'd rather say something else. Something better. But of course, without the legitimacy of a flashy title at a blue-chip company, I wouldn't have a platform to say anything at all" (24-25). The narrator has an economically privileged but contingent title and paycheck, but her boyfriend is secure in his generational wealth. Wandering the grounds of his family's estate, Brown's narrator, who has been declining treatment for a serious illness, performs love she does not feel and lies about her health: "I'd told my boyfriend it was fine" (17).

Contemplating the possibility of her death, the narrator reflects: "Surviving makes me a participant in their narrative, succeed or fail, my existence only reinforces this construct, I reject it, I reject these options, I reject this life" (98). She considers her family's love and also their suffering, concluding with language that echoes Woolf's own:

Generations of sacrifice, hard work and harder living. So much suffered, so much forfeited, so much—for this opportunity. For my life. And I've tried, tried living up to it. But after years of struggling, fighting against the current, I'm ready to slow my arms. Stop kicking. Breathe the water in. I'm exhausted. Perhaps it's time to end this story. (15)

But then, suggesting the slightest possibility of a counterpoint, writing in fractured prose, in a footnote with smaller font than the main text, on a half-blank page, she begins to find a sense of agency and identity that had eluded her before.

1. It is remarkable, even
in the ostensible privacy of my own thoughts
I feel (still)
compelled
to restrict what I say. (78)

With this tentative, crucial insight, Brown's narrator opens the possibility for re-assembly and repair, of recovering language to shore fragments against her own ruin, in the contemporary waste land that she has encountered in the City of London.

The novel ends at an ambiguous moment, as—relieved and misled by the narrator's false assurances about her health—the boyfriend proposes.

As *Assembly* closes, it is unclear whether Brown's unnamed narrator will follow Septimus's tragic path, become a new Clarissa or, perhaps, forge a new path, continuing to write, filling in the blank spaces of her fractured narrative in a room of her own. Her potential fiancé, with the "big, important things he was peripherally involved in at Whitehall" (18), is a convincing enough template for a twenty-first-century Richard Dalloway. But there is no Peter Walsh, no Sally Seton, no pleasure to be taken in Shakespeare or flowers or London, and not the slightest echo of Old Bloomsbury's idealism about love and art to be found in *Assembly*. Brown's debut offers a powerful intersectional indictment of Britain's history and its contemporary historical moment.

Restorying Bloomsbury also lends itself to a broader scope, one that crosses genres. In multimedia artist Kabe Wilson's *Of One Woman or So*—an anagram for Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*—Woolf's text encounters a hands-on revision, and Bloomsbury's Cambridge gets a direct critique. "Restorying" not fiction but Woolf's feminist economic polemic, Wilson uses digital technology to rearrange every word in the earlier book. Wilson's narrator, Olivia N'Gowfri—an anagram of Woolf's name—is a young African woman of mixed race, who is radicalized by the elitism and eurocentrism of her contemporary Cambridge. She considers burning down its libraries, and with them, its exclusionary ideas and pedagogy, but instead resolves to recycle Woolf's text, making it her own story. Kabe Wilson and Susan Stanford Friedman, in an extended interview in *Recycling Virginia Woolf in Contemporary Art and Literature*, characterize *Of One Woman or So* as a "vast project of literary recycling" (55); as Wilson explores this metaphor, he also applies the term "composting" for his project of "reworking and reusing" Woolf's text (64).

Finally, as Jean Wyatt observes, Toni Morrison "'breaks [her] mould' with each novel, in Woolf's phrase (*A Writer's Diary* 202, 220), inventing a new narrative form to express the new complexities of her subject" (Wyatt 18). Wyatt posits that, in addition to situating Morrison's narrative innovations in the context of postmodernism, "a broad contextualization of her experiments with style and form ought to include, as well, her early intimacy with modernist texts," including especially Woolf and Faulkner (6). Woolf and Morrison scholars have already begun work toward tracing such connections, which offer rich potential for paired teaching. For example, Lori Watkins Fulton explores tropes of alienation in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Morrison's *Sula*, and Adriana Varga has recently examined "transatlantic resonances" in Morrison's novels and *Mrs. Dalloway*. Pairing restoried and canonical narratives has the potential to facilitate greater engagement and learning in the twenty-first-century classroom, empowering all students to share their knowledge and experience as they decolonize both modernist and contemporary culture.

Alice D. Keane
Queens College, City University of New York

Works Cited

- Brown, Natasha. *Assembly*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2021.
- Fulton, Lorie Watkins. "'A Direction of One's Own': Alienation in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Sula*." *African American Review* 40.1 (April 2006): 67-77.
- Miranda, Lin-Manuel. "Hamilton: An American Musical." *Hamilton: The Revolution*. Ed. Jeremy McCarter. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992.
- . *Sula*. New York: Knopf, 1973.
- Solomon, Asali. *The Days of Afrekete*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021.
- Thomas, Ebony Elizabeth. *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to The Hunger Games*. New York: New York UP, 2019.
- Varga, Adriana. "Transatlantic Resonances: Performance and Community in the Works of Virginia Woolf, Toni Morrison, and Bessie Head." Paper presented at Profession and Performance: The 30th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf. Virtual. Vermillion, SD. 13 June 2021.

- Wilson, Kabe and Susan Stanford Friedman. "Of Words, Worlds and Woolf: Recycling *A Room of One's Own* into *Of One Woman or So*." Ed. Monica Latham, Caroline Marie, and Anne-Laure Rigeade. *Recycling Virginia Woolf in Contemporary Art and Literature*. Kindle 7.0. New York: Routledge, 2022. 55-85.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs Dalloway*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1925.
- . *To the Lighthouse*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1927.
- . *A Room of One's Own*. New York: Harcourt, 1929.
- . *A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf*. London: Hogarth, 1965.
- Wyatt, Jean. *Love and Narrative Form in Toni Morrison's Later Novels*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2017.



The Uses of Anger...in Pedagogy: Reading Woolf through Lorde

Collectively, we've probably read *A Room of One's Own* [AROO] at least two dozen times. In our later teenage years, we each stumbled upon the book—probably with some educational intervention—and, with seriously no exaggeration, it changed our lives. We might not have been able to anticipate our eventual professional decisions when we were sixteen or seventeen, but something about Woolf's prose and her project in *A Room* spoke directly to us. We could feel the impossible hopelessness of Judith Shakespeare's circumstances, we could—without quite putting our not-yet-identifiably-queer fingers on it—understand the intense impact of "Chloe liked Olivia" (81), and we could, with rooms of our own, acknowledge the full-body exhale of shutting the door behind us.¹ In other words, *A Room of One's Own* became a foundational text for us, both personally and professionally, and we'd return to it many different times and in many different contexts over the years. We are certainly not the same readers we were when we were late teenagers and our experiences reading Woolf have definitely evolved, but the text is no less significant for us now than it was then.

It wasn't until much later that we both found Audre Lorde. The delay between discovering Woolf and discovering Lorde is the result of the successful marriage of feminism and whiteness that permeated the academy during the 1990s and early 2000s. Scholars as diverse as Alison Phipps, Rafia Zakaria, and Mikki Kendall have explained that white feminism centers political whiteness thus sidelining, at best, and rejecting, at worst, the experience of women of color. It is not surprising, then, that the writing of Lorde was absent from our initial feminist awakenings. Another reason for our delayed encounter with Lorde might have to do with the perceived radicality of her work. As emerging young white feminists, we were very concerned, implicitly if not explicitly, with our palatability to the educational and academic power structures that were—and still are—coded as masculine. (Think "strong modernism" à la Paul K. Saint-Amour.) Yes, Woolf energized us, but Lorde would have fanned the flames of our anger—flames that would make us less agreeable, less polite, and less willing to be complicit in the maintenance and perpetuation of patriarchal white supremacy. And it simply took us longer to unlearn our own racialized gender socialization, a process that we continually negotiate every day that we exist in the academy—and in the world.

In February 2021, we co-hosted a session of the Woolf Salon Project—an (often) monthly Zoom meeting facilitated by the estimable "Salon Conspirators"—Ben Hagen, Shilo McGiff, Drew Shannon, and Amy Smith—dedicated to bringing Woolf scholars together during the height of the pandemic. Early Salon sessions were focused on specific texts like "Kew Gardens" or theoretical methodologies like "Planetary Modernisms," but ours, "A Room of Your Own Will Not Protect You:

¹ Melanie Micir, in her book *Passion Projects: Modernist Women, Intimate Archives, and Unfinished Lives*, provides one of the most timely readings of Woolf's declaration that "Chloe liked Olivia."

Woolf and the Second Wave Feminists," was an attempt to put Woolf in conversation with writers who came after her, specifically Lorde. We were interested in the ways in which we might think of Lorde as writing *back* to Woolf, of how the two were interested in similar subjects but considered them from very distinct positions, of how they embraced seemingly diametrically opposed approaches to methods, literary and political. Since that generative afternoon over two years ago, we have not stopped thinking about this pairing, putting them together in classes, in our writing, in our day-to-day conversations.

Which brings us to this piece of writing and the question that underscores it: How do we reframe Woolf—in terms of relevancy, agency, activism, etc.—within a classroom of students much more attuned to intersectional concerns and racial politics than we were during our early feminist coming of age? For better or worse, Woolf seduced us easily; our students, though, are more adept at playing hard to get. For them, Woolf's solutions to issues of gender equity in the academy are cautious and short-sighted, born of privilege and colonialism; her polite disagreements leave our students cold. Conversely, Lorde's assertiveness and expansiveness, born of oppression and marginality, light a fire that fuels their self-reflection, analytical impulses, and political praxis. Of course, we acknowledge the significance of both and, despite our students' desire to be 'over' Woolf, continuously work to frame Woolf's contributions to our own intellectual lives and those of the feminist modernist scholars who came before us. Thus, our approach to Woolf in the classroom is contingent upon a contextual understanding of her contemporary applicability, compelling us to build an intellectual feminist coalition across time and space. Both Woolf and Lorde might have been skeptical of the composition of this coalition, but considering Woolf and Lorde *together* allows us to both reconfigure Woolf in terms of relevance and centralize Lorde in terms of feminist canon formation.

Woolf's Allure: Independence (and Its Whiteness)

The argument Woolf crafts across the six chapters of *A Room*, while compelling, is deeply indebted to her particular social location. As readers of the *Miscellany* know well, Woolf's lineage is intellectually elite if culturally bohemian. Her familial connections can be found in the chronicles of empire, education, and art. An outsider in terms of gender, yes, Woolf is more insider than outsider when it comes to the cultural production and political formations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her proximity to power—just out of reach—speaks directly to white women readers who, historically, have leveraged racial privilege to offset gender oppression. Of course, as with all employments of privilege, Woolf does not name the racialized and gendered politics embedded in her polemic. And white feminist readers have often followed suit. Early literary feminists placed Woolf on a pedestal and her "long shadow" (Detloff 206) remains, despite efforts at expanding and diversifying the canon.

Woolf's nearly unassailable position as a feminist literary icon is, at least partially, the product of patriarchal socialization. For women who desire a life of the mind, the path before them is one well-worn by a "procession of the sons of educated men" (*Three Guineas* [TG] 177)—all of whom subscribe to an ideology of solitary contemplation, independent scholarship, and individual genius.² Thus, the Judith Shakespeares of the world, if they survive, are compelled to conform to the same masculinist model, striving for solitude and independence through which to cultivate their own yet unsung genius. Women who want to read, write, think, and create, thus, are easily seduced by Woolf's politically and economically liberal solution to the gendered problem encountered by Mary Beton and company: five hundred pounds and a room of one's own.

But whereas Woolf's solution may solve one problem—that of the woman writer—it leaves untouched another, much bigger problem: patriarchy. Woolf's room of her own is firmly ensconced within the pa-

² This speaks directly to Gilbert and Gubar's conception of the "anxiety of authorship" in *The Madwoman in the Attic*.

triarchal house of colonialism and white supremacy; it is, very literally, the master's house of which Lorde writes, to which we return in a few short paragraphs. Yes, Woolf may have a room of her own, but the house is owned by sons of educated (white) men. While Woolf's imaginary women writers are afforded space, time, and money, the impacts of these sought-after privileges are more personal than political, disconnected from the radical ethos more contemporary readers seek.

And yet countless white women, us included, too long ignored the revolutionary call reverberating just beyond our coveted rooms. Woolf's brand of feminism served—and continues to serve—many white women. Woolfian feminism is palatable, unobjectionable to and even embedded within the patriarchal status quo of higher education. Isolated in the rooms of our own, we might be intellectually outspoken, critiquing the patriarchal and racist structures that, on the surface, seem to provide for and protect us. Challenging the system from within, though, ensures that we remain politically dutiful daughters, perpetuating systems of inequity even as we decry them.³ Although alluring, this feminist positionality is ultimately unacceptable. It simply does not go far enough in imagining liberation, affinity, and transformation.

Lorde's Counterseduction: Rage and Its Discontents

When we introduce our students to Lorde in our U.S. college classrooms, they often have some awareness of what might be considered the most well-known of her claims: "*the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*" (112; our italics). Our students think it's a call to burn it all down—which, to be fair, it might be. And they're entranced by the radicality of that possibility. But Lorde follows that famous line with, "They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support" (112). The short-sightedness of using the master's tools—with which we, as women in the academy, are quite familiar—is at the heart of Lorde's critique here. And as we've seen over the past few years—for our primarily U.S.-based students, through the appointment of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, the overturning of Roe vs. Wade, the right-wing attempts by rage-filled moms to ban books and identities in classrooms across the country⁴—there are plenty of women, usually but not exclusively white women, who still identify with the master's house even in the face of inevitable harm.

Woolf, in this regard, occupies a somewhat complex position—at times hypercritical of the master's house, at times an ardent defender of it, at times removed from the perceived safety of its walls, at times disenfranchised by others closer to the master than she. Our students, more aligned with Lorde than Woolf, do not find this complexity compelling, projecting their activist sensibilities onto Lorde's championing of anger as methodology. Lorde understands anger as "loaded with information and energy [...] direct and creative [...] crucial" ("The Uses of Anger" 8). She does not apologize for anger, something that women have long been asked to do, instead she advocates for its necessity in any generative engagement with racism and sexism in or outside of the academy. Of course, when we ask our students about their own relationship with anger, they—most particularly women and gender diverse folks—share personal stories that are familiar to the both of us, stories of a gender socialization that prioritizes docility and acquiescence. Like us, they have been conditioned to think of anger as destructive rather than productive, an attitude that unquestionably serves the system and its institutions.

Despite Woolf's problematic assertion that, "anger was tampering with the integrity of Charlotte Brontë the novelist" (AROO 72), readers can absolutely trace anger throughout *A Room of One's Own*—and much

³ Carol Hay, in *Think Like a Feminist*, references Susan Brownmiller's theorization of the patriarchal protection racket, a social system in which men are necessary to protect women from other men.

⁴ These women, notably, are rarely vilified for their anger, a testament to the privileges afforded by whiteness and conservative hypocrisy.

of Woolf's other nonfiction writing in particular. But it's not the kind of incisive anger that our students crave.⁵ Instead, it reads more like frustration tinged with sadness as Judith Shakespeare struggles with her own immense talent, as the skeptical world reconciles with the ghastly possibility that women may have "other interests besides the perennial interests of domesticity" (AROO 82), as education is withheld from *most* women regardless of intelligence or capability. Yes, these critiques are powerful and persuasive, but our students—as they look for kinship and political solidarity with each other, with friends on social media, with community organizations—simply do not find in Woolf a kindred spirit. They recognize that Woolf, privileged if also tokenized within the academy, has been given disproportionate attention, which reinforces the subordination of marginalized and potentially more radical women writers. Our current students refuse the "loving, knowing ignorance" (Ortega 56) of scholars whose academic foundations are built on and continue to bolster Woolfian feminism.

Not the Strangest Bedfellows: On Pairing Woolf and Lorde

To effectively teach *A Room of One's Own* in the 21st century is to acknowledge Woolf's privilege, certainly, but it's also to imagine what is necessary beyond that singular room and those pesky little five hundred pounds.⁶ If what Woolf wrote in 1928 was radical in the marriage of space and money belonging to a woman *on her own*, then, a century later, the feminist radicality resides in space and money belonging to *many women*. (And, obviously, the contemporary reimagining of Woolf's room requires an expansive and capacious understanding of the concept of 'woman': cis, trans, genderqueer, and beyond.) For us, the feminist, modernist classroom can accomplish at least part of this project.

Given that the feminist, modernist classroom is no longer confined to the oft-shifting chronological boundaries given to the modernist period, the question for us then, is: How can we, as feminist educators, build an intellectual room that accommodates many, that invites students and teachers to craft coalitions, and that prioritizes community over intellectual isolation? As Erica suggests in the Introduction to *Women Making Modernism*, "instead of employing canonicity as a *whole*, creating insiders and outsiders," we can instead "seek to imagine various *networks* that constitute modernist studies, *networks* that often interrupt, sometimes assist, and occasionally supersede the established patterns of order that have given shape to modernism through the academically endorsed institution of modernist studies" (6). Indeed, by pairing Woolf and Lorde, though we're certain that we're not the first to situate them *together*, we can forge new networks, prioritizing the formation of what we mentioned in the introduction to this piece: an intellectual feminist coalition across time and space—one that invites critique but also draws out possibilities for affinity, one that acknowledges the problems that come with unexamined privilege but also emphasizes the influence of complex sociopolitical realities that we cannot quite understand, one that culls individual and collective reflection at the same time that it generates sharp analysis.

While this does not require us to forsake Woolf, it does demand that we think critically and intentionally about who and what we're sacrificing in order to centralize her. Just as we scoff at male academics who cannot imagine a modernism syllabus without Lawrence, Joyce, Faulkner, Eliot, we, too, need to move with Woolf *beyond* Woolf. We must, as Lorde suggests in "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" (*Sister Outsider* 36-39), "learn to bear the intimacy of scrutiny, and to flourish within it" (36) even as that intimacy breeds discomfort and difficulty. It is through such challenges and our interrogation of them that a newly generative feminist modernist classroom will be built.

Erica Gene Delsandro and Jennifer Mitchell
Bucknell University and Union College

⁵ To be fair, we crave it, too.

⁶ Thanks, inflation!

Works Cited

- Delsandro, Erica Gene, ed. "Introduction: Making a Feminist Modernist Studies." *Women Making Modernism*. Gainesville: U of Florida P, 2020. 1-18.
- Detloff, Madelyn, "Iconic Shade and Other Professional Hazards of Woolf Scholarship." *Women Making Modernism*. Ed. Erica Gene Delsandro. Gainesville: U of Florida P, 2020. 203-19.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. 1979. New Haven: Yale Nota Bene Books, 2000.
- Hay, Carol. *Think Like a Feminist*. New York: Norton, 2020.
- Kendall, Mikki. *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women White Feminism Forgot*. London: Bloomsbury, 2021.
- Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *Sister Outsider*. 1984. Berkeley: Crossing P, 2007. 110-13.
- . "Poetry Is Not a Luxury." *Sister Outsider*. 1984. Berkeley: Crossing P, 2007. 36-39.
- . "The Uses of Anger." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 9.3 (1981): 7-10.
- Micir, Melanie. *Passion Projects: Modernist Women, Intimate Archives, Unfinished Lives*. Princeton, Princeton UP: 2019.
- Ortega, Mariana. "Being Lovingly, Knowingly Ignorant: White Feminism and Women of Color." *Hypatia* 21.3 (Summer 2006): 56-74.
- Phipps, Alison. *Me, Not You: The Trouble with Mainstream Feminism*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2020.
- Saint-Amour, Paul K. "Weak Theory, Weak Modernism." *Modernism/modernity* 25.3 (2018): 437-59.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. 1929. Annotated and with an Introduction by Susan Gubar. Gen. ed. Mark Hussey. New York: Mariner, 2005.
- . *Three Guineas*. 1938. Annotated and with an Introduction by Jane Marcus. Gen. ed. Mark Hussey. New York: Harvest Books, 2006.
- Zakaria, Rafia. *Against White Feminism: Notes on Disruption*. New York: Norton, 2021.



Teaching Critical Race Theory with *Orlando* and the *Dreadnought* Hoax

In the years since Jane Marcus published *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race*, many critics have done excellent work with Virginia Woolf's treatment of race.¹ This paper will discuss how we can use this scholarship in our teaching, both to help students reach a more sophisticated understanding of Woolf's work and to equip them to discuss complex racial dynamics within and beyond literary texts.

I use Woolf to teach Critical Race Theory (CRT) in my sophomore-level literary theory class. Since this is a pedagogy paper, I won't be bringing us to a single, ringing conclusion the way I would in a critical argument; instead, I'm offering a recipe for classroom conversations, which I've developed over the nine years I've been teaching this material. These conversations serve three important purposes at once: introducing students to a major body of theory; teaching them how to use theory to analyze literature; and giving them tools to talk about issues of race and racism more broadly.

¹ A complete bibliography on Woolf and race is beyond the scope of this essay, but good resources include work by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, Urmila Seshagiri, Karen Kaivola, Mark A. Wollaeger, Julie Vandivere, Helen Carr, Kevin Young, and Simone Niehoff.

Framingham State University's literary theory class is the gateway for our English major. All sections concentrate on a few books by a single author, alongside a textbook on literary theory; I use Lois Tyson's *Critical Theory Today*. The class walks students through basic concepts from a range of theories, assigns sample works of criticism, and culminates in their first literary-critical research paper. We use a textbook for theory rather than primary texts because the goal of the class is to give students an overview of major theoretical schools, providing context for the terms and concepts they meet in the wild when they start reading criticism. This survey involves some oversimplification of the theories, but so does any introductory class. Our student body is smart and hard-working, but they are often juggling full-time school with full-time work and frequently have little experience reading challenging philosophical texts. There is time to give them Butler or Lacan or Spivak's own language later in the major, after they've assimilated some core concepts.

Focusing on a single author as a case study allows students to develop expertise on a major author, getting a sense of what "expertise" actually means (i.e., a lot more than "I read the Wikipedia entry"). They learn to draw connections among texts, finding patterns and variations in how authors treat their key ideas. We can draw on past assignments as well as the day's reading to understand each theoretical approach: we might, for example, return to a passage we analyzed using psychoanalytic theory to test how our analysis changes with the addition of a feminist lens, and see how those different readings of one text cast light on the writer's later work.

The single-author model has a few significant drawbacks, however. First is student interest: if I'm teaching English 204 and you are in the class, you're reading Virginia Woolf all semester whether you like it or not. Second, and relatedly, a single-author course is by definition not diverse. A class on Woolf lends itself easily to discussions of gender and sexuality. Using Woolf as a springboard for talking about theories of race may seem quite natural to readers of this essay, but to most students and even some of my colleagues, it is initially a harder sell. I have found, however, that my unit on CRT is one of my favorites of the semester, both because students often care intensely about the material and because the match between Woolf's novels and the theoretical material is less instantly obvious.

The *Dreadnought* Hoax makes an excellent starting point to help students understand how CRT can provoke fascinating, multi-layered discussions about Woolf, and about literature by authors of any race. Our unit on CRT is particularly helpful in this class as an object lesson in the use of theory, precisely because Woolf is not "doing" CRT herself in the way students might argue that she is "doing" feminist theory or structuralist theory or even Marxist analysis. One of the reasons I selected Woolf for my literary theory class is that Woolf's experiments with structure, with consciousness, or with not going to the help of that young man across the table actually walk students through some of the same basic premises as our theory textbook does. This is useful, since students get more sophisticated understandings of the theory by seeing it in action, but also misleading, since we don't necessarily expect authors to share our theoretical interests—rather, we use theory to analyze underlying ideas of which some authors may not be consciously aware. The experimentalism and curiosity that makes Woolf's work a great case study can also trick students into thinking that we are looking for ways that authors agree with the theories we use, rather than using theory to unpack a text's components, underpinnings, commitments, or ideologies.

But Woolf's treatment of race, while complex and interesting, does not map tidily onto recent theory; her opposition to empire, her progressive politics, her willingness to use the n-word in her diaries, the blackface escapade of the *Dreadnought* Hoax, and the complex treatment of Blackness in *Orlando* make her resistant to pigeonholing. This means that students who have been trying to find 'examples' (or worse, 'proof') of the theories we have studied will be challenged to a more advanced

level of theoretical engagement by discussing ideas Woolf herself did not consider in the same terms.

We reach the *Dreadnought* Hoax a little more than halfway through the semester, when we have already read *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, and have speedwalked through week-long units on new criticism, Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, new historicism, structuralism, and deconstruction. At this point, the students have a good grasp of Woolf's thematic interests and political beliefs—but their readings often focus on the sadder aspects of her writing: Septimus's suicide and the elegiac tone of *To the Lighthouse* often make more of an impression on them than the fun of Clarissa's party.

To this very serious set of ideas, I add a brief 2014 essay on the *Dreadnought* Hoax by Maria Popova, originally published in her blog *The Marginalian* (<https://www.themarginalian.org/>),² a lighthearted piece aimed at general readers. Popova's takeaway—echoing the original 1910 newspaper coverage—is that the Hoax is a delightful story of smart young people pranking the world's largest naval power. Popova tells the story, gives the photograph of the hoaxers that was reprinted in the newspapers, and quotes passages from Adrian Stephen's 1936 *The "Dreadnought" Hoax*. She does not engage with the racial politics of the prank: she merely describes the image of "Woolf in brownface" as "disarmingly entertaining" (Popova), and her analysis concentrates on the ways that the popular press's enthusiastic mythmaking around the Hoax prefigures twenty-first-century media spin and narrative-creation.

As Danell Jones argues in *The Girl Prince*, retellings of the *Dreadnought* Hoax often tell us more about the teller than about the Hoax itself. Students respond to Popova's essay with a mixture of shock and pleasure: they share Popova's delight in pranking the Royal Navy but are appalled by Woolf's use of blackface. To help students turn those simultaneous, competing reactions into analysis, I pair Popova's essay with Tyson's chapter on African American Criticism, which introduces students to a range of thinkers and ideas including but not limited to concepts from CRT. Key terms introduced in the chapter, which I go over at the beginning of our first two-hour class in the unit, include the difference between racism (the belief that one race is superior to another) and racialism (the belief that such superiority is based in biological rather than cultural or social differences); institutionalized racism (the idea that existing systems promote racist outcomes and whether or not individual actors intend such outcomes); internalized racism (when members of a racialized minority comes, perhaps unconsciously, hold racist beliefs about themselves); Afrocentrism (the recognition of shared African roots across Black diaspora cultures and a push against forced assimilation); and Toni Morrison's term "Africanism," the use by white writers of Black people or Blackness as a rhetorically useful Other.

While Tyson's chapter gives a history of African American criticism beginning with W. E. B. DuBois, I focus our discussion on her section on CRT. Tyson presents several core ideas from this diverse body of legal and critical thought:

- The idea that race is a social rather than a biological concept;
- The cumulative effect of everyday racism;
- Interest convergence: Derrick Bell's argument that Black civil rights often advance when Black and white interests align;
- Kimberlé Crenshaw's notion of "intersectionality," the idea that identity categories like race, class, gender, and sexuality have overlapping effects on an individual and each other;

- The importance of including voices of color—an ironic point to discuss in a class on Virginia Woolf;
- and white privilege, the benefits white people receive simply by virtue of their race—benefits that come with being perceived as "normal," such as a presumption of innocence (Black drivers are more likely to be stopped by the police) or pervasive representation (white people can expect to see politicians, teachers, cartoon characters, etc. who look like them).

Many of these concepts prove fruitful in examining the *Dreadnought* Hoax—both the event itself and Popova and Stephen's retellings of it. Students may see the fact that the hoaxers got away all but unpunished as an example of white privilege (although class privilege also plays a role). Analysis of the photograph leads to discussions of the ways that constructions of race shift over time, as students frequently say that the figures in the photograph do not read as Black to them; this is frequently a new idea to students, one they find surprising and revelatory in light of the fact that hoaxers and hoaxed alike would have regularly seen Black people in London streets and on British vessels.

Our conversation about the Hoax frequently hinges on discussions of intersectionality. This concept helps students understand their own simultaneous feelings of appreciation at the Hoax and disapproval at the blackface, as it helps them identify Woolf's own equivocal position as privileged (given her class, connections, and relative wealth) and oppressed (given her gender and lack of formal education). They tend to argue that the Hoax is funny to the extent that it is punching up by mocking the Royal Navy but distasteful to the extent that it is punching down by using blackface. Their explication of that distaste helps them understand Morrison's concept of Africanism, as in most accounts of the Hoax, the "Abyssinian" identity performed by the hoaxers is an African identity created entirely for their own purposes and based on vanishingly few actual facts³ (although Jones argues that Horace de Vere Cole may actually have done considerable research [128]). Even interest convergence is helpful here, if we examine the ways that the hoaxers' choice to imitate specifically Abyssinian royalty is informed by the British Empire's diplomatic relationship with Abyssinia, one of only two African states to remain uncolonized by European countries.⁴

The next class meeting turns to the first chapter of *Orlando*, with its startling opening sentence burlesquing the performance of gender, class, race, and nationality: "He—for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it—was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters" (*Orlando* 11). Armed with the discussions I have just outlined, even students who have not yet recognized the book's playfulness or encountered its utter rejection of the gender binary often do excellent work with this sentence, examining how it constructs and critiques a white English identity which is explicitly tied both to biological sex and to the shifting social construction of gender. These students tend to read the image as contrasting race and gender: gender is fluid here, they argue, but race is not. This reading often evolves as they continue through the book and contrast Orlando's slicing at the literal Moor's head with his passionate identification with Othello; here, too, students see a construction of Africanness for European ends, often engaging in substantive debate about the degree to which Woolf critiques that European use of Blackness.

By the end of the week-long unit, we have discussed, in depth or in passing, a range of white British performances of Blackness: the *Dreadnought* Hoax, and the blackface minstrel shows that surrounded it; Shakespeare's *Othello*; Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*; and Woolf's varying degrees of alternately alienating and 'seductive' fictive Blackness in

² Editorial note: Maria Popova's *The Marginalian* relies on donations (PayPal is one of the options) and donations can even be made directly from the webpage dedicated to the article on the *Dreadnought* Hoax at: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2014/02/07/dreadnought-hoax-virginia-woolf/>.

³ See, for example, Hermione Lee, who describes the hoaxers' "breathtaking degree of ignorance of all things African" (Lee 283).

⁴ For more on the political overtones of the choice of Abyssinia, see Moira Marsh.

Orlando; these can be paired with Black British responses to such performances, including Kabe Wilson's "The Dreadlock Hoax." As we continue the novel and read about Orlando's encounter with the Gypsies in Turkey, we move to a unit on postcolonial theory, challenging students to consider how differential racialization in the British Empire plays out in the text.

Opening the unit on CRT with the *Dreadnought* Hoax motivates the focus on race we apply to *Orlando*. In an earlier version of the class, before I added the day on the *Dreadnought*, I found it difficult to get students to sustain our discussion of race in the novel, especially once they discover Orlando's transformation from man to woman; while discussions of Blackness are threaded through the whole text, they are often brief, and easily skipped by a reader who is either uninterested in or uncomfortable with discussions of race. The inclusion of the *Dreadnought* material, however, not only helps students find their way in a theoretical school; it convinces them that the racial undercurrents in the novel play a serious and slippery role in Woolf's treatment of fluid identity and artistic creation. In the process, our discussions model the importance of CRT in reading white authors, and contest the idea that whiteness is somehow race-neutral.

Rachel V. Trousdale
Framingham State University

Works Cited

- Bell, Derrick A., Jr. "Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma." *Harvard Law Review* 93.3 (1980): 518-33. Web. 29 December 2023. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1340546>.
- Carr, Helen. "Virginia Woolf, Empire, and Race." *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*. Eds. Sue Roe and Susan Sellers. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2010. 197-213.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *U of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989 (1989): 139-67. Web. 29 December 2023. <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.
- Gerzina, Gretchen Holbrook. "Virginia Woolf, Performing Race." *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*. Ed. Maggie Humm. Edinburgh UP, 2010. 74-87.
- Jones, Danell. *The Girl Prince: Virginia Woolf, Race, and the Dreadnought Hoax*. London: Hurst Publishers, 2023.
- Kaivola, Karen. "Revisiting Woolf's Representations of Androgyny: Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Nation." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 18.2 (1999): 235-61. Web. 25 October 2023. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/464448>.
- Lee, Hermione. *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.
- Marcus, Jane. *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1994.
- Marsh, Moira. "Bunga-Bunga on the *Dreadnought*: Hoax, Race and Woolf." *Comedy Studies* 9.2 (2018): 200-15. Web. 25 October 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2040610X.2018.1494359>.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992.
- Niehoff, Simone. "Unmasking the Fake: Theatrical Hoaxes from the *Dreadnought* Hoax to Contemporary Artist Practice." *Faking, Forging, Counterfeiting: Discredited Practices at the Margins of Mimesis*. Ed. Daniel Becker, Annalisa Fischer and Yola Schmitz. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2018. 223-38. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839437629-014>
- Popova, Maria. "The *Dreadnought* Hoax: Young Virginia Woolf and Her Bloomsbury Posse Prank the Royal Navy in Drag and a Turban." *The Marginalian* 7 February 2014: 312. Web. 30 August 2023. <https://www.themarginalian.org/author/mpopova/page/312/>.
- Seshagiri, Urmila. *Race and the Modernist Imagination*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2010.

- Vandivere, Julie. "The Bastard's Contention: Race, Property, and Sexuality in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*" *Modernism/Modernity* 28.1 (2021): 91-116. Web. 26 October 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.2021.0012>.
- Wilson, Kabe. "The Dreadlock Hoax." *Studies in the Maternal* 6.1 (2014). Web. 9 January 2024. <https://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk/article/id/4224/>.
- Wollaeger, Mark A. "Woolf, Postcards, and the Elision of Race: Colonizing Women in *The Voyage Out*." *Modernism/modernity* 8.1 (2001): 43-75. Web. 26 October 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.2001.0014>.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando: A Biography*. Annotated with an Introduction by Maria DiBattista. Gen. ed. Mark Hussey. New York: Harvest/Harcourt, 2006.
- Young, Kevin. "The Time Virginia Woolf Wore Blackface." *The New Yorker*. 27 October 2017. Web. 3 January 2024. <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-time-virginia-woolf-wore-blackface>.



A Modernist Pedagogy for the Twenty-First Century: Embracing Woolf's Unorthodoxy and Student Agency

In 1992, Susan Stanford Friedman reasserted Virginia Woolf's progressive pedagogies, but for teaching modernism. Aided by theorist Alice Jardine, Friedman argued that Woolf's projects help to valorize women as intrinsic to modernity, and that Woolf claims an unprecedented amount of literary agency in crafting her narratives this way (104-05). This agency directly relates to Woolf's pedagogical model, and to my own argument. Friedman believed that Woolf shaped her own audience through her writing, creating 'common readers' who were "active, engaged readers positioned at the borders of convention and innovation, encouraged to interrogate prevailing orthodoxies of representation" (105). Woolf encouraged this learning experience by allowing each text to establish ground for its experimentalism and teach its audience how to interpret it. Woolf lectured only a few years, but her goals for the future of higher education—made available to all and focused on pursuing peace and universal well-being—were recorded most clearly in *Three Guineas* [TG].

Though not as popular as her other works, *Three Guineas* elucidates Woolf's feminism, anti-imperialism, and other strong political sentiments. Like her earlier modernist works, *Three Guineas* is an experimental text. Woolf frames the text as a series of letters about preventing war, and cites private letters, autobiographies, and newspapers as her central sources of information. Following Woolf's model for using "unauthorized" and unorthodox sources to find the "truth" (qtd. in Marcus xlvi) of human experience can help us create a more inclusive environment for all, and effectively interject a modernist ethos into this moment of diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) debates, academic precarity, and resurgent global fascism. Adaptations and pedagogies can instill the spirit of modernism in forms which push today's boundaries, just as the modernists used unusual formats (such as manifestos) to convey their sociopolitical concerns in the twentieth century.

In her foreword to the annotated Harcourt edition of *Three Guineas*, Jane Marcus thinks about why the text is so effective, focusing on the materiality of its craft and the history of its amalgamation. She sees

Woolf's commitment to experimentation, to creating a text that requires interaction from its readers in a fashion far ahead of its technological moment, as leading us toward a discovery of the "truth" of women's experiences (Marcus xlviii). Marcus argues that, as Woolf deconstructs her authority within the text and invites readers to form their own opinions about "the relation of women to 'facts'" (Marcus xlviii),¹ she turns to these "unreliable" or unorthodox sources—biographies, autobiographies, letters, daily newspapers, etc.—as wellsprings of history and politics. Such sources were not considered 'scholarly' in Woolf's day (see Marcus xlviii), so by emphasizing them as her primary references, Woolf deliberately challenges patriarchal authority. Woolf's example should also make us pause in our patriarchal, fascist, alarmingly prejudiced social moment and consider: From where do we draw the evidence of our 'truth'?

If, as scholars and global citizens, our goal is to teach modernism in an inclusive and even activist manner, then we should learn from Woolf's model and seek unusual ways of transmitting the modernist ethos. Manifestos, as art and literature, worked as subversive distributors of the modernist spirit in the twentieth century, Laura Winkiel argues. Before the twentieth century, manifestos were an unusual literary medium, but they became a critical way of disseminating avant-garde art, literature, and sociopolitical messaging for modernist intellectuals (e.g., *BLAST*). But Winkiel contends that manifestos ruptured the flow of homogenous/empty time through their practice of performativity (13). This claim positions modernism not as a single notion, but as a "conflictual terrain occupied by colonial writers, flooded by militant women's movement literature, and fragmented by the avant garde" (Winkiel 4). In other words, manifestos are under-venerated activist texts serving crucial functions on the peripheries of twentieth-century societies. The "Feminist Manifesto," though unpublished in her lifetime, is one of Mina Loy's most popular texts in university classrooms. Loy's revolutionary piece co-opted the genre and created something for women, expressing feminine rage in the hopes that publicly articulating such emotions would generate real action. This was the core of the modernist spirit.

Woolf had a complicated relationship with manifesto writing in her own oeuvre,² but in discussing forms of individual action that women might take against war, Woolf also looked to performative actions women were taking which drew attention to their revolutionary agency. According to Naomi Black, Woolf praised the Woolwich mayor's wife, who refused to "so much as darn a sock" to support the war effort (196). Apparently "the 'mayoress' persisted, and publicly, in expressing unpopular views, and this Woolf suggests is exemplary behavior." Of course, Black also notes, in places where fascist regimes were most oppressive, people were unable to exercise their freedom by refusing to cooperate or resisting incorporation into state-endorsed regions, educational systems, and organizations (196). But in England, individuals were still free to try. The same is true of our temporal moment as we face down a resurgence of global fascism: many of us still have the freedom to resist unjust systems and to make radical stands for change, and we have the perfect platforms from which to do so: our classrooms.

One way to teach a modernist form in the twenty-first century might be to look at its adaptations; if manifestos were always unorthodox but indispensable formats which disseminated a modernist sensibility, as Winkiel claims, then manifestos are likely to be a format which adapts well across time. Take, for example, UK recording artist Paris Paloma's 2023 song "Labour" about feminine/feminist rage. Paloma teased

¹ Marcus says that, in *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf executes this same maneuver with her opening lines, inviting readers to determine the relation between women and fiction (xlvii-xlviii).

² Woolf critiqued manifestos for being ineffective and hypocritical, as well as for being too masculine in nature (Winkiel 197-99). However, some of her critical works are difficult to categorize and take on a polemical tone, so one could argue that they have many of the defining qualities of a twentieth-century manifesto. In fact, Edinburgh University Press lists *Three Guineas* as one of the Top Ten most important manifestos of the twentieth century.

the bridge of the song (along with visual clips from a music video), two months before its official release, using the popular social media platform TikTok to both market the single and share the emotion behind the song. Its lyrics critique the uneven and toxic power dynamics that exist in heterosexual relationships because of how our society normalizes patriarchy.

Paloma denounces patriarchy, pointing especially to the dichotomous roles that women are made to inhabit, constantly shifting between maternal and vestal acts as they serve and please their male romantic partners. She decries how these men live easy lives while women churn out children to uphold antiquated notions of the heterosexual nuclear family. Paloma ultimately argues that love and subjugated labor are not the same thing. The soundbite went viral among young women, who identified almost universally with the lyrics' sentiments outlined—but it also sparked debates in comment sections about white feminism and the necessity of highlighting the historical and continued labor of black and brown women globally.³ Winkiel asserts that the spirit of the modernist manifesto "sought to transform modernity so that it would overcome ignorance, servitude, and injustice" (232), and the song's visuals combine with the lyrics to advance that same goal. The pre-released video clip shows Paloma eating a dripping, crimson pomegranate with her hands, staring defiantly, symbolisms proliferating. Looking at how that this song uses the maelstrom of modern social media to combine performativity with the modernist ethos (as Winkiel has explained it), I'd argue that the TikTok sound bites of "Labour" and the various ways it was used to transmit sociopolitical statements about feminine rage, sexist oppression, and misogynoir, qualify it as a particularly modernist feminist manifesto.

But looking at adaptations of manifestos is just one example of how we can embody the essence of modernism in our twenty-first-century classrooms. The goal is to find relevant and inclusive ways to connect the two. Well-versed on the subject, Woolf's writings on how to build a future women's college stand as a paragon for us still: "The poor college must teach only the arts that can be taught cheaply and practiced by poor people [...] It should teach the arts of human intercourse; the art of understanding other people's lives and minds, the little arts of talk, of dress, of cookery that are allied with them. The aim of the new college [...] should be not to segregate and specialise, but to combine" (TG 43). Woolf's ideals do not mention the terminology we are now so familiar with—diversity, equity, inclusion—but they begin to embody their meaning. Yet in the twenty-first century, what should this "new college" look like? I contend that a pedagogy that truly strives to facilitate diversity, equity, and inclusion has to go hand-in-hand with a sense of discomfort and learn from it.

Though as modernists we work within a field often characterized as unsettling the social and artistic boundaries of its audience, many of us seem to shy away from the discomfort of emphasizing the "arts that can be taught cheaply and practiced by poor people" (TG 34). We want to make our courses worth the exorbitant fees our students pay to take them, to earn our ever-more-precarious salaries. So, we've canonized texts such as *Women in Love* and *Ulysses*, which were once considered radical and unorthodox,⁴ and we teach them as though we are imparting great secrets of the universe to impressionable minds. Woolf detests this sort of authoritative preaching: "Set fire to the old hypocrisies," she

³ This passage refers to "black women" and "brown women" separately and to the groups who came up in discussions in the comment sections of the viral video. TikTok is a global platform, so commenters were not sticking to a solely American context, but their discourses seem to use the language of "black and brown" women's labor throughout history and across spaces.

⁴ Both D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* and Joyce's *Ulysses* were at one point banned for obscenity. Beyond their sexual content, both texts push the boundaries of sociopolitical thought on a variety of issues. The Woolf's Hogarth Press published many "radical young writers" (xv) Mark Hussey says in the preface to *Three Guineas* and were approached with several chapters to *Ulysses* but couldn't accommodate its length or complexity.

entreats (TG 45). I'd argue that the best way to do this is deceptively simple: we give our students more agency in their teaching and learning process. Maybe we give up a little power in the classroom. Maybe instead of rigid syllabi and content *we* choose, we invite students to learn with us, to bring to *us* resources we would otherwise miss, and thereby also a diversity of thought. It will be an uncomfortable shift, especially for those of us trained in traditional methodologies. But think like a modernist for a moment, be a little radical. Pedagogical theorist Henry Giroux argues that there is a "need for radical educators to view schools as cultural and political spheres actively engaged in the production and struggle for voice" (141), especially if we are modeling ourselves after the work of political modernism.

Acknowledging student agency is about facilitating a space where it's not a hardship to make space for and adapt to student needs. It's about reorganizing our thinking, and centering our students, their needs, and what our rapidly changing world requires of them. It's about being willing not only to teach, but also to be taught. In some ways, what I am arguing for is DEI as an ethics and as a praxis; being open to the unexpected, which arises from everyday interactions with our already existent, diverse student body. Thus, by allowing our students more instrumentality in their education, and being willing to probe texts still considered 'unreliable' and 'non-academic' (like viral TikToks), we may yet be able to shape a new pedagogy beyond the old, dysfunctional academy, and reveal the relevance of the revolutionary modernist spirit for our current moment.

In an effort to demonstrate my own advice, the following suggestions (though compiled and re-phrased) are gathered from dialogue with my students and peers regarding how to make courses more inclusive and equitable:

- leave open spaces in the curriculum for what students want to read and discuss;
- host fewer lectures and more dialogues or student-led projects;
- survey students for how the topic of the class impacts their daily lives on campus or in their society, and spend time on that connection;
- work more with public/open access/mainstream sources of information and recognize that knowledge production doesn't just happen in ivory towers.

These aren't new or shocking suggestions to seasoned educators, but coming directly from students, I believe they bear repeating, because they're not reflected in students' experiences.

Allowing students agency over their classes also breaks down the barrier that our hierarchy of 'authority' constructs, because authority is a major part of the problem: it's a barrier to equity and inclusion. As Giroux expounds,

the discourse of critical understanding not only represents an acknowledgement of the political and pedagogical processes at work in the construction of forms of authorship and voice within different institutional and social spheres; it also constitutes a critical attack on the vertical ordering of reality inherent in the unjust practices that are actively at work in the wider society. (143)

We can't have equity while maintaining these ideological and social hierarchies. And we can't be inclusive if we're always partitioned emotionally and intellectually from our students. Remaining cut off from others who could expand our perspectives only impoverishes our lives. Woolf entreats us, the teachers of her "new college," to be "good liverers as well as [...] good thinkers" (TG 43). It seems to me that Woolf's

goal in establishing such a place is really *increased* access to improve everyone's lives—including ours.

I know it feels challenging to be a "good liver" when our future as instructors is also uncertain. You cannot attend any conference in the humanities, or pick up a scholarly journal, without encountering at least one panel or article on the precarity of academia, or the 'death' of the English degree as we know it. Modernist intellectuals had different circumstances leading them toward what they perceived as a great break from their past, a moment of rupture—but as a scholar of the humanities in the twenty-first century, I imagine this is probably how they felt. And yet, despite the uncertainty she must have faced, Woolf found it in herself to petition future intellectuals (us) to do something new—to make the academy better. It's clear that the current trajectory of academia is unsustainable; it and we will have to change. But I believe that allowing our students the agency to determine their own paths through knowledge and being open to unorthodox ways to navigate that knowledge, will help us to change the structures of academia that are no longer serving us.

Dominique Townsend
University of Rochester

Works Cited

- Black, Naomi. *Virginia Woolf as Feminist*. New York: Cornell UP, 2004.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. "Virginia Woolf's Pedagogical Scenes of Reading: 'The Voyage Out,' 'The Common Reader,' and Her 'Common Readers.'" *Modern Fiction Studies* 38.1 (1992): 101-25. Web. 26 March 2023. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26284319>.
- Giroux, Henry A. *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture, and Schooling: A Critical Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Marcus, Jane. Introduction. *Three Guineas*. 1938. By Virginia Woolf. Annotated with an Introduction by Jane Marcus. Gen. ed. Mark Hussey. Orlando: Harvest/Harcourt, 2006.
- Winkiel, Laura. *Modernism, Race, and Manifestos*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2008.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Three Guineas*. 1938. Annotated with an Introduction by Jane Marcus. Gen. ed. Mark Hussey. New York: Harvest/Harcourt, 2006.



Outsider Pedagogy and Its Paradoxes

Virginia Woolf's provocative, visionary critique of higher education in *Three Guineas* anticipates many arguments by proponents of "radical pedagogy," such as Paolo Freire and bell hooks. Like such later writers, Woolf explores whether and how education might be transformed into "a practice of freedom" (Freire 80).¹ She hints at curricular and pedagogical changes necessary if universities are to empower those she calls "outsiders," people historically denied access to education and public life, while allowing them to retain the outsider's freedom from "unreal loyalties" to a system that oppresses (*Three Guineas* [TG] 78). It is a paradox, of course, to teach in this spirit within institutions developed to reproduce this system.

In twenty-first-century institutions remade by neoliberalism, the paradoxes of what Jill Channing has called, in this journal, Woolf's "outsider pedagogy" remain acute (11). This essay charts a contemporary form taken by such paradoxes by juxtaposing Woolf's challenges to higher education in *Three Guineas* with a passage from Zadie Smith's

¹ Freire describes his famous contrast between "banking" and "dialogic" models of education as a contrast between "education as a practice of domination" and "education as a practice of freedom" (81). Hooks adopts his phrase "education as a practice of freedom" in the subtitle of her landmark book, *Teaching to Transgress*.

2005 campus novel, *On Beauty*, and warnings by Gerald Graff during his contemporaneous tenure as President of the MLA. Echoing Woolf, Smith and Graff both suggest that outsider pedagogy might reinforce the ethos it strives to subvert: neoliberal, rather than interwar, competitiveness and instrumentalization. After outlining these warnings, I turn to a Woolf text seemingly unrelated to education, *The Waves*, from which I draw a vision of aesthetically oriented conversation that, I propose, offers an analogy for both classroom and wider literary-disciplinary ambitions suited to the paradoxes of twenty-first-century academia.

As readers will recall, *Three Guineas* nests letters within letters. It opens with an ostensible response to a male correspondent's request for advice about how to prevent war, in which Woolf's narrator digresses into a critique of institutions of higher education and public life generally. These institutions have excluded people like Woolf's narrator, the "daughters of educated men," and this exclusion generates a communication gap between such "outsiders" and the "educated men" who run society (TG 4). Much of the text is devoted to questioning whether and how to close that gap: should women be educated like their brothers and admitted to the halls of power? On this point, Woolf's narrator is famously ambivalent. Universities link education to "superiority" and "distinction," she argues, "rous[ing] competition and jealousy—emotions which [...] have their share in encouraging a disposition to war" (TG 21). In an enclosed letter addressed to a woman seeking donations to support a college for women, she speculates that perhaps the old system of education should be burned down, rather than emulated for a wider, more diverse student body. She imagines a new college for outsiders, a "poor college" designed "not to segregate and specialize"—among subjects and persons—"but to combine," to seek out "new combinations [to] make good wholes in human life" (TG 34). At such a college, "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" (TG 34). In this environment, students of literature would think "not of examinations or degrees or of what honour or profit they could make literature give them," she asserts, "but of the art itself" (TG 34).

At this point, however, another gap appears in the text, an ellipsis after which Woolf drops the utopian thread. She acknowledges the pressing "reality" that women "must be taught to earn their livings," as this is the route of escape from the dependency "upon their fathers and brothers" that makes women "consciously and unconsciously in favour of war" (TG 35, 36). Economic security, she indicates, is necessary not only for intellectual independence, but also for escaping resentment, competitiveness, and other emotions that fuel violence. We have reached the central paradox of *Three Guineas*' view of education: it does not resolve the tension between its utopian radicalism and its accommodation to reality. The utopian vision is repeatedly broken off, but so is everything in this collage-like work, full of footnotes and letters within letters, dashes, ellipses, and extracts from others' writings. As Matthew Cheney has argued, the text's "polyphonic" form "presents the reader with [...] multiplicity within which flows a yearning for liberatory, communal, anti-authoritarian unity," and it "leave[s] the unifying to each reader's imaginative work" (67). For Cheney, this style comprises the text's own pedagogy, its instruction of readers in the work of combining without suppressing, unifying without dominating.

Indeed, although *Three Guineas* only glancingly discusses methods of teaching, its arguments and formal experiments complement key ideas associated with progressive and radical pedagogy, the calls for new teaching methods in the service of liberation to which I alluded at the outset of this essay. There are compelling similarities between Woolf's criticisms of "the old and rich universities" and progressive educators' challenges to traditional lecturing and grading practices (TG 34). She recommends "pour[ing] mild scorn upon chapels, upon degrees, and upon the value of examinations," mocking "prizes" and "refusing to

lecture," and the text's ironies and unconsolidated polyphony formally model the intellectual freedom and disavowal of a lecturer's posture of authority Woolf advocates (TG 35, 78). In form and content, then, *Three Guineas* anticipates Paolo Freire's advocacy of "dialogic" over "banking" models of education (81), bell hooks's concerns that institutions of higher education too often reinforce a "culture of domination" (25), and contemporary arguments for "flipped classrooms," "ungrading," and other innovative pedagogical methods designed to rebel against classroom and assessment practices that critics maintain reinforce competition, anxiety, and "compliance," rather than genuine learning (Blum 4-5).²

Simultaneously, however, *Three Guineas* shares a note of hesitation we sometimes find in the writings of progressive and radical educators. Consider hooks's articulation of the premise of such pedagogy: "the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy," she writes, implicitly qualifying her vision by reminding us that the possibilities of the classroom are inevitably conditioned by the ethos of the academy (12).

Indeed, even as universities have (in theory) opened to historical 'outsiders'—and even as instructors redesign curricula and teaching practices to make the most of the classroom's status as our 'most radical space of possibility'—universities arguably cultivate "competition and jealousy" today more than ever before (TG 21). Remade by decades of neoliberal governance and ideology, twenty-first century academia demands that literature instructors demonstrate "what honour or profit"—what marketable skills—an education in literature affords, even as we may wish to insist that this framing is antagonistic to the deepest values of literature and the arts (TG 34). Contemporary employment trends in higher education enforce distinctions between research faculty, adjuncts, and staff; and students and teachers are burdened by debt and anxiety, coming of age—or laboring obscurely—in a precarious world, our future threatened by climate change, AI, political upheaval, and numerous other causes of uncertainty.³ In such a context, simply boycotting credentialism and conventional modes of assessment is unlikely to expand freedom.

Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* unites the neoliberal context I've just sketched with campus 'culture wars,' embodied in the novel by an interpersonal rivalry between two British art historians at a liberal arts college near Boston. To explicate the novel's vision of campus power and politics, pedagogy, and institutional structure is beyond my scope. I focus here on a vignette in which Smith hints at a specific paradox to pursuing "education as a practice of freedom" in contemporary academia (Freire 81). The passage warns that not only are key tenets of radical pedagogy unable to counteract the forces of neoliberalism, but that they might, in fact, reinforce them.

In the passage, a student tells a professor about the undergraduates' shorthand for different humanities classes:

[W]e say, like, Professor Simeon's class is "The tomato's nature versus the tomato's nurture," and Jane Colman's class is "To properly understand the tomato you must first uncover the tomato's suppressed Herstory"—she's *such* a silly bitch that woman—and

² See Blum (ed.) for a comprehensive anthology of arguments and strategies for "ungrading." As Blum notes in her introduction, proponents of "going gradeless" adopt varying methods and rationales, but they share a belief that an emphasis on grading diminishes learning, while reinforcing attitudes similar to those Woolf identifies in the elite, exclusionary universities of her day (5).

³ For a review of social scientific studies of global neoliberal reforms in higher education, see Mula-Falcón and Caballero. The authors spotlight the increasing influence of "market interests, competitiveness and performativity" in higher education, and they identify evidence of increasing rates of anxiety and other health risks among educators (381). See also Feldman and Sandoval, and Newfield, for discussions of neoliberal reform in the UK and US respectively.

[...] Erskine Jegede's class is "The post-colonial tomato as eaten by Naipaul." And so on. So you say, "What class have you got coming up?" and the person says "Tomatoes 1670-1900." Or whatever [...] But your class [...] is all about never *ever* saying *I like the tomato*. (312)

The student's disclosure reflects one of the novel's abiding lessons: higher education is, for many, a commodity. In this context, feminist and post-colonial 'practices of freedom'—in syllabi and instructional methods—are simply absorbed into market logic. Caricatures of professors serve as rubrics for success, shorthand shibboleths for credentials. If students are learning interpretive skills and suppressed 'herstories,' they instrumentalize them, thereby also learning 'entrepreneurial' skills required in a 'flexible,' unregulated neoliberal economy: adapting to the seemingly arbitrary demands of professors who hold keys to their futures.⁴ So much for "the art itself" (TG 34).⁵

The passage anticipates aspects of Gerald Graff's 2008 MLA Presidential Address, which culminates in a charge that radical pedagogy contributes to students' compartmentalization of professors and classes. Graff warns that, as radical teachers build "quarantined" utopias or "curricular liberated zone[s]" in disparate classrooms, students devise their own understandings of the connection between courses (Graff 740) (he focuses on content, but the point encompasses method, as well). Smith's tomato-sorters, by Graff's light, are simply responding as "called for by the disconnections and mixed messages of the curriculum" (733).

Graff urges us to learn how and what our colleagues teach, and to make a point of elucidating for students the continuities. Despite disagreements about canons, theoretical traditions, and classroom methodologies, he claims, we agree with colleagues that academic life is an ongoing "conversation" premised on certain "fundamentals of reading, analysis, and argument" (735). He advises us to foreground this implicit conversation in our courses, thereby equipping students to join society's wider, "common culture of ideas and arguments" (736). This is the notion behind the ubiquitous primer for student writing he and his wife Cathy Birkenstein co-wrote, *They Say, I Say*, which is full of templates for "entering the conversation" (1).

Smith and Graff thus suggest that radical, 'outsider pedagogy' might paradoxically reinforce the ethos of competition and instrumentalization that today we associate with neoliberalism, and which Woolf associates with war. Yet Woolf might question Graff's implied conflation of 'conversation' and 'argument,' as the latter suggests competition. *On Beauty*, moreover, spotlights a deeper issue than students' potential employment of market logic to navigate humanities programs. To express the issue as Smith's fictional student might: are 'tomatoes' merely, circularly, a pretext for our 'conversation'? Is there a tomato in our classes?

Such questions hint that 'outsider pedagogy' might paradoxically foster in students not only a neoliberal, entrepreneurial ethos, but also the cynical skepticism threatening the foundations of social and political common life in the twenty-first century, known colloquially as our 'post-truth' conditions. Woolf offers a response to this latter concern, which does not resolve the paradoxes of outsider pedagogy but offers a timely reframing of admittedly familiar ambitions in literary studies. I draw this response from the unique vision of 'conversation' articulated and enacted by *The Waves*, in which a repeated scene of dinner conversation serves as a synecdoche for the text itself, its unique form of cycling soliloquies in six voices.

⁴ Raphael Dalleo has made a related argument in *PMLA*, warning that the skills and values a "dialogic" classroom instills may foster the entrepreneurial self of neoliberalism.

⁵ Like *Three Guineas*, *On Beauty* affirms a bleak 'reality' in which universities are at once flawed, complicit, and essential to personal and collective freedom.

Bernard, the most loquacious speaker, proposes that the six friends meet for dinner out of a compulsion to "make one thing," a "many-sided substance" or a "six-sided" flower, as they look together at a centerpiece flower whose "sides" they illuminate by their unique ways of looking (*The Waves* [TW] 127, 229). The scene recalls a moment during the dinner party in *To the Lighthouse*, when Mrs. Ramsay and Augustus Carmichael simultaneously look at a centerpiece bowl of fruit: "That was his way of looking, different from hers. But looking together united them" (97). In *The Waves*, Woolf adds the curious notion that 'looking together' is creative, a practice that "makes" something. As I argue at greater length in my book, *Fiction, Philosophy and the Ideal of Conversation*, *The Waves* unifies the ordinary sense of conversation as talking and a sense embedded in the word's Latin roots, *con* and *vertĕre*: while talking, the characters "turn" together toward the flower and toward their common, yet distinct, experiences of living ("converse"). The "thing" they make is at once the "many-sided substance" that symbolizes their "communion" and the many-voiced text of *The Waves* itself (TW 127).

Bernard's metaphor is important: the flower evokes the post-Kantian aesthetic tradition inherited by the Bloomsbury group, which links beauty to speech and community. According to this tradition, we become compulsively expressive in the presence of beauty, pronouncing aesthetic judgments with a claim to "universal voice" (Kant §8, 50).⁶ This Kantian notion that each of us instinctively recognizes within ourselves a "universal voice" implies that beauty awakens a sense of underlying commonality. Woolf suggests that the characters' communion is analogous to such feelings of commonality inspired by beauty; what they "make" is not a literally six-sided flower, but rather their *sensus communis*, their sense of being already in community, which blurs into the idea that the flower is constitutively shared. The character Rhoda supplies a second metaphor, announcing immediately after they have 'made' the flower, "this is our dwelling-place": by talking about a beautiful object, the friends generate a sense of dwelling together on common ground (TW 228). That Woolf in *Three Guineas* echoes Rhoda's metaphor when criticizing the "uneasy dwelling-places" of traditional universities invites us to see the friends' conversation as exemplifying consideration of "the art itself," another Kantian notion, which Woolf envisions the utopian, "poor college" enabling: we make a better, freer dwelling-place when liberated from concerns about "what honour or profit" beauty affords (TG 34). The significance of Rhoda's metaphor deepens when we link the idea of a "dwelling-place" to modernism's engagement with interwar skepticism, the wavering of both political and epistemological confidence that shadows *The Waves* and Woolf's other works.⁷ Such skepticism questions the possibility of feeling we inhabit a common world and is echoed in today's 'post-truth' crises of confidence.

Woolf's depiction of a community conjured by aesthetic experience, I suggest, offers a model and rationale for classroom conversations about literature (and other aesthetic works). We train our students to attend to 'many-sided' texts. Prolonging the analogy, we guide them in deepening their perceptions of the figurative flower, their attentiveness to the shading and curling of petals, the play of light and shadow. Then we talk with students about what we notice from our different sides, thereby 'making' a common text and transforming the classroom into a 'dwelling-place.' We simultaneously share a discrete text and endlessly admit new sides, new perspectives on it, as if our work is not primarily a matter of disputing what another says about the text—although at times we might, of course—but of testing whether and how what 'they say' collates with what 'I say': is there a 'many-sided' text we share?

⁶ See Ngai for an excellent discussion of the ways in which Kant's *Critique of Judgment* begins with a "turn toward ordinary conversation" and includes a "veritable catalog of speech acts" prompted by encounters with beauty (19).

⁷ For discussion of Woolf's work in relation to Bertrand Russell's epistemological skepticism, and modernism's broader concerns with upheavals in philosophy and politics, see Banfield and Greer.

Woolf's imagery suggests a way to conceptualize institutional literary studies in more 'conversational' than compartmentalized terms, retaining both normative, shared conventions (the language and objects of our conversation) as well as freedom, openness. To invoke Smith's *On Beauty*, we might imagine telling the student quoted above that the task of literary studies is to deepen and broaden our sense of—our tastes for—"tomatoes," to discover their roundness, spots, and glisten by talking with others. Whereas someone in our community sees shadow, another sees the sheen of sunlight. An 'outsider' arrives and alerts us to sides we had not fathomed (perhaps by invoking feminist or postcolonial thought), or produces new tomatoes previously excluded from consideration. Our task is to interpret and judge the shared crop of tomatoes, an ongoing and variable labor, classroom to classroom and essay to essay. It requires careful attention and effort to make intelligible to others the sides we see, and to express, test, and expand the commonality of our conversation. If we thereby 'make' the tomatoes, this does not mean they are arbitrary: it means we have affirmed community and a common world.

Shifting the analogy from Woolf's 'flower' to Smith's 'tomato'—an edible commodity—I allude to our neoliberal 'reality.' We might cherish our texts for "the art itself" (TG 34), but at some point, we must speak of them in terms that translate to university administrators, politicians, and the wider public. Woolf's "many-sided substance" suggests terms that sidestep the market value of 'tomatoes,' however, and point to the preconditions of markets and common life as such. *The Waves* proposes that aesthetic experience has a double function, not only providing a testing ground for talking about the meaning of shared objects, but also providing a sense of collectivity and common reality, of sharing a 'dwelling-place.' In an era of 'post-truth' politics and its attendant threats, even those skeptical of the market value of aesthetic experience might acknowledge the deeper imperative of learning to perceive ourselves as sharing common reality.

As for pedagogy, the image of the many-sided flower endorses, while subtly reframing, what progressive teachers already do: we train students to become experts in perceiving, while insisting they listen to each other in constructive ways. The classroom is a creative space, not only a space for practicing cultural 'conversation' or 'argument' in Graff's sense. We "make one thing" (TW 127) each time we bring our students together around one object, inviting them to notice, discuss, and come to a shared—not necessarily identical—interpretation. To mitigate the cynical instrumentalism of which Graff and Smith warn, we should connect this work to conversations undertaken elsewhere, in our colleagues' classrooms and beyond the university. Inviting 'outsiders' into the project is not simply an ethical matter of access and inclusion, for their "way[s] of looking" (LH 97) will be different and differently situated, and their voices will add dimension to the texts we collectively make. The discipline of literary studies is itself, like the classroom, a 'dwelling-place' created as we talk and turn together toward shared texts. The hope of teaching, of course, is that we invite and equip others to enter—and endlessly transform—the conversations that expand such dwelling-places.

Erin Elizabeth Greer
University of Texas, Dallas

Works Cited

- Banfield, Ann. *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Blum, Susan Debra, editor. *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)*. Morgantown: West Virginia UP, 2020.
- Channing, Jill. "Woolf in the Community College." *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 73 (2008): 11-14.
- Cheney, Matthew. "The Reader Awakes: Pedagogical Form and Utopian Impulse in *The Years*." *Woolf Studies Annual* 24 (2018): 55-74.
- "converse, v., Etymology." *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford UP, July 2023.

- Dalleo, Raphael. "The Work of Teaching Literature in the Age of Mechanical Education." *PMLA* 131.5 (2016): 1471-79.
- Feldman, Zeena, and Marisol Sandoval. "Metric Power and the Academic Self: Neoliberalism, Knowledge and Resistance in the British University." *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* 16.1 (2018): 214-33.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 1970. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. 30th Anniversary Edition. New York: Continuum, 2005.
- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. "*They Say/I Say*": *The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. 2006. 4th Edition. New York: W. W. Norton, 2018.
- Graff, Gerald. "Presidential Address 2008: Coursecentrism." *PMLA* 124.3 (2009): 727-43.
- Greer, Erin. *Fiction, Philosophy and the Ideal of Conversation*. Edinburgh UP, 2023.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Judgment*. 1790. Trans. J. H. Bernard. New York: Free P, 1951.
- Mula-Falcón, Javier, and Katia Caballero. "Neoliberalism and its impact on academics: a qualitative review." *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 27.3 (2022): 373-390.
- Newfield, Christopher. *The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2018.
- Ngai, Sianne. *Theory of the Gimmick: Aesthetic Judgment and Capitalist Form*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2020.
- Smith, Zadie. *On Beauty*. New York: Penguin, 2005.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Three Guineas*. 1938. New York: Harvest, 1966.
- . *To the Lighthouse*. 1927. New York: Harvest, 1989.
- . *The Waves*. 1931. New York: Harvest, 1978.



Common Reader, Common Classroom

In her long essays *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, Virginia Woolf exposes the patriarchal system of education from which she was excluded and calls into question the dehumanizing foundations of the academe of her day. Though her critique is fundamentally an attack on patriarchy itself, these texts and several shorter essays provide principles for building a more humane and equitable pedagogy. Woolf's writing is decidedly political, seeking redress for exclusion and disdaining authoritarianism and war, but she also develops a broader vision for learning, summarized powerfully in her idea of the "common reader." These common readers, like herself not formally educated, can and should encounter literature and the humanities for their own sake. Such an encounter is not only personally enriching but also represents cultural capital toward advancement and greater equality (*Three Guineas* [TG] 24-25). In these essays, Woolf explores strategies for common readers and their classrooms, offering her recipe for a compassionate and egalitarian academe where learners can flourish personally and claim agency.

Three Guineas proposes a series of attributes appropriate to the ideal university, the imagined place I'll call Woolf's "Common Classroom":

An experimental college, an adventurous college [...] built on lines of its own. [...] Not the arts of dominating other people; not the

arts of ruling, of killing, of acquiring land and capital [...] only the arts that can be taught cheaply [...] the arts of human intercourse; the art of understanding other people's lives and minds [...] not to segregate and specialise, but to combine [...] explore the ways in which mind and body can be made to co-operate; discover what new combinations make good wholes in human life. (33-34)

Woolf's effort to unite empowered and voiced common readers within an environment of free inquiry, empathy, and collaboration is a radically democratic gambit. She envisions a school where "people who love learning for itself would gladly come," and "musicians, painters, writers, would teach, because they would learn." Artists and writers would choose this model precisely because it is "a place where society [is] free; not parceled out into the miserable distinctions for rich and poor, clever and stupid; but where all the different degrees and kinds of mind, body and soul [...] co-operat[e]" (TG 34-35). These sentiments evoke an ideal, and Woolf acknowledges her imaginary Common Classroom to be aspirational. Yet, the model she describes invites educators to seek this imagined learning space worthy of the common readers under our charge. In my own experience, both in conventional and unconventional classrooms, the more we aim for this target, the greater our success in universal participation, strong engagement, and unbiased affirmation of agency for all participants.

Long before reading *Three Guineas*, I found myself unknowingly employing Woolf's vision as I helped create a small private school environment for homeschoolers in the late 1990s. Though similar organizations have proliferated since (especially during and after the COVID pandemic) at the time we felt as though we were creating something quite new. Through offering college-style à la carte classes to middle and high school home-educated students, we sought to fill the gaps in traditional home education by providing mentor-led group discussion, varied opportunities for peer work, hands-on interaction with course content, and a context for academic socialization. While we celebrated the unconventional freedom these high school students enjoyed, i.e., pursuing interests ranging from professional music, dance, and theater to studying higher math and engineering at the secondary level, we hoped to enrich this accelerated work through the benefits of the classroom environment. Ultimately, relational learning proved the missing piece in homeschooling at the time, and this hybrid of radical freedom and the best of the traditional classroom expanded academic potential considerably. This model, supplementing and enriching the work already happening in the home, turned out to be exactly what homeschooling parents sought.

With reports of growing class sizes and reduced academic rigor in other educational contexts, my interests lay in creating learning spaces where eight to twelve engaged and committed students gathered around a Harkness¹ seminar table as a learning community with just enough voices for multiple perspectives but not so many that some could remain quiet observers. The content had to employ challenging, expanding, and demanding reading coupled with active, discursive, and spirited discussion. In our literature courses, we chose 'classic' texts from the *Iliad* to the *Divine Comedy* to *King Lear* but peppered our reading with the insights of more contemporary and diverse writers like Zora Neal Hurston, Sandra Cisneros, and Toni Morrison. Whether challenging in style or ideas, each text provoked a crisis or encounter leading to relational learning in our time together. Every session would model process thinking and writing, workshopping, and engaging in one another's ideas, arguments, and written work. The instructor would play the role of 'setting the table for the session,' but the onus for discussion topics, questions, written content, and debate became a potluck of student involvement and ownership.

Formally, we developed a nonprofit organization offering homeschoolers in middle and high school à la carte courses in

a variety of academic disciplines. Though our program offered coursework across the curricula, my teaching concentrated on upper-level humanities (the foundation for my comments here). Before ever sitting down to articulate 'philosophy of education' statements, we employed an unspoken pedagogy which sprang, frankly, from what we loved about our own best learning experiences: respect afforded to students in assuming their capacity to read and process mature texts, agency in student writing, and student leadership in classroom discussions. Freed from the confines of the conventional and institutional, we focused intently on each student learner as an individual reader, writer, inquirer, and thinker. Downplaying grades, honors, and accolades, we instead honored individual and collective critical thinking and the unique contributions of all members of our community, eschewing what Woolf calls the "old poisoned vanities and parades which breed competition and jealousy" (TG 35).

Conversely, we remembered viscerally the mind-numbing classrooms of our time in school. In her essay "Why?," Woolf sympathizes with our traumatic memories of pedant-dominated classrooms. Lectures in the lecture hall almost always prove deadly, "audience" members gazing "with the placidity of bull frogs at the ceiling." She describes the agony of watching the hands of the clock ("Were they swollen? They moved so slowly") and the audience's internal pleading that the pedant "'Skip!' We entreat [...] him—vainly" (*The Death of the Moth* [DM] 229). Instead, Woolf calls for direct confrontation and engagement with course content, with reading, with one another. Silent bullfrogs cannot engage directly; their task is to sit at attention and receive. A consummate reader of texts and life, Woolf suggests that a direct connection of reader/learner (subject) and content (object) is necessary for the kind of "great boldness of imagination" she seeks (*The Second Common Reader* [CR2] 261). Through the process of engagement and intensive reading, the reader/subject comes to set her own path in this vocation of inquiring and knowing. In our small seminar classrooms (8-12 students), we found students capable of contributing astute and imaginative questions and readings. Each participant bore the mantle of responsibility for the class discourse, and most arrived having read deeply and with something significant and specific to say. Positive peer pressure became an ally in sustaining the rigor of our common work, but our commitment to one another as unique people sustained the challenge of the workload. Once students experienced the power of engaged reading and the play of shared ideas in the hum of a classroom, they willingly finished even unabridged versions of the *Aeneid* and *Paradise Lost* and immersed themselves in Emily Dickinson's poems, Melville's *Moby-Dick*, and yes, Woolf's own *To the Lighthouse*. Rather than feeling put upon, they experienced and vocalized delight in this critical engagement.

Though there are many ways to facilitate a Woolfian engagement with literature, I saw my primary task as establishing a direct connection between each individual student and some aspect of the 'common' text. One student related personally to Lily Briscoe, one to James Ramsay, another to the loss of Mrs. Ramsay due to her own experience of losing a parent. One student became obsessed with light, one with the Odyssean 'hero's journey' to the lighthouse, another with psychoanalysis, another with theodicy. I labored to make sure that each individual student connected deeply with some aspect of the text. Like Lily, I wanted the reader to have a "vision," one unique to each member of the class (*To the Lighthouse* [TTL] 209).

How does Woolf suggest this reader-directed learning process works? In "How Should One Read a Book?" she reiterates her vision of the common reader as subject, operating in dialogue with literary texts or work of art. "To follow your own instincts, to use your own reason, to come to your own conclusions," is Woolf's 'only' advice to aspiring readers. Inviting the "authorities, however heavily furred and gowned, [...] destroys the spirit of freedom which is the breath of these sanctuaries" (CR 2 258). Though Woolf cautions her now-liberated readers against a 'free-for-all,' her vision bestows a deeply individual

¹ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harkness_table.

emancipation from ‘authority’ and a crowning of agency on every serious reader. Woolf cites the voice inside each reader (she ironically calls the voice a “demon”) “who whispers, ‘I hate, I love’” as a simple and gut-level response to what we read. She further acknowledges that we “cannot silence” this demon, that it is “precisely because we hate and we love that our relation with the poets and novelists is so intimate” (CR 2 268). In short, we connect personally, as individual readers, relying on our fundamental preferences and never satisfied with great critics’ ex cathedra pronouncements about a text’s meaning.

The reader as subject prioritizes core instincts over form, a posture our early staff maintained in building our pedagogical approach. Indeed, our own gut instincts about what we “loved” and “hated” in our experience as students determined our choice to jettison lectures, didacts, and institutional ‘authority’ in our learning community, instead asking ourselves and our student readers to do the real work of engagement with poems, novels, and plays. The students’ interpretations come together in the discourse of the Common Classroom, dialogue producing ideas greater than the sum of the ‘common readings.’ Individual reading engagement jumpstarts and expands kaleidoscopically when doing the work of “the arts of human intercourse; the art of understanding other people’s lives and minds” (TG 35). For instance, one student reads Lily Briscoe as an annoying complainer and assumes Mrs. Ramsay’s criticisms of her character. Another raises the point that Lily lacks agency, respect, and mobility in her artistic vocation. Indeed, someone suggests, she faces verbal criticism from Mr. Tansley, silent disappointment from Mrs. Ramsay, and a plea to perform a ‘nurturing’ role with which she can’t identify. A fourth student comes prepared with some research on gender politics of the time. A fifth shares some reading on the autobiographical aspects of the novel. I might jump in, bringing synthesis to these ideas and asking a few probing questions. Back the students go to the real work of discourse. This kind of discussion was the core work and took up most of our class time. For Paulo Freire: “The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow” (Freire 53). Rod Taylor maintains that Woolf assumes “dialogue is necessary for true learning to occur” (72). My students often commented that they enjoyed the book when reading on their own, had specific ideas they wanted to share, but only ‘truly’ internalized the text after the many free voices shared and debated multiple readings.

To these ends, we found it imperative to craft book lists, writing assignments, and classroom presentations in a way that avoided ‘busy work’ (e.g., dreaded worksheets, fill-in-the-blank notetaking, and generalizing book report assignments) while promoting the greatest challenge of engagement we could imagine. For instance, students devoted hours at home to color coding the Benji section in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*. Tickled that using different colored text was the author’s original intention, students were astounded by the connections they made once they knew where they were on the timeline, the age of the children in the scene, and the major life events tied to each (now color-assigned) passage. They argued with one another about which color to splash in the margin, making cases for different time designations, digging into character, plot, objects, and chronology while also teaching themselves to close read. This banter was certainly enjoyable, but when a young man, who may only have read the four classics we had already studied that semester, postulated that the novel is about memory, about how all our memories get confused, about how we overlay our memories and they all meld together to make our myths, I knew that this kind of spontaneous epiphany represented our utmost goal.

Returning to where we started, Woolf’s writing on education ties dynamically to her advocacy for an egalitarian and humane approach to learning in the greater culture. For her, gender inequality in education was the looming issue to be addressed and the patriarchy she calls out

in *A Room* the main culprit. Overcoming the challenge of patriarchy required a radical reassessment of cultural discourses and law. For Audre Lorde, this work is “learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures, in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish.” With Lorde, we might ask whether the tools of the structure of hegemony can be used to liberate those historically excluded from these discourses (“The Master’s Tools” 26-27). Woolf thinks not, offering, as we have shown, a radical vision for replacing the current ‘patriarchal’ model with the ideal of her interactive, agency-promoting Common Classroom and thus opening the door for the “daughters of educated men” traditionally excluded from taking university degrees. As my quotation from Lorde suggests, almost a century after *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf’s admonition should expand beyond the white middle classes of the author’s limited vision to everyone of any background and identity. In theory, Woolf’s pedagogy elevates all common readers if a place is made at the table and the role of subject extends to all student readers of any background.

Virginia Woolf’s vision, however, requires significant work on the part of readers and learners in the Common Classroom. Woolf famously identifies herself as a “highbrow,” extolling the great monuments of cultural life and encouraging her readers to spend time with these texts knowing “we tire of rubbish reading in the long run” (CR2 264). Melba Cuddy-Keane tempers the sting of “highbrow” with the arguably more accurate moniker “democratic highbrow,” tying Woolf’s commitment to culture’s “best” to her equally compelling vision of elevating all readers (DM 177; 58). To build reading engagement—to facilitate deep learning—students should encounter master works. Thankfully our ever-evolving ‘canon’ or ‘great books’ list has swelled beyond the generally white, upper class, straight, and cis texts making up the majority in Woolf’s own specific reading indices. Doing justice to a vision of radical openness, engagement, and equity requires our work in continuing to expand our literary repertoire in the practice of classroom reading and discussion. Though I believe we should still teach traditional Euro-American writers like Shakespeare, Austen, Melville, and Woolf, teachers have a moral responsibility to introduce students to texts crafted by people of color, LGBTQ+ writers, and international authors. Texts from Alice Walker, Chinua Achebe, Leslie Marmon Silko, Julia Alvarez, and Leslie Feinberg unsettle European, middle class, white, heteronormative readings, asking students to engage outside of the boundaries of their experiences and culture. The Common Classroom should be open to everyone, readers and the texts they study alike, and all common readers are welcome to interrogate and reset the conversation. Elevating student readers to intellectual subjects while engaging literature that confronts patriarchy, white supremacy, and heteronormativity produces classroom discourse often at odds with prevailing culture and power structures we take for granted. In theory, Woolf approves. The classroom must question, not simply countenance the status quo. This kind of critical reading and engagement makes “the rich writhe” and “power and prestige come down upon it with all their weight” (DM 227). Though these discussions can become uncomfortable, the Common Classroom must not reify the very constructs and discourses responsible for creating widespread inequity and suffering through hierarchies, exclusion, and domination, “but rather” as Susan Stanford Friedman notes, develop “active, engaged readers positioned at the borders of convention and innovation, encouraged to interrogate prevailing orthodoxies of representation” (105).

As Woolf herself acknowledged, creating “the sort of education that is needed” evokes the challenge of the ideal. Though many of the elements of Woolf’s vision have, over time, won lip service from educators and experts, the practical manifestation of these goals remains aspirational. For Cuddy-Keane, “Woolf’s ideal community of writers and readers is neither paradoxical nor logically inconsistent, however much it falls short of being fully imagined and achieved”

(57). Most educators know the challenge of functioning within an institution while intentionally striving to maintain freedom for creative dissent and working to protect the expression of the “loves” and “hates” of common readers. Indeed, even in ideal and unconventional contexts like the one we built, perennial derailments of the work of the Common Classroom surface. Our teachers sometimes struggled with students’ impulse to impose an ‘orthodoxy,’ usually religious or political, in classroom discussions. We felt the challenge of balancing the free flow of ideas, opinions, and convictions with the very real and sometimes ideological commitments some wielded because of those convictions. Perhaps my most glaring example involves a zealous evangelical Christian declaring to his class (which included a Muslim student) that Islam is fundamentally a “religion of violence” while Judeo-Christian faith is peaceful. What might have been a showstopper turned into a meaningful discussion of the history of violence in the name of various religions and in contrast to their highest ideals of peace. In cases like this one, rather than shut down the conversation in embarrassment, we situated the discussion in history, called out the stereotype, and all moved forward. In short, our classrooms invited the range of opinions, worked hard at hearing one another out, and strove not to respond immediately with antithetical positions before truly grappling with another thinker’s argument or reading.

While challenging, this work does produce some of the results Virginia Woolf hoped for in her description in *Three Guineas*. When we as educators concentrate on each student as a valuable and unique person, reader, and writer; when we focus on student readings, interpretations, and yes, strong feelings about the texts; when we teachers talk less, only glossing, providing definitions, or relating brief historical context, then and only then can the true work of egalitarian engagement commence. The Common Classroom of common readers is a monument to a deeply relational and person-centered pedagogy, crowning each participant with agency and voice, elevating all voices to a meaningful harmony. In an era leaning back toward authoritarianism and essentialism, Woolf’s admonition to common reading and the common classroom continues to carry the clarion pulse of the prophetic.

Christopher Westrate
University of New Hampshire

Works Cited

- Cuddy-Keane, Melba. *Virginia Woolf, The Intellectual, and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. London: Penguin Classics, 2017.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. “Virginia Woolf’s Pedagogical Scenes of Reading: *The Voyage Out, The Common Reader*, and Her ‘Common Readers.’” *Modern Fiction Studies* 38.1 (1992): 101-25.
- Lorde, Audre. “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House.” *Sister Outsider*. 1984. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007. 110-13.
- Taylor, Rod C. “Narrow Gates and Restricted Paths: The Critical Pedagogy of Virginia Woolf.” *Woolf Studies Annual* 20 (2014): 54-81.
- Woolf, Virginia. *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*. 1942. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970.
- . *The Second Common Reader*. 1929. New York: Harcourt, 1986.
- . *Three Guineas*. 1938. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1966.



What Is a Woolfian? Teaching Woolf at the End of the English Major

When the *New Yorker* declared “The End of the English Major” in February of 2023, it added to a familiar narrative about the irrelevance of the humanities to life in the twenty-first century. Humanities faculty quickly shared the article, and other publications picked up the story. Notably, the ‘end’ of the English major appears to trace to the material conditions that shape students’ higher education experiences. As Nathan Heller summarizes, “For decades now, the cost of education has increased over all ahead of inflation. One theory has been that this pressure, plus the growing precariousness of the middle class, has played a role in driving students [...] toward hard-skill majors” (28). Bluntly, lack of financial independence and material resources shape the lives available to students. Without, as Virginia Woolf might put it, “money and a room of her own” (*A Room of One’s Own* [AROO] 3), a student today does not believe she has the privilege of pursuing the study of literature—or any other ‘soft-skill’ major.

Woolf’s vision of the ways in which material circumstances enable or obstruct learning, creativity, and intellectual life seems particularly prescient in our present moment in literary studies. As Madelyn Detloff suggested in the introduction to the “Woolf and Pedagogy” special issue of *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* in 2008, the tendency to “instrumentalize knowledge” places pressure on educators to “imagine students primarily as potential contributors to local and national economies. We only need look to Woolf [in *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas*] to understand that this is not a new development in public perceptions of education” (Detloff 1). With Woolf’s warnings against such instrumentalization of knowledge echoing in our thoughts, we collectively watch the number of English majors decline, see hiring lines in English departments distributed to other ‘more valuable’ units on our campuses, and read news about program closures in literature and language. Students who do not feel materially supported in the study of literature while at university or who do not foresee a beneficial return on the investment of choosing an English major have voted with their feet.

To borrow Woolf’s language, “material circumstances” are against the major in English, and, as such, they appear to be against the intensive study of Woolf’s writing at the undergraduate level: “Dogs will bark; people will interrupt; money must be made; health will break down” (AROO 39-40). While these impediments challenge faculty and students across institutional types, they are, perhaps, rendered most visible in the context of regional public universities (RPUs), which often serve first-generation college students, adult learners, and other diverse student populations. According to the December 2022 report prepared by the Alliance for Research on Regional Colleges, “an estimated 47 percent of bachelors-degree-seeking students attend four-year public institutions.” Beyond this, “RPUs educate 58% of Black or African Americans, 47% of American Indian or Alaska Native students, 35% of Asian American students, 39% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students, 44% of Hispanic or Latino students, and 44% of multi-racial students attending four-year public institutions,” and “on average, 37% of RPU students are Pell grant recipients” (Orphan, Wetherbee, and Duncan 5). These students, for the most part, do not major in English.

Notably, the instrumentalization of knowledge that Detloff lamented in 2008 critically informs the work of regional four-year institutions, exerting powerful influence over both faculty and students. As the 2020 Modern Language Association Report on Language and Literature Research in Regional Comprehensive Institutions concludes, tenure-track “scholars at regional comprehensive institutions face added challenges when doing research,” including inadequate library collections, time



pressures that make difficult or prohibit acquiring research materials and engaging with them, burdens on professional relationships with colleagues, lack of up-to-date technology access and training, and insufficient funding (15). These research conditions shape students' learning conditions. While these institutions, such as my own, promise to enable "economic and social mobility" ("About NKU"), along with the privileges that such mobility affords, they exist within a system that values the instrumentalization of knowledge, and faculty and students alike must demonstrate the ability "to adapt to the status quo, however unjust, rather than to imagine other methods for bringing about a just world" (Detloff 1). The promise of equal privilege does not ameliorate the negative effects of a larger system of inequality in which the enterprise of twenty-first-century higher education is imbedded.

By the time Woolf writes *Three Guineas*, she understands that a more radical intervention than an independent income and a room of one's own is necessary to make a life of the mind accessible to the widest range of people. Rather than expanding privilege, Woolf suggests that "an experimental college, an adventurous college" should eradicate privilege altogether (TG 118). If today's Woolfians follow Woolf's suggestion, RPUs may become the perfect incubator within which to develop innovative pedagogies for introducing students to Woolf's writing and to develop new audiences to appreciate it into the future.

Using the terms "adventurous college," "poor college," and "cheap college" interchangeably, Woolf argues that turning away from stone edifices, stained-glass windows, and libraries teeming with books can assist in a vision for education that emphasizes—in today's parlance—diversity, equity, and belonging (TG 118). "They would come to the poor college and practise their arts there because it would be a place where society was free," Woolf writes, "not parcelled out into the miserable distinctions of rich and poor, of clever and stupid; but where all the different degrees and kinds of mind, body and soul merit co-operated" (TG 119). Readers may experience surprise that Woolf assigns such generative power to lack of material resources. In direct contradiction of her argument in *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf suggests that such impoverishment may liberate minds and create a new context for intellectual and creative life.

Woolf's vision for this "adventurous college" raises many questions, but the most important for Woolf's Twenty-First-Century Academia is this: what, after all, is a Woolfian? In the past, a Woolfian was defined by expertise about Woolf's life and work. Woolfians would share that expertise with others through pedagogy and publication. This narrow definition encourages the traditions of higher education in which professors disseminate their wisdom, and some students mirror back their passions and their habits of thought. Those mirror-students then go on to become professors themselves, until they then reproduce the next generation. According to this model, 'Woolf Studies' exists to perpetuate itself and to aggrandize those teacher-scholars who find an audience for their expertise.

A more expansive, and practical, answer to the "What is a Woolfian?" question would align more closely with Woolf's own ideas about who can read, think about, and discuss literature—common readers. As Anna Snaith notes in "Woolf and Education," "Much of [Woolf's] thinking represents an alternative pedagogy based in outsidership and refusal. Her emphasis is more often on the democratizing potential of reading (and writing) as a site of education and the valorization of the active, dialogic common reader" (359). Perhaps future Woolfians will find meaning in Woolf's writing without pursuing academia as a career, living double lives as engineers, cybersecurity specialists, accountants, marketing professionals, doctors, social workers, and data scientists. In this model, 'Woolf Studies' becomes a public endeavor ruled not by experts but by critically engaged amateurs, and Woolf's writing realizes its generative potential not in the proliferation of literary criticism but in the ways in which everyday people take inspiration from Woolf and act on that inspiration in the world.

In practice, this new definition for Woolfian identity requires teachers of Woolf's writing to change their mindsets and adapt their pedagogical goals and practices. Instead of designing courses as a reflection of professionalizing impulses that dominated literary studies in the twentieth century, faculty must speak to the interdisciplinary needs of a range of students, many of whom are majoring in STEM, health professions, business, or other pre-professional fields. They must recognize the privilege they hold as they enter the classroom and seek to bridge the gap between their privilege and students' inexperience and, even, resistance. As Beth Rigel Daugherty writes about her own experience teaching a small senior seminar of English majors with diverse backgrounds, levels of ability, and ambitions in "Teaching Woolf / Woolf Teaching":

I cannot erase my privilege, but I can name my position and understand its inherent discomfort. I can continue to believe that it's better to be educated than uneducated, that it's meaningful to educate others, and that it's important to fight the forces that want to write students of one sort or another off. And when I fail to understand an individual student or a group, as I invariably do, I can learn from my misunderstanding, keep trying to cross the bridge, and encourage others to cross it, too. (Daugherty 301)

This first step can lead to other high-impact pedagogies that align with the demand for "instrumentalized knowledge" (Detloff 1) that both institutions and students value. One effective strategy emphasizes project-based learning. As an example, rather than asking honors STEM students in a general education course to write a critical essay in which they would analyze Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, I challenged them to apply what they learned about spaces that empower creativity and learning from reading Woolf's text to the spaces that they themselves inhabit. This project encouraged students to use visual representation and narrative to communicate about a space within which their creativity and learning thrives. Upon the assignment's completion, students reported feeling a stronger connection to Woolf's ideas, while at the same time they felt energized to pursue their own intellectual and professional passions.

Faculty can also create conceptual frameworks for student learning that more directly connect their engagement to Woolf with their major areas of study. When teaching *To the Lighthouse* in a first-year writing course, I assigned students a small-group, collaborative PowerPoint presentation. Each student selected a passage from the novel that resonated with an ethical concern in their major field of study, and then as a group they worked to compile research about that ethical concern and synthesize a presentation that demonstrated the novel's relevance to the twenty-first-century workplace.

Finally, faculty can offer students opportunities for reflection and metacognition either throughout the reading process or at its end. Social annotation software, class discussion boards, and group blogs in my courses have provided a space within which students can create community while they process the difficult material of Woolf's writing for themselves. Instead of encouraging discipline-specific mastery as literary critics, faculty can meet students where they are and show them the ways in which Woolf's writing can enrich their lives.

"Our own influence as outsiders can only be of the most indirect sort" (TG 121), Woolf wryly notes, as she concludes her "adventurous college" thought experiment. This sardonic observation can positively instruct faculty as they endeavor to inspire the next generation of Woolfians, students who may never find their way to an upper-level literature course, who attend institutions at which "students must be taught to earn their livings" (TG 120). While some may fear that these practices will deliver the fatal blow in the attack on the humanities generally and the English major specifically, this essay argues that these pedagogical approaches animate the public value of what we do and inspire new scholarly and interpretive possibilities for the future.

Such generative work should not warrant despair, though despair is a common theme in the many obituaries to the English major and the humanities that appear, year after year. More than a decade before “The End of the English Major,” Mark Slouka mourned the death of the humanities:

In a visible world, the invisible does not compute; in a corporate culture, hypnotized by quarterly results and profit margins, the gradual sifting of political sentiment is of no value; in a horizontal world of ‘information’ readily convertible to product, the verticality of wisdom has no place. (Slouka 32-33)

But today’s students, who see knowledge as instrumental to their success, wealth, and privilege, still find value in the writing of Virginia Woolf, so long as their teachers connect Woolf’s ideas to the material world in which students live.

Throwing off the orthodoxies of the twentieth-century university, of a model that insists that Woolfians must replicate themselves in academia as the evidence of Woolf’s value, potentially gives birth to the “adventurous college” that Woolf imagines. Woolf’s Twenty-First-Century Academia may, in fact, reach further and with more impact if we participate in this experiment and make supporting Woolfian common readers our primary objective as educators.

Tonya Krouse
Northern Kentucky University

Works Cited

- About Northern Kentucky University. Web. 17 May 2023. <https://www.nku.edu/about.html>.
- Daugherty, Beth Rigel. “Teaching Woolf / Woolf Teaching.” *Woolf Studies Annual* 10 (2004): 275-307.
- Detloff, Madelyn. “I. Introduction—Woolf and Pedagogy.” *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 73 (Spring 2008): 1-3.
- Heller, Nathan. “The End of the English Major.” *The New Yorker* 27 Feb. 2023. www.newyorker.com. Web. 17 May 2023. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/03/06/the-end-of-the-english-major>.
- Language and Literature Research in Regional Comprehensive Institutions: A Report by the Modern Language Association*. Modern Language Association of America, Sept. 2020. <https://www.mla.org/content/download/129337/file/Language-Literature-Research-Regional.pdf>.
- Orphan, Cecilia M., et al. *Identifying, Defining, and Supporting Regional Public Universities and Colleges: Report Prepared by the Alliance for Research on Regional Colleges*. Alliance for Research on Regional Colleges, Dec. 2022. https://assets.website-files.com/5fd3cd8b31d72c5133b17425/639f1833beb26a26ffafbc8a_IADRPUs%20Full%20Report.pdf.
- Slouka, Mark. “Dehumanized: When Math and Science Rule the School.” *Harper’s Magazine* September 2009: 33-34. Web. 28 May 2023. <https://harpers.org/archive/2009/09/dehumanized/>.
- Snaith, Anna. “Woolf and Education.” *The Oxford Handbook of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Anne E. Fernald. New York: Oxford UP, 2021. 344-61.
- Spicer, Audra. “A World Bound by Language: General-Education Requirements and English Courses.” *CEA Critic* 84.2 (2022): 180-83. Project MUSE. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cea.2022.0020>.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One’s Own*. In *A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas*. 1929. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Anna Snaith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015. 1-86.
- . *Three Guineas*. In *A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas*. 1938. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Anna Snaith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015. 87-216.



No Gate, No Lock: *A Room of One’s Own* as Complaint

Much like the entrance of women into the university, the lecture in *A Room of One’s Own* [AROO] nearly doesn’t happen. The narrator’s presence in spaces of learning is precarious, and her talk replete with examples of barriers. “But,” she begins, attempting to forestall objections to her method, “what has [the topic of women and fiction] got to do with a room?” (AROO 3). She had been asked to speak about women and fiction, and to do so, she asserts, she has to speak about spaces. The narrator takes her audience on a walking tour of literary and social history, which is the history of women’s exclusion from intellectual life by way of the spaces from which they have been excluded over the centuries. Rather than handing her captive audience “after an hour’s discourse a nugget of pure truth to wrap up between the pages of your notebooks” (AROO 3) she recalls for them her experience of walking through an Oxbridge college, chasing possible topics for her talk, and being interrupted by a beadle and a librarian, respectively. First, she is being shooed off a lawn, then barred from a library. The two men who rise up to intercept her inform her in no uncertain terms that she is unwelcome. In this essay, I consider how Woolf persistently revisits physical space to negotiate questions of belonging, accommodation, and accessibility. Beginning, most famously, with *A Room*, Woolf reads doorways not as entrances, but instead as gateways of exclusion.

My title invokes Sara Ahmed’s *Complaint!* in which she argues that there is much to learn from the excluded about the unequal power relations that continue to define academic spaces. The narrator’s experience with the Beadle and the librarian in *A Room* maps how institutions enlist doors to establish or deny legitimacy to certain bodies. In other words, Woolf creates what Ahmed calls a “phenomenology of the institution” (41). Ahmed writes that “we tend to notice what stops us from proceeding, from going somewhere, from being somewhere” (24), which is also the experience of *A Room*’s narrator as she is stopped by the Beadle and the librarian: the college lawn and door to the library are not in themselves remarkable to her, but after she is stopped, the narrator suddenly becomes aware of the spaces through which she is moving and the spaces that become inaccessible to her as a result of being stopped. Reading Woolf and Ahmed in tandem tells us something about the continued experience of space—not just for women, but also, I argue, for people of color, people with disabilities, and first-generation students—in higher education.

Reading Woolf and Ahmed together also reveals the configuration of rooms that remain inaccessible to certain bodies as one of Woolf’s enduring questions. Though scholars have by and large focused on her figurative use of space, Woolf was deeply attuned to material spaces.¹ What Woolf offers is an account of the lived experience of exclusion that comprises a kind of phenomenology: from meager nourishment to hostile physical environments,² exclusion begins at the door that bars the way to many. Accordingly, the history of figurative intellectual gatekeeping of women that Woolf describes in *AROO* is shot through with occasions of physical gatekeeping, the two instances of exclusion mirroring one another, prompting us to think about “how actual doors are used to stop some people from entering” and how they are symbols of the “power and legitimation,” in other words, the reality of “who decides who resides” (Ahmed 221). Reading Woolf through and with Ahmed allows the reader to think through the material dimensions of the twenty-first-century college experience via attention to doors and the questions of access they raise.

¹ A recent reassessment of Woolf’s interest in spaces can be found in Victoria Rosner’s *Machines For Living*.

² The plain and unappetizing dinner at Fernham is evidence that meager meals make for dull conversation (14).



In narrating experiences of inaccessibility, *A Room* registers a complaint on behalf of those who are disinvited—explicitly or implicitly—from spaces of higher education. The spaces of academia preserve prestige by producing places that remain out of reach for many; despite upgrades to the material infrastructure, academic spaces have in many ways remained unchanged since Woolf’s own narrator gave her lecture in *A Room*. As Laura Heffernan and Rachel Sagner Buurma put it, twenty-first-century academia has not “overcome the problems of access and equity” (24) and, despite initiatives to attract students from a wide range of backgrounds, colleges in the United States still enroll low numbers of historically under-represented students. Though *A Room* focuses primarily on patriarchal exclusion of women in the United Kingdom, Woolf charts a map of exclusion that resonates with countless other accounts of being shooed off lawns and having doors shut in one’s face, and critics have repeatedly turned to the figure of the door in the hundred years since Woolf’s plea for women’s education. Queer and Black feminists such as Audre Lorde and Christina Sharpe have described impassable thresholds and how “one’s life and mind are organized [...] through the optic of the door” (Sharpe 12); disabilities scholars such as Aimi Hamraie and Rosemary Garland-Thomson have outlined the ways in which doors and entryways contour the bodies that are meant to use them—and fail to accommodate those who don’t fit the outline.

In *Building Access*, disability scholar Aimi Hamraie writes “examine any doorway [...] and you will find the outline of the body meant to use it” (19). Though Woolf does not address disability directly in *A Room*, she remains attentive in all her work to the “different sites and causes of ‘misery’ bodies may experience” (Outka 9). One such site of misery is the room in which Woolf attends a lecture in her 1934 essay “Why?” Neither restful nor nourishing, neither for sitting nor for eating, the room is strewn with “comfortless little chairs” that are “occupied intermittently, as if [people] shunned each other’s company” (161). The room drains from everyone, including the lecturer himself, “all traces of ordinary humanity” (161). Though Woolf and the other attendees were let through the door without protest, the room remains deeply unwelcoming to everyone in attendance; no body fits its outline. Woolf connects the room’s austerity to the austerity of the lecture format, which she questions in this essay as well as in *A Room*. She wonders whether “these hours of lectures [...] which the monks devised, presumably, hundreds of years ago” are appropriate for students (AROO 59). Woolf does not believe that the way to learn effectively is by mortifying the body or mind—she rejects the austerity of the lecture as much as she rejects the austerity of the room. No wonder, she muses, that conversation flags after the dinner at Fernham, which does nothing to delight the diners. Woolf complains about sites of misery and meager nourishment because she sees in them complex and intersecting social constructions that have profound political implications: the materiality of learning—the phenomenology of the institution raised by *A Room* (and named in Ahmed’s *Complaint!*)—operates between lived social experiences and reveals ways in which the material infrastructure of the university’s doors and rooms directly excludes many bodies.

Though scholarly assessments of Woolf’s treatment of disability vary,³ her attunement to how bodies are barred from institutions of higher education intersects with the social model of disability as a “phenomenon that bars the full participation in public life” (Crosby 6-7), and, I would add, in academic life: participation is made impossible by barriers created through building codes and education policy alike. *A Room*’s complaint thus dovetails with feminist disability studies: “feminist disability studies can make us all reimagine more deeply what it means to have a dynamic and distinct body that witnesses its own perpetual interaction with the social and material environment”

³ Some have censured Woolf’s proximity to eugenics (see, for instance, Maren Linett’s *Bodies of Modernism*); others have argued that Woolf productively reinscribes eugenic discourse and other ableist and genocidal frameworks (see Outka, as well as Chloe Leung’s “Survival of the Unfit: Virginia Woolf’s Crip and Eugenic Modernisms in *The Voyage Out*”).

(Garland-Thomson 1582). Drawing a phenomenological connection between closed doors, uncomfortable spaces, and barred access with Woolf via Ahmed to the twenty-first-century university invites us to question the aims and methods of higher education with a view to making spaces socially and materially accessible and navigable for all.

A Room narrates academia as a phenomenological experience of systemic exclusion. In so doing, Woolf provides an account of the “loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities” that Joan Acker calls “inequality regimes” (443). The inequality regimes that Woolf maps through the figure of closed doors urgently draw our attention to the question of where someone ends up going when a door is shut in their face, which in turn raises a question for twenty-first-century colleges: what is the cost of shutting doors in people’s faces?

Woolf teaches us what we lose if we don’t provide wider access: “Masterpieces,” *A Room*’s narrator points out, “are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people” (49), and the more bodies are excluded, the plainer and drier the learning that occurs. Instead of walking away from closed doors, Woolf makes her own mode of discovery part of the lesson: “Literature is open to everybody. I refuse to allow you, Beadle though you are, to turn me off the grass. Lock up your libraries if your like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind” (57). When doors are shut, the narrator insists, her audience should become trespassers, find “a mass of information” about ordinary women (34), construct a theory of “men’s opposition to women’s emancipation” (42), or study “the value that men set upon women’s chastity and its effect upon their education” (48). The research topics she suggests offer possibilities for redressing historical exclusion but more importantly, they’re an invitation to her audience to become students despite the closed doors. Woolf’s treatment of the locked doors and uncomfortable chairs littering the spaces of higher education, her attunement to bodies and the spaces they inhabit or are kept out of, and her invitations to trespass despite closed doors, might be understood as examples of what Benjamin Hagen calls Woolf’s “subtle yet persistent and insistent feminist pedagogy” (142). Woolf’s inequality regimes are spatially located, reminding us that access in higher education needs to take into account not just minds, but bodies.

The journey of *A Room*’s narrator across inhospitable spaces and closed doors charts a history of exclusion, but not of forgetting. Though *A Room* was published nearly a century ago in the United Kingdom, the ideas and questions about access it raises are still active not just as elements of the past, but, as I have thus far argued, as elements of present academic spaces in the United States. Woolf’s focus on spaces in *A Room* reveals the (infra)structural problems that excluded many in Woolf’s time and that persist in excluding countless people from US institutions of higher education today, proving that spaces are never just figurative or metaphorical, but that the two registers interlock to raise pressing questions about access.

To end, I want to open the door on a group of people who exemplify that interconnection: first-generation students. Many first-generation students in the US contend with what education scholars call the hidden curriculum: a set of implicit academic and social practices, rules, and expectations that structure the gamut of learning and fundamentally impact academic success. In terms of closed doors, we might think of first-generation students not attending office hours because they do not know that other doors besides the doors to the lecture hall are open to them; they may not know that rather than an imposition on their instructor’s time, office hours are a resource intended for students. In *Virginia Woolf’s Apprenticeship*, Beth Rigel Daugherty writes that Woolf wanted to provide her students at Morley College with the connections and context they needed to succeed academically, because she saw “what lack of access had done to her students” (186).

Woolf's simplified view of the hidden curriculum notwithstanding, her work shows her sensitivity to the social complexities of receiving an education and the urgency of providing wider access. Though no beadle or librarian would today shoo off or close a door to a first-generation student outright, doors that are only implicitly open amount to much the same as shut doors: unequal knowledge about resources makes for inaccessible resources. As a site of "contestation concerning what the institution represents, whom it serves, and how it defines success" (Gable 3), the hidden curriculum becomes a closed door in Ahmed's sense. And if keeping women out of the university has disastrous effects for literature, as it is "impoverished beyond our counting by the doors that have been shut" (AROO 63), so is neglecting first-generation students and people with disabilities a disaster for the twenty-first-century university. Navigating spaces structured by exclusion takes a toll that directly affects how much someone gains from their experiences in academia. Reading *A Room* in the twenty-first century is an invitation to attend to inequality regimes that are still in place today. Ultimately, Woolf's complaint teaches us that ethical and accessible education is a project of remembering the exclusions that came before so that we can face them, lest we shut the door on the future of higher education.

Laura Tscherry
Indiana University

Works Cited

- Acker, Joan. "Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations." *Gender & Society* 20.4 (2006): 441-64.
- Ahmed, Sara. *Complaint!* Durham: Duke UP, 2021.
- Buurma, Rachel Sagner and Laura Heffernan. *The Teaching Archive: A New History for Literary Study*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 2021.
- Crosby, Christine. *A Body, Undone*. New York: New York UP, 2016.
- Daugherty, Beth Rigel. *Virginia Woolf's Apprenticeship: Becoming an Essayist*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2022.
- Gable, Rachel. *The Hidden Curriculum: First Generation Students at Legacy Universities*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2021.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. "Feminist Disability Studies." *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30.2 (2005): 1557-87.
- . "Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept." *Hypatia* 26.3 (2011): 591-609.
- Hagen, Benjamin. *The Sensuous Pedagogies of Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence*. Clemson: Liverpool UP/Clemson UP, 2020.
- Hamraie, Aimi. *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2017.
- Leung, Chloe. "Survival of the Unfit: Virginia Woolf's Crip and Eugenic Modernisms in *The Voyage Out*." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 17.1 (2023): 41-57.
- Linett, Maren. *Bodies of Modernism: Physical Disability in Transatlantic Modernist Literature*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2016.
- Lorde, Audre. "A Litany for Survival." *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde*. New York: Norton, 1997.
- Outka, Elizabeth. "Disability, Illness, and Pain." *The Oxford Handbook of Virginia Woolf* Ed. Anne Fernald. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2021. 504-20.
- Rosner, Victoria. *Machines for Living: Modernism and Domestic Life*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2020.
- Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke UP, 2016.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*. 1929; 1938. 2nd ed. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Anna Snaith. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2015.
- . *Selected Essays*. Ed. David Bradshaw. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008.



Winner of the 2023 Angelica Garnett Undergraduate Prize Cailyn Mickelsen, Pace University

The essay is the author's adaptation of her final paper for LIT 373: Modernism, completed during her undergraduate studies at Pace University.

Cailyn Mickelsen was advised by Dr. Erica Johnson. The author is now in her third year of her BA in English at Pace University.

Time in the Margin: Queer Temporalities in *Mrs. Dalloway*

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* engages with time and subverts expectations of linear narrative in decidedly queer ways. Queer characters—primarily Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith—have a magnetic pull on the narrative, altering the traditional progression of time. In the novel, Woolf constructs a reality concurrently bound by and free of time, with characters simultaneously existing in their past and present, merging these dichotomies into paradoxical singularities. Through her portrayal of simultaneity, a focus on memories, and the embracing of contradiction, Woolf portrays how queer people's non-normative temporalities function as an act of resistance against oppressive and repressive systems.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf portrays time as simultaneously absolute and elastic, crafting a non-normative timeline that echoes both queer and modernist temporalities. Time resonates throughout and even controls the novel, as Big Ben consistently sounds "first the warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable" (Woolf 99). However, despite this enforced structure, Woolf emphasizes the elasticity of time, both in defiance of and in concert with its objectivity, by mentioning another clock: while in contemplation, Clarissa is interrupted by "the other clock... which always struck two minutes after Big Ben, came shuffling in with its lap full of odds and ends" (Woolf 108). If there are other clocks, which allow time to bend to accommodate other perspectives, then the objectivity of Big Ben's timeline is not as absolute as it appears; the novel conveys this conclusion through its contradictory nonlinearity, a key facet of queer and modernist temporalities. By Jack Halberstam's definition, queer temporality is "the perverse turn away from the narrative coherence of adolescence-early adulthood-marriage-reproduction-child rearing-retirement-death" (Dinshaw et al. 182). Carolyn Dinshaw postulates that queer temporality also begets "a kind of expanded now in which past, present, and future coincide," as the adolescent and adult selves merge due to a lack of self-understanding in childhood (Dinshaw et al. 190). Both of these definitions rely on a disruption of linearity; modernist literature similarly rejects traditional "narrative coherence" in favor of a new temporality in which "the realities of human experience no longer arrange themselves as a sequence of events unfolding in calendar time" (Kohler 16). Gertrude Stein, in a lecture presented both at the Cambridge Literary Club in late 1925 and at Oxford University in 1926, describes this concept of simultaneity as "a continuous present," in which narrative trajectory collapses into a single moment (Stein). Discarding the typical beginning, middle, and end of narrative in this way bridges modernism with queerness, as it mirrors the queer rejection of the typical beginning, middle, and end of development: Stein herself was a lesbian, and her idea of a continuous present can be applied to both queer and modernist temporalities—and in the case of *Mrs. Dalloway*, how they intersect.

Woolf infuses queer temporality into *Mrs. Dalloway* through the importance of "moments of being." These small, seemingly insignificant moments—such as Clarissa walking the streets of London and remarking that "what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her," this "life; London; this moment of June"—have immense impacts on the

Here Ends the Special Topic
Woolf's Twenty-First-Century Academia



characters and structure of the novel (Woolf 6; 2). Instead of overt, anticipated plot points being of greatest importance—similar to the heteronormative marks of the passage of time—these simple brushes with the extraordinary mark growth and development in the novel with both the resounding certainty and the translucent subjectivity of the chiming clock. Clarissa's central moment of being—and the gravitational center of the novel—resides in her memory: her singular kiss with Sally Seton in her youth. Clarissa describes the kiss as “the most exquisite moment of her whole life” yet relays it in relatively simplistic diction: “Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips” (Woolf 29). As Kate Haffey describes, this kiss represents a “moment that temporarily interrupts [Clarissa's] inevitable movement towards marriage and reproduction,” and one that is more important to Clarissa than both of those heteronormative markers of development (Haffey 137). The kiss becomes a central point in Clarissa's life elevated above her more traditionally important marriage and child thus subverting the continuity of heteronormative time and placing Clarissa in a queer timeline of her own invention.

The motif of diamonds and treasure follows Clarissa and her memories throughout the novel, demonstrating the value of these moments of being. Clarissa understands her memory in the context of treasure, describing her search through her memories to be like dropping “some grain of pearl or diamond into the grass and part[ing] the tall blades very carefully [...] search[ing] here and there vainly” (Woolf 102). By calling the memories she constantly revisits “some grain of pearl or diamond,” Clarissa demonstrates that they are infinitely precious to her and even potentially more valuable than her current reality. Specifically, Clarissa considers her kiss with Sally to be not only “the most exquisite moment” in her life, but also “a present, [...] a diamond, something infinitely precious” (Woolf 29). This description explicitly communicates the value of this memory, and, further, as Haffey notes, it employs “the other meaning of the word ‘present’”—the temporal meaning (146). By conflating the two meanings of “present,” Woolf communicates the value Clarissa places on her understanding of temporality, but also establishes a contradiction: Clarissa's valuable memories *supplant* her present reality. Memories also constitute Clarissa's understanding of her own self, as “when [...] some call on her to be her self” “drew the parts together,” and she becomes “one centre, one diamond, one woman” (Woolf 30). Clarissa not only values her memories; she *is* her memories, forged through pressure and trial into something beautiful, multifaceted, and priceless.

The value Clarissa places on her past complicates her experiences in the present. One clash between past and present desires occurs when she reunites with Sally at her party and notices that “the lustre had left [Sally],” a reference to the diamond of her memory and the reality of Sally's now-faded nature (Woolf 146). Despite this loss in the present, Clarissa still concurrently exists with the Sally of her memories, providing a safe place for her to admire her most valuable treasure: her queer past. Clarissa's memories, and their disruption of her progression through heteronormative time, become a refuge for Clarissa to plunge into and escape the repression of society. Clarissa repeatedly uses the word “plunge” to describe her foray into these treasured memories. When remembering her youth, Clarissa exclaims “What a plunge!” as she “plunged at Bourton into the open air” (Woolf 1). This connection between plunging and youth is further demonstrated by her later proclamation that “the young people” must “shout, embrace, [...] plunge and swim” at Clarissa's party (Woolf 151). However, Clarissa also describes how she herself “plunged into the very heart of the moment” of the present before examining herself in the mirror (Woolf 30). The use of “plunge” in this context connects Clarissa's past and present, uniting them into a single experience: Clarissa plunges into both her memories and her present reality simultaneously.

Clarissa's simultaneous experience of adolescence and adulthood and her fixation on both present moments and past memories implies

a merging of chronologies inherent to queer temporality. Clarissa consistently transforms ephemeral moments into relivable experiences, refuting the objectivity of society's linearity and embracing queer time, which theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick refers to as “a continuing moment” (Sedgwick qtd. in Haffey 143). Throughout the novel, Woolf continuously depicts the “past and present simultaneously in a single moment,” allowing “Clarissa [to describe] herself as simultaneously young and old” (Haffey 141; 144). For example, when speaking to Peter Walsh—who has returned to England from India and whom Clarissa had rejected as a partner decades earlier—Clarissa describes herself as “a child, throwing bread to the ducks, between her parents, and at the same time a grown woman coming to her parents who stood by the lake” (Woolf 35). As Halberstam emphasizes in the definition of queer time, “the embrace of late childhood in place of early adulthood, immaturity in place of responsibility” (Halberstam qtd. in Dinshaw et al. 182) is an essential aspect of queer temporality. Thus, this moment of convergence can be viewed as queer.

Clarissa exists in this queer state of flux, plunging repeatedly into her own memories to survive within repressive systems. Because she outwardly submits to a heteronormative timeline by leaving her rebellion at Bourton and entering a heterosexual marriage, she must create an internal chronology that allows her to relive her authentic past; thus, “Clarissa is able to break through the temporal divides between past and present in order to experience pleasure and desire across them” (Haffey 141-42) and create a safe and joyous space for her queerness. Clarissa's paradoxical coalescence within both her memory and reality creates a new chronology wherein she can exist apart from heteronormative society's restrictions.

Clarissa's continuous present, and its impact on her identity and temporality, contrasts with that of another queer character marked by memory: Septimus Warren Smith. Septimus exists between memory and reality, constantly reliving his experiences in World War I and failing to reacclimate to reality. While at war, Septimus “drew the attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans” (Woolf 72), a relationship as intimate as that of a married couple: “they had to be together, share with each other, fight with each other, quarrel with each other” (Woolf 72-73). The war, despite its terrors and traumas, provided a space for Septimus and Evans to explore queer identity and love, but Evans' death then shrouds Septimus's queer experience in inescapable tragedy. While Clarissa's past is an escape, Septimus's trauma haunts him through his hallucinations of Evans, continually reinforcing the futility of his queer existence as his wife, Lucrezia, whom he chose in desperation after losing Evans, supports him, cares for him, and defends him from his doctors to the best of her ability. Ultimately, however, Septimus's only option for freedom from the repressive force of heteronormative time's sequence—from the doctors who seek to stop his hallucinations and “free” him both from his memory and thus also from his queerness—is death.

Confronted with the arrival of one of these doctors at his residence, Septimus escapes by jumping out the window and plunging to his death. Through this action, Septimus removes himself entirely from the linear flow of time and forces others to interact only with their memory of him. In the wake of his death, Rezia, traumatized and in grief after trying and failing to prevent the doctor's entrance, notes that “the clock was striking—one, two, three: how sensible the sound was; compared with all this thumping and whispering; like Septimus himself” (Woolf 127). Woolf leaves the question of what “like Septimus himself” means intentionally debatable, and thus, paradoxical: he is either the sensible clock or the disorder of the “thumping and whispering.” This doubling echoes Septimus's experience of grief: society dictates a linear progression, in which one experiences suffering, processes, and then moves on. Yet Septimus, due to the prohibition of queerness, cannot truly grieve and process Evans' death; while he attests that he has moved on, and that “he could not feel” (Woolf 73), Septimus in fact does nothing

but feel, over and over, as if “his body was macerated until only the nerve fibres were left” (Woolf 57). Septimus’s panic over his inability to progress linearly directly ties into the pressures of heteronormative time, as it is “one evening when this panic was on him—that he could not feel,” that he becomes engaged to Rezia, attempting to move on externally even as he stagnates internally (Woolf 73). The doctors that “would cure Septimus at once” seek to actualize the linearity Septimus feigns, and they thus threaten to expunge the threads of queer memory to which he clings (Woolf 70). His death, in which he becomes, in Rezia’s mind, both the striking clock and the disordered “thumping and whispering,” allows Septimus to exist in contradiction, freed from both his inability to move on and his inability to fully grieve. In contrast with Clarissa, and due to his lack of “some grain of pearl or diamond” of untainted queer joy, it is only through his fall that Septimus can plunge into this ambiguity and enact a paradoxical temporality, existing in memory outside of the oppression of linear, heteronormative time.

Clarissa and Septimus, disconnected throughout the narrative, unite near the end of the novel to form foiled images of queer temporality. Clarissa, who is shown to fear death throughout the novel, sees the news of Septimus’s death as an intrusion, thinking: “Oh! [...] in the middle of my party, here’s death” (Woolf 156). Despite her fears, however, Clarissa sees Septimus’s death as an escape from linear time: although “they would grow old,” herself and Sally and Peter, Septimus would not (Woolf 157). Clarissa thinks of “death [as] defiance” of this dictated linearity, as a means of preserving essential moments of being and escaping from time’s progression (Woolf 157). Death is, in Clarissa’s eyes, “an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them” (Woolf 157). Yet Clarissa then snaps out of her almost suicidal reverie: she wonders, “this young man who had killed himself—had he plunged holding his treasure?” (Woolf 157). Clarissa has found her “centre,” her treasure, in the “one centre, one diamond, one woman” she sees in the mirror: she has found the amalgam of her many refracted selves in her memories, in her moments, and in her queerness (Woolf 30). While Septimus in his plunge escapes from “the terror; the overwhelming incapacity” of “this life, to be lived to the end”, Clarissa finds her own escape through continuing life, through the incessant plunge into “the triumphs of youth” of her memory (Woolf 158).


Just as Lucrezia hears a doubled echo of Septimus in the rigid and rumbling clock, Clarissa herself finds clarity as “the clock striking the hour, one, two, three,” rings in three conclusions: that “she did not pity him,” that “she felt somehow very like him,” and that “she felt glad that he had done it” (Woolf 159). Clarissa feels a deep queer solidarity with Septimus, as two escapees who—by entirely different methods—surmount the dictations of linear time. As “the clock was striking,” Clarissa decides that “she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter” (Woolf 159). The ringing clock, now echoing both the rigidity of societal demands and the affirmation of Septimus’s escape, reorients Clarissa to her “centre” and carries Septimus with her as she returns to her party. This glimpse into another’s life, one without the reclamation of “triumphs of youth” (Woolf 158) that Clarissa so treasures, suggests how “the preservation of [Clarissa’s] feelings for Sally is essential to her life” (Haffey 146). Thus, Clarissa’s memory of Septimus further tethers her to her queer understanding of time and integrates the potential he represents into her own continuous present. The two characters become foils, as each plunges—one into death and the other back into life—into a queer temporal state, one of both stasis and contradiction that stands apart from the sequential, ever-flowing current of society’s heteronormative timeline.

Cailyn Mickelsen
Pace University

Works Cited

Dinshaw, Carolyn, et al. “Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13.2

(2007): 177-95. *Project MUSE*. muse.jhu.edu/article/215002.
Haffey, Kate. “Exquisite Moments and the Temporality of the Kiss in ‘Mrs. Dalloway’ and ‘The Hours.’” *Narrative* 18: 2 (May 2010): 137-62. *JSTOR*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40856405>.
Kohler, Dayton. “Time in the Modern Novel.” *College English* 10.1 (Oct. 1948) 15-24. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/372065>.
Stein, Gertrude. “Composition as Explanation.” *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation. 15 Feb. 2010. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69481/composition-as-explanation>.
Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. Edited by Stella McNichol and Elaine Showalter (1992). Notes by Elaine Showalter (1992). Foreword by Jenny Offill (2021). New York: Penguin Books, 2021.


**Runner-Up of the 2023 Annual Angelica Garnett
Undergraduate Essay Prize
Audrey Campbell-Eby
Sarah Lawrence Programme at
Wadham College, Oxford**

This essay was written for the course
“Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury” taught by
Dr. Laura Ludtke in 2023 during the final term of
the author’s year abroad at the University of Oxford.
The author has now completed her BA
in English and History at Sarah Lawrence College, NY.

**“If discordant, producing harmony”:
Wholeness from Antithesis in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts***

Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts* portrays an England on the cusp of war in June 1939. Frank Kermode insists that “the book is deliberately placed on the threshold between peace and war, between a known past and an unknown but probably appalling future” (xv). In this “limbo,” to use Woolf’s term, in which things are “neither one thing nor the other” (Woolf 159), neither at peace nor yet at war, the distinctions between opposites become more prominent, clearly visible from a distinct in between position. Woolf is perennially concerned in her writing with summing things up, capturing the whole, and within this historical limbo she sees the whole as being made up of contradictions. For Kermode, Woolf’s *Between the Acts* presents “antithesis as a principle of this world,” bringing together oppositions to “account for the whole” (xxv). Kermode briefly touches on the antithesis between what he calls “normal time and the time of the epiphany” (xxxi), but these conflicting experiences of time—which can alternatively be described as masculine and feminine time—are integral to understanding Woolf’s novel. In her essay “Women’s Time,” Julia Kristeva distinguishes between feminine and masculine time: feminine time is both “cyclical and monumental,” experiencing “*repetition and eternity*” (16), while masculine time is understood as “time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding [...]—in other words, the time of history” (17). Masculine time is associated with Great Men and historically significant, out-of-the-ordinary events, whereas feminine time is associated with the personal experience of everyday life, the hidden side of history. In such a division, the impending war, being a major historical turning point with set goals and a clear end, represents masculine time.

In *Between the Acts*, Woolf aims to create the whole by presenting the alternative to this time. Thomas S. Davis contends that “late modernist texts look to the everyday to explain a historical transformation in the structure of the world-system” (2), and indeed Woolf endows the everyday in this novel with as much significance as the war. Woolf privileges a feminine experience of time on the day of an annual pageant by setting her novel in a village which hasn’t changed since at least

1833 and where “Most days it was the same” (Woolf 48) This setting emphasizes cyclicity and repetition while not denying linearity its position within cyclicity. Linearity and cyclicity, masculine and feminine together make the whole, united in their very opposition, but Woolf privileges feminine time because it is the less frequently voiced experience, but masculine time makes itself felt even in its silence. Woolf offers an alternative mode of understanding history and human experience which, to use Kristeva’s words, “rejoins [...] the archaic (mythical) memory” (20) to embrace more fully the whole of human experience to maintain hope and calm in the face of the overwhelming inevitability of the coming war. Woolf offers the feminine time antithesis to the masculine time of war to “account for the whole” (Kermode xxv) in her perpetual goal of “one-making” (Woolf 157).

Woolf imparts a sense of stasis upon her novel to reflect the historical limbo of June 1939. The book takes place almost entirely on the day of the annual pageant: “Every summer, for seven summers now, Isa had heard the same words; about the hammer and the nails; the pageant and the weather. Every year they said, would it be wet or fine; and every year it was—one or the other” (Woolf 20). Seven summers may seem a small number, but it is a tradition grown out of the age-old traditions of summer solstice festivals, village mystery plays, and the ritualistic theatre of ancient Greece. Already feminine notions of cyclicity and eternity become apparent: this day takes on something of epiphanic significance, in which past and future collapse into an eternal present. But on a more ordinary level, this pageant creates a sense of uncertainty regarding the weather: “would it be wet or fine”? If wet, the pageant will take place in the barn; if fine, on the terrace. The variability of English weather creates a state of suspension; the day holds two possibilities at once, like Schrödinger’s cat, and, until Miss La Trobe decides where the pageant will be held, the community exists in a limbo between wet and fine. Wet or fine is one of the antitheses representing the whole; as Kermode explains, “If you put together the pageants when it rained, and the pageants when it was fine, you have all the pageants and all the days together” (xxv). Even though wet and fine weather oppose each other and cannot exist simultaneously, they encapsulate the whole, which is best seen from the liminal space between them.

Just as Woolf creates a limbo for her characters, Miss La Trobe creates a limbo for her audience. In many ways the entire pageant is liminal—uniting past and present, collapsing time into that feminine experience of eternity and cyclicity, making her audience leave their present selves and join in the collective English memory—but there is one moment when the audience is explicitly in limbo. When La Trobe’s pageant arrives at the present moment in her survey of English literary history, La Trobe leaves the stage silent and empty for ten minutes with only the tick of the machine, “to expose them, as it were, to douche them, with present-time reality” (Woolf 161). The silent stage has a profoundly disconcerting effect on her audience: “They were neither one thing nor the other; neither Victorians nor themselves. They were suspended, without being, in limbo” (159).

The pageant has been transporting the audience from one time period to the next, and now they sit waiting to be picked up from the Victorians and safely delivered to the present—but La Trobe denies them this. Still enveloped by the play, they sit suspended, waiting, unsure what exactly “the present” will be. This suspense is a microcosm of the suspense all England felt leading up to the war; those in Great Britain were clearly no longer in peacetime but had not yet plunged into wartime, and so they hovered on the threshold. This suspenseful waiting combines masculine and feminine time; they are unmoving and yet waiting for time to move; not experiencing linear action but expecting it. In the historical limbo, the waiting will be broken by action, by declaration of war, by plunging into the forward workings of time, but in the pageant’s limbo, Woolf breaks the waiting with a sign from the eternal and universal—with a sudden shower of rain:

Looking up [Isa] received two great blots of rain full in her face.

They trickled down her cheeks as if they were her own tears. But they were all people’s tears, weeping for all people. [...] The rain was sudden and universal. Then it stopped. From the grass rose a fresh earthy smell. (162)

The day is both wet and fine: opposites are reconciled. Rain is a symbol of creating unity from dispersity: water evaporates across the globe, mingling in the sky, moving to and falling upon new places. Rain is universal in that it falls on everyone, and eternal in that it recycles water that has existed forever. The water that hits Isa’s cheeks may have fallen on Chaucer’s face, or that of an Elizabethan peasant. The rain falling on her face like tears reminds her of “all people’s tears”; people dispersed across time and space are united in this rain. The resulting “fresh earthy smell” roots the audience in their present experience and pulls them out of uncertainty and into—not action, but rather an awareness of what Kristeva calls “the archaic (mythical) memory” (20).

Masculine time is traditionally the time of history, but Woolf demonstrates how history, too, can fit into cyclical, feminine conceptions of time. In fact, she suggests this cyclical sense of history from page one, when Mr Oliver remarks, “From an aeroplane [...] you could still see, plainly marked, the scars made by the Britons; by the Romans; by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough, when they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars” (Woolf 3-4). Woolf emphasises the lasting importance of history and the living presence of the past in the present. It is notable that Woolf mentions the effects a past war has made on British soil. The Napoleonic wars share many similarities with both World Wars, so its mention imparts a sense of historical repetition, a primary theme of the pageant. War is part of the never-ending cycle of history, and the war on the novel’s horizon recalls the war that occurred two decades earlier, which recalls the war that occurred over a century ago; each war’s particularities are trumped in wider historical cycles by their uniting identity as war.

Notably, these scars and patterns can only be seen “From an aeroplane,” the very symbol of the current threat against England. Antitheses are joined in opposition: the image of the coming war, representative of linear, masculine time, provides a view of the wider, cyclical, feminine vision of history. However, the physical scars on English soil that the elderly Mr. Oliver refers to were not produced by war machinery or troop movements, but by ploughs—“to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars.” Woolf’s use of “in,” not “for,” makes it uncertain whether the need to plough the hills was caused by the wars, or whether it was a coincidence, the wars being a handy time marker for when wheat was first cultivated there. A grand historical moment is placed on equal footing with the everyday task of farming and the reader is situated in the liminal space between them, unsure of their connection (cause and effect or coincidence), but able to see how they make a whole. Mr. Oliver joins the masculine time of the Napoleonic wars with the feminine time of farming, but Woolf makes clear that it is the farming which has made the lasting scar on English soil, privileging the cyclical, feminine activity.

Woolf demonstrates this conflation of important historical moments with the cyclical activity of farming more explicitly in the pageant. Throughout the performance there is a chorus of villagers:

Digging and delving, [they] sang [...] for the earth is always the same, summer and winter and spring; and spring and winter again; ploughing and sowing, eating and growing; time passes....

The wind blew the words away. (Woolf 112)

Melba Cuddy-Keane notes that, “Since the chorus thus reflects repetition and recurrence in opposition to change, its role expands beyond that of medieval pilgrims to embody what is permanent and enduring in all historical periods—the life of the common people in touch with the soil” (281). Even as “time passes” and the earth moves from one season to another, the earth itself “is always the same”; linearity exists within

cyclicality, with the linear path from ploughing to reaping restarting cyclically every year. The cyclical nature of farming comes to symbolize, through the villagers' choric function, the cyclical and eternal nature of all time and being. But of course, we mustn't forget, "The wind blew the words away" (Woolf 112). This message of cyclicality, which serves as antithesis to the pageant's scenes which move chronologically through literary history, is lost in the wind, unheard and yet somehow felt all the same.

Silence has an important function in this novel; what is unsaid and unheard is just as important as what is said and heard. This function is evident when Isa silently asks Mrs. Manresa about her appearance, "making silence add its unmistakable contribution to talk" (36), and later when Giles Oliver asks himself a question regarding Manresa and William Dodge, "And his silence made its contribution to talk" (45). Silence is just as productive as speech, for what is not said about Manresa and William is nonetheless felt, hovering ambiguously over the conversations. Silence is similarly productive during the pageant, when the chorus's words are consistently blown away, forcing the audience to infer meaning from scraps, and allowing nature to "take[...] her part" (173), as with the shower of rain and the lowing of cattle (126).

A significant silence in the pageant is the absence of the military, picked up on by Colonel Mayhew, who observes in frustration, "Why leave out the British Army? What's history without the Army, eh?" (141). This is a significant but productive omission; like Woolf, La Trobe steers away from the war, trusting it will make its contribution through silence. Though the looming war is only explicitly referred to a couple times in *Between the Acts*, its presence is conveyed through parallels and oblique references. Woolf knows the war will make itself felt without any action on her part, turning her attention to the feminine experience of time as the antithesis to the masculine war. Similarly, La Trobe focuses her pageant on communicating the cycles of historical repetition; the military's absence is notable, and thereby asserts its presence. Indeed, Reverend Streatfield offers his summing up even as "Twelve aeroplanes in perfect formation like a flight of wild duck came overhead," bisecting his speech (174). These planes remind the audience uncomfortably of that anticipated future they hoped to escape by delving into the pageant's "archaic (mythical) memory." The audience wonders, "And what's the channel, come to think of it, if they mean to invade us? The aeroplanes, I didn't like to say it, made one think..." (179). Just as the rain falls unexpectedly, bringing feelings of universality and eternity, so too in direct antithesis the aeroplanes enter unexpectedly, bringing thoughts of the future war and the forward march of time. This antithesis makes it clear that masculine and feminine time must both exist to make the whole. But while masculine time makes itself felt through relative silence, Woolf gives voice to the traditionally unheard experience of time: the feminine.

Between the Acts, "written in a desperate time" (Kermode xiii) at the start of World War II, offers a view of life that transcends the war. It was difficult at that time to see anything beyond the war—"On 27 June 1940—after the French capitulation—Woolf wrote that she could not conceive 'that there will be a 27th June, 1941'" (xiv). But as Woolf demonstrates, there is a space "between the acts" where one can see life from both a linear and cyclical perspective. *Between the Acts* presents these different modes of time and experience to remind us that, through opposition, life is made whole.

Audrey Campbell-Eby
Sarah Lawrence College (alumna)

Works Cited

- Cuddy-Keane, Melba. "The Politics of Comic Modes in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*." *PMLA* 105.2 (1990): 273-85.
- Davis, Thomas S. Introduction: Late Modernism and the Outward Turn. *The Extinct Scene: Late Modernism and Everyday Life*. New York: Columbia UP, 2015. 1-25.

- Kermode, Frank. Introduction. *Between the Acts*. By Virginia Woolf. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008. xii-xxxiv.
- Kristeva, Julia. "Women's Time." Trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake. *Signs* 7.1 (1981): 13-35.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Between the Acts*. 2nd ed. 1992. Edited with an Introduction by Frank Kermode. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008.



Image from the cover of
Leonard Woolf's *De wijze maagden*
(The Wise Virgins)
 illustrated by Louisa Albani

**The Afterword from the Dutch translation of
 Leonard Woolf's *De wijze maagden* written by Anthony Rudolf.**
 The volume was translated by Monique ter Berg and Jetty Huisman and
 can be accessed for purchase at:
<https://www.hetmoet.com/product-page/de-wijze-maagden-leonard-woolf>.

Published by Uitgeverij HetMoet in 2023,
 founded by Elte Rauch in November 2018.
<https://www.hetmoet.com/about>

What Does Harry Want?

I am a Jewish socialist publisher educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and my late partner was a great artist. So it is hardly surprising that I am fascinated by Leonard Woolf, since everything in the first sentence applies to him too. But the resemblance involves surface structures and ends there. I am a humble scribbler. Woolf was a grand and magisterial figure and, along with John Maynard Keynes, the most brilliant intellectual in the Bloomsbury Group. Leonard was the exemplary husband and main support of a dazzling, emotionally fragile and complicated literary genius and, although not a genius himself, made an

enormous and lifelong contribution, amounting to a major oeuvre, to the intellectual and cultural life of his country.

Like Keynes, Leonard Woolf was a man of action, in Leonard's case serving as a colonial administrator, journalist, active member of progressive committees, societies and editorial boards, while never neglecting Virginia. Some of his political books are dated, others survive their time. He also wrote five significant autobiographies, of which the best is the second, *Growing*, about his years in Ceylon as a civil servant. And he was a novelist, although not in the class of Virginia and their friend, E.M. Forster. I think one can argue that had he not married Virginia, his life, unlike hers, would not have been all that different in the way it panned out socially and intellectually.

The progressive vision in the UK still survives, just about, despite the powerful opposing forces of nationalism and globalisation (both failing to deliver), and the passivity of the left in terms of identifying solutions to deep-seated problems. Following the generation of John Ruskin and William Morris, the progressive vision's roots lie in the early Labour Party, the Fabian Society, the trade union and co-operative movements and the beginnings of institutional internationalism, all of which influenced and were influenced by Woolf's actions and writings. As a senior colonial administrator in Ceylon from 1904 to 1911, he witnessed and did things which later he reacted against and which helped form his enlightened and generous view—anti-imperial, anti-colonial, anti-racist—of the way the world should be arranged. His experience in Ceylon, he said, turned him into a liberal and, like Clement Attlee and many others, his direct awareness of poverty in London's East End made him a socialist.

Leonard Woolf's fiction—two novels and a book of stories—is not a mere footnote to the rest of his written work. It “survives the rainbow of his will,” in the phrase of Robert Lowell.

His first novel, *The Village in the Jungle*, was published in 1913, *The Wise Virgins* in the following year. *The Wise Virgins* sometimes reads like a first draft of later and more sophisticated satires like Anthony Powell's or even a post-script to Chekhov. It also has echoes of his friend Forster. The least important thing about *The Wise Virgins* is that two of the main protagonists Camilla and Katherine Lawrence are loosely based on Virginia and Vanessa Stephen (later Woolf and Bell). Equally secondary is the fact that the main protagonist, Harry, a Jew, is loosely based on Leonard himself, as his family certainly understood. They hated the book.

The Wise Virgins is a social satire, a grim and even pessimistic tragicomedy of manners, mainly set in a middle-class social world at the height of the post-Edwardian and immediately pre-war suffragette movement. It is a compelling portrait of a world where the words virgin and unmarried woman are supposed to be synonymous, and women's potentialities are limited by a narrowness of vision symbolised by that synonym, which his publisher tried to invoke for use as the book's title, and fortunately failed. What do women want? asked Freud (whose complete works were first published in English translation by the Hogarth Press, founded by Leonard and Virginia). In 1912-1914, the publication of Woolf's two novels, following his return to the UK after the seven years in Ceylon, coincided with the beginnings of the Bloomsbury Group, following its intellectual origins in Woolf's Cambridge. In *The Wise Virgins*, Woolf asks a more specific question: what do single women want? And what does Harry want?

The book paints the lineaments of ungratified desire as well as ungratifiable desire, of ignored desire as well as sublimated desire. Harry Davis, an angry and frustrated Jewish art student who meets the potential model and painter Camilla Lawrence in a studio (where he will paint her portrait), cannot cope with her domestic world *in situ* and doesn't want to, but tries without success to import its possibilities, mentally speaking,

into his recently acquired suburban world of garden parties, river trips and so on. This upmarket suburb is called Richstead, almost explicitly Hampstead on the river at Richmond, where the Davis family, Harry and his parents and sister, has arrived (in both senses) and becomes friends with the widow Garland and her four daughters.

The four Garland sisters live depressingly narrow and constrained lives and one of them will marry the most grotesque character in the book, the wretched and doubtless virgin Reverend Macausland. A kind of freedom, relatively speaking, is symbolised by the upper middle-class Camilla, a mystery figure somewhat cold and probably bisexual, whose family live in Bloomsbury, and have a country house in Kent. Apart from scenes set in Camilla's house, the main episodes outside the suburb take place on a day trip to the river and a holiday on the Sussex coast in the hotel and surroundings where Harry Davis and Gwen Garland will “fall in love,” Camilla having failed to reciprocate Harry's feelings.

The much-discussed Jewish aspect of the novel provides a counterpoint to the geographical and gentile settings of Richstead and Bloomsbury. We note that Harry and Gwen have to marry because, in the holiday hotel, they have broken the rule concerning sex before marriage (although we are never told whether she is pregnant or not), but significantly they will marry in church. There is no question of a conversion in either direction or a religious rupture, and indeed in real life Leonard and all his many siblings married out of the faith, although his Jewish parents joined the main Reform synagogue in England after his father became a prosperous barrister, having escaped his poor origins. His father was a synagogue warden and died young.

Woolf is very selective in his portrayal of the ancestral heritage. One cannot ignore the tropes of anti-Semitism which are present in the book, including the words of the Jewish protagonist himself. These tropes, internalised by Harry (but not by Woolf) and unacceptable today, are true to the thought processes of that period in history and we find them later in the diaries of Virginia Woolf and the poems of the Woolfs' friend T. S. Eliot who, like Freud, was published by the Hogarth Press.

Hindsight has twenty-twenty vision. What happened to the Jews under Nazism should not be read back into the casual anti-Semitism of previous decades. Jews had been emancipated earlier and their integration (not the same as assimilation) was proceeding apace. In 2023, we are uncomfortable when the narrator (not to be confused with the author) says of Harry's father: “he had the Jewish habit of manipulating his capital.” A minor character says to Harry: “it's a characteristic of your race—they've intellect and not emotion [...] You've produced Mendelssohn and Barney Barnato. You never find a Jew on the land.” It is ironic that the great Jewish Christian composer's “Wedding March” is the most played tune of all time at weddings in church. And if you want deeper feeling, listen to his oratorio *Elijah*, premiered in Birmingham. Woolf is having fun with his selective details. The Jewish profiteer Barnato, an amazing figure, had plenty of feeling and was also an easy target for anti-Semites. In the immediate pre-war years, the Marconi scandal too provided rich pickings concerning Jewish cabinet ministers).

“There has never been a good Jew artist, and never will be,” says a minor character Lion, “they're too like Davis, too cold and clammy and hard.” Leonard himself knew very well that there were good Jewish artists, including his and Virginia's friend Mark Gertler. He is writing a novel where everyone generalises all the time and talks nonsense much of the time, perhaps because they have too much money and not enough sex. Sublimation takes many forms.

Harry himself says gentiles have no blood and never do anything and that he thinks this because he is a Jew. He also says “There isn't sensibility in us. We want to *get* [...] The only thing that a Jew is sentimental about is Judaism [...] We're hard and grasping.” And then “[...] The first article of our creed—money.” His generalising à la Karl Kraus includes the internalised anti-Semitism already mentioned,

anti-Semitism which was characteristic of that period in British history and contains a superiority complex unconsciously inherited from Jewish persecution as a defence mechanism. The novel was published in 1914, less than a decade after the Aliens Act of 1905, one of whose main aims was to prevent or reduce Jewish immigration. It should be stated that anti-Semitism was less acute in the UK than in France, Russia, and Austria.

Harry is not a loveable character, but why should he be? Nor are any of the other characters. But why should they be? This is a tragicomic novel and a satire. Harry is the fulcrum of a seesaw between the two incompatible genteel worlds of Bloomsbury and Richstead. Felix Mendelssohn may in fact have got the best of both worlds but the option of being a Jewish Christian is no longer possible except in cultic groupuscules. Let's end with Leonard's awareness in his final autobiography, *The Journey Not the Arrival Matters* (and repeated elsewhere), that the ancient Jewish vision of justice and mercy combined with the ancient Greek vision of liberty and beauty (Jerusalem and Athens, Micah and Pericles, Matthew Arnold's Hebraism and Hellenism) are the bedrock of civilised society. Woolf's splendid life, private and public, was devoted to advancing these values.

Anthony Rudolf



"Balcony on Theatre" by Fidan Nazim qizi
<https://www.pexels.com/photo/balcony-on-theatre-15473491/>

***Orlando*: Reflections on Neil Bartlett's Adaptation, Staged by Michael Grandage at Garrick Theatre, London**

Both as a fan and as a scholar, I am filled with excitement every time I come across a new adaptation of Woolf's works. As a fan, delving into new Woolf-related cultural objects gives me the thrill of awaiting a new publication from my favorite writer. As a scholar, I am consumed by curiosity when it comes to exploring how her voice resonates with the ever-new urgencies of the present-day world. The merging of these two aspects of my own self brought me to purchase a ticket to London when I first heard of Neil Bartlett's adaptation of *Orlando* being staged by Michael Grandage, a winner both of Tony and Olivier Awards.¹

As part of the preparation for my West End adventure, I bought Bartlett's script, which was commissioned by the Michael Grandage Company (MGC) for the production. Bartlett does not limit himself to translating the rich plot of Woolf's novel for live-theater performance; he also offers a re-reading of it. Attention has primarily been given to investigating the original novel as a quest of one's own self, symbolically expressed by the classical philosophical query "who am I?", which returns several times in the play since Orlando's very first Shakespearean-sounding line: "Well yes, that *is* the question. Who am I—and...next question please... who do I love?" (Bartlett 7).

To convey the fresh spirit of Bartlett's adaptation, it is enough to mention that the play contains references from different writers over the centuries, including, among others, Alexander Pope, Nell Gwyn, and Vita Sackville-West. Moreover, along a postmodernist stance that the script seems to pursue, there are also more pop-culturally based

references including the movie *Some Like It Hot* and the musical *Cabaret*.²

Perhaps the most significant innovation of the play is the idea of including Virginia Woolf as a character. To be precise, not only one but nine different versions of her enter the stage, speaking both separately and at once in unison—a powerful, symbolic manifestation of the complexity and pluralistic sense of identity that Woolf has often discussed in her works, as it will be illustrated in detail later. Mrs. Grimsditch, Orlando's housekeeper, is perhaps the other main original aspect of the play compared to Woolf's novel which, without altering the plot, represents a useful supporting character and ensures the smooth progression of the protagonist's wild goose chase. Her witty verve is evident since her first lines: "Ladies and gentlemen—no, sorry, everyone" (Bartlett 10), a condensation of satire, witticism, and gender reflections which, overall, characterizes the play.

Two Meaningful Scenes

Two scenes are particularly significant in my view, both from a narrative perspective and from a more performative level. The first one is the very opening of the play where Orlando stands still on the top of his bed, stretching, at the center of the stage, with a prosthetic phallus hanging between his legs. Making the fact that "there could be no doubt of his [male] sex" (Woolf, *Orlando* 9) the emphasis on the male organ reminds one of discussions on phallogocentrism in Irigaray's work while the evident *artificiality* of its material, size, and shape, reminds one of the cultural *construct* of patriarchy: the ridicule directed at the phallus, which caused the audience to burst into laughter upon seeing it, serves as an effective critique of its associated implications.

The second scene which is worth mentioning, as banal as it may sound, is the play's conclusion: after finding answer(s) to the existential question(s) illustrated at the beginning—and accompanying him/her throughout his/her journey ("My name... is Orlando. / What's my favorite color? Midnight. / What's my favorite bird? A wild goose—ready to be chased" [Bartlett 79])—Orlando walks toward the back of the stage where a luminous crack emerges in the wall. Paired with the closing line "What is my favorite time [...] now" (Bartlett 80), this scene seems to open a new dimension, suggesting Orlando's prosecution of her search beyond the fictional domain of theater (or, in a wider sense, of literature). While the fourth wall is broken at various moments throughout the play by actors acknowledging the audience, this conclusive, sci-fi-like element assumes a particular value, suggesting a possible continuation of the protagonist's pursuit in the *real* world. Questions which this scene inspired include: what would Orlando mean today? What lessons could he/she teach us in an era where patriarchy continues to manifest across a range of issues?

A link between the play and the current times features in the public narratives accompanying *Orlando* in the media. Before delving into this aspect, it is worth noting that the play garnered mixed reviews from critics. There is consensus in recognizing the inventiveness of Grandage's staging, along the line offered by the *Evening Standard* which discussed the play as "a bold and interesting experiment by Grandage" (Curtis). *The Guardian's* positive review, adding on to this aspect, notes that the play "couldn't feel more timely, and it's glorious" (Jays).³ On the other hand, *The Spectator's* less enthusiastic contribution underscores the importance of the feminist lens embodied by the play but also criticizes the limited scope of this perspective, stating: "Although it looks sensational, it's an eccentric triviality aimed at 1970s feminists"

² For a whole discussion on the intertextual references present in *Orlando*, see Bartlett viii-x.

³ This positive comment, however, is combined with a controversial argumentation on the innovative adaptation of the novel's key themes in this new theatrical guise. "At a moment of toxic arguments around trans identity, this show arrives like a liberation. No intrusive discussion of lady parts or bathroom arrangements: how refreshing" (Jays).

¹ The performance ran in London from November 22, 2022, to February 25, 2023.

(Evans). As I will discuss later, I have some reservations about this comment.

Another aspect on which critics seem to generally agree is Emma Corrin's portrayal of Orlando, which obtained words of appreciation and praise. Beyond her undeniable talent as an actress, I believe that casting her holds features that favored the positive reception of her performance (and the play, in general): she is a rising global star in the entertainment industry due to recent successful roles, including Lady Diana in *The Crown* (Season 4, 2020). The media's discussion surrounding the production was also deeply intertwined with her public identity where her claim of being nonbinary⁴ remains relevant, steering the conversation on the play toward contemporary topics associated to gender discourse. In an interview with *The Guardian*, for instance, Corrin observes that the play offers "a very real experience of life and identity, particularly with figuring out your gender" and that it is "all about trying to answer these questions of how you feel, and pairing that with what society is trying to make you feel about yourself" (Corrin qtd. in Armitstead). The stress on the timeliness of the play has also been emphasized by Grandage, who highlights the significance of presenting this story on stage amidst ongoing and exacerbating issues of discrimination, particularly within the LGBTQ+ community: "I think the moment that this young generation start to realize it might actually be happening will be the start of an uprising the likes of which we've never seen before. Because they are not going to give up the freedoms they rightly enjoy, after a lot of fights involving a lot of us over many years" (Grandage qtd. in Armitstead).

Beyond the widely discussed androgyny of Corrin's appearance, I believe that the ultimate element that renders this play a successful vehicle for revitalizing *Orlando* pertains to the "smell of teen spirit" of the cast, including several actors in their 20s. I believe that this aspect somehow dusted off the layer of classicism that Orlando—the character—possesses, as crystallized by Sally Potter's (extraordinary) 1992 cinematic adaptation, which has ingrained itself in collective imagery for over two decades now. In this context, it was intriguing to witness numerous 'young' people flocking to the stage door after the play, waiting for Corrin to appear for an autograph or a selfie. Could she potentially become the embodiment of Orlando for Generation Z?

While it remains too early to answer this question, another character perhaps represents the most surprising aspect of the play, especially when considering the discussion on subjectivity that she/they allows: Virginia Woolf.

Virginia Woolf's Multiple Subjectivity

As mentioned earlier, Virginia Woolf is one of the three central characters in the play (Bartlett x), alongside Orlando and Mrs. G., and she is the first to enter the stage. The significance and complexity of this character are demonstrated by the fact that not one, but nine actors portray her, all wearing similar wigs and costumes: "horn-rimmed spectacles, long tweed skirts and woolly cardigans, and they comply with current diversity targets" (Evans). While the idea of witnessing a 'reincarnation' of Virginia Woolf on stage—as only the magic of theater permits—is enough to send shivers down the spine of an enthusiast and scholar like myself, the multitude of her appearances offers the audience a broader spectrum of emotions and considerations.

What struck me most about this presentation was that, through the costumes, the distinct physical features of the various actors were accentuated, particularly their ethnicity becoming the prominent focus of attention. This effect pays homage to Woolf's exploration of identity, self, and subjectivity, alongside the constraints of cultural constructs and

⁴ If one considers the media attention dedicated to her, in fact, stress has been dedicated to Corrin who publicly identified herself as nonbinary ("Being nonbinary is an embrace of many different parts of myself, the masculine and the feminine and everything in between," with the stress that her pronouns were "she/they" first, and "they/them" next (see Ryzik).

expectations, as she articulated in *A Room of One's Own*: "it is obvious that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex" (Woolf 55-56). Much like she reminds us that sex and gender cannot be confined to a singular perspective, and that categories should be negotiated, it is intriguing to consider how, similarly, even traditional audience expectations for portraying Woolf deserve to be challenged.

The fact that the actors embodying Woolf(s) do not exclusively represent her, but instead also take on other characters throughout the play, adds another layer to this discussion. The notion of performativity—a cornerstone of gender studies—thrives in the actors as they traverse, just like Orlando, various genders and eras. This choice can also be seen as a potent metaphor for the idea that fragments of Woolf exist within the various characters inhabiting the storyworld of *Orlando*, a world that remains a product of her pen and genius. The absence of an attempt to intricately mimic Woolf's realistic depiction, instead, can be interpreted as a meaningful choice, illustrating the need to remain attentive to the multi-layered nature of Woolf herself. This choice, in my view, represents almost a warning to readers and critics against the risk of falling into the trap of overly romanticizing Woolf along a single dimension or through excessive celebratory intent, both of which often obscure the multiperspectivism through which she can—and should—be observed (a viewpoint clarified by the ever-fresh perspectives explored in the topics of the Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf).

Gender issues are also addressed in the context of this multi-dimensional portrayal of Woolf on stage. Notably, one of the individuals in the Woolf ensemble is male. This choice broadens the exploration of subjectivity—and identity—as examined by the play in a non-dualistic sense, aligning with Woolf's later insights in *Three Guineas* while prompting new approaches to education and countering the discriminatory, hierarchical, chauvinistic assumptions and foundations of past traditional thought. Additionally, the inclusion of a male actor playing Woolf appears as embodiment of the novel's line "he became a woman" (Woolf, *Orlando* 98), but with an added, original twist. While in *Orlando* it is famously stated that "he [...] has remained so ever since" (98), a different outcome can be observed in the play: playing with pronouns, it would be accurate to say that, in reference to the interpretation of Woolf on stage by both female and male performers, not only "he [the actor] became her [Woolf]," but also that, subsequently, "she [Woolf] became them [actors/characters]," underscoring the significance of Woolf's deconstruction and reconstruction in fresh, evolving, multiple selves. In this regard, the implications of the racial aspects evoked by the actors' diverse ethnicities cannot be overlooked.

It is not new that race discourse remains contentious in Woolf's writing in general. *Orlando* begins with the main character at the moment of "slicing at the head of a Moor" (Woolf, *Orlando* 9) while practicing swordmanship. In this context, a recent comment by Kabe Wilson, the multimedia artist behind *Olivia N'Gowfri—Of One Woman or So* (2014), is crucial. When Wilson explores the complex implication lying behind the use of the word "negress" in *A Room of One's Own*, he explains that, "in context[,] it's used in a very troubling sentence with all these colonial connotations" (Wilson and Friedman 59). This observation can be approached critically and applied to the reference to the Moor in *Orlando* thus enriching the discourse on Woolf with new possibilities to investigate the complexities of race in her work.

For instance, the fact that, in the play, "there's a white Woolf, a black Woolf, a mixed-race Woolf, an East Asian Woolf" (Evans) among others, proves particularly significant in extending the contributions of intersectional feminism⁵ which therefore appears to encompass global implications regarding the gender issues it develops. The multiethnicity of the cast also sheds light on the ever-pressing concerns of the present day, serving as a reminder that gender, race, social, and numerous

⁵ See Crenshaw (1989) as well as bell hooks (1981).

other challenges are interconnected. This evidence is, in my view, proof of how Bartlett and Grandage's *Orlando* is engrained in a mature and updated critical discussion on feminism which also explores the complexity of the topic through a global and planetary perspective on Woolf that aligns well with ongoing discussions in Woolf studies.⁶ I therefore disagree with Lloyd Evans's dismissive comment in the *Spectator* that the play is primarily "aimed at 1970s feminists."

While it is true that there could have been further exploration of race discourse in the play—and that perhaps a more inclusive set of intertextual references could have been offered including excerpts and citations by non-white or non-binary authors—*Orlando* remains a valuable play that caters my condition of devoted Woolf-fan.⁷ I would therefore recommend considering the play in academic settings to reflect on new interpretations of the novel, and perhaps even staging it with students. Should this come to fruition, do extend an invitation: I would immediately buy a plane ticket to attend it.

Stefano Rozzoni
University of Bergamo

Works Cited

- Armitstead, Claire. "'It's Relatable' ...*The Crown's* Emma Corrin on Playing Gender-Swapping, Time Traveling *Orlando*." *The Guardian*. 15 November 2022. Web. 26 August 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/nov/15/crown-emma-corrin-gender-swapping-time-travelling-orlando-woolf-queer>.
- hooks, bell. *Ain't I a Woman?: Black Women and Feminism*. Boston: South End P, 1981.
- Bartlett, Neil. Introduction. *Orlando*. London: Nick Hern Books, 2022. vii-xvii.
- . *Orlando*. London: Nick Hern Books, 2022.
- Curtis, Nick. Rev. "*Orlando* at the Garrick Theatre Review." *Evening Standard*. 6 December 2022. Web. 26 August 2023. <https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/theatre/orlando-garrick-theatre-review-emma-corrin-west-end-b1044944.html>.
- Dubino, Jeanne et al., eds. *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and Contemporary Global Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2022.
- Evans, Lloyd. "Eccentric Triviality Aimed at 1970s Feminists: *Orlando*, at the Garrick Theatre, Reviewed." *Spectator*: 7 January 2023. Web. 26 August 2023. <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/eccentric-triviality-aimed-at-1970s-feminists-orlando-at-the-garrick-theatre-reviewed/>.
- Jays, David. Rev. "*Orlando* Review—Emma Corrin Is Glorious in a Giddy, Heartfelt Show." *The Guardian*. 5 December 2022. Web. 26 August 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/dec/05/orlando-review-emma-corrin-garrick-theatre-virginia-woolf>.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *U of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989 (1989): 139-67. Web. 29 December 2023. <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.
- Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum De L'autre Femme*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1974.
- Ryzik, Melena. 2022. "For Emma Corrin, Identity Is an Ever-Evolving Project." *The New York Times* 2 December 2022. Web. 26 August 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/02/movies/emma-corrin-lady-chatterleys-lover.html>.
- Wilson, Kabe and Susan Stanford Friedman. "Of Words, Worlds and Woolf." *Recycling Virginia Woolf in Contemporary Art and*

- Literature*. Ed. Monica Latham, Caroline Marie, and Anne-Laure Rigeade. New York: Routledge, 2022. 55-85.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando. A Biography*. 1928. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970.
- . *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*. 1929; 1938. Ed. Anna Snaith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015.



Political Influences and Intersections: Virginia Woolf and Margaret Cavendish on Gender, Citizenship, and War

When Margaret Cavendish and Virginia Woolf are spoken of together, the association is often negative. This is both understandable and unfortunate. Certainly, Woolf's disparaging characterizations of a crazy duchess and her manic scribbling engender defensiveness amongst Cavendish scholars. As Lise Mae Schlosser observes, Woolf has become "the bogey against which Cavendish critics assert her merit" (354). This is true in the scholarly literature, and it has also surfaced in discussions on the Cavendish listserv, with one scholar claiming that Woolf "was not only dead wrong, but had personal ideological investments in caricaturing MC the way she did" (Sigfried).

Yet an exclusive focus on this negative portrayal misses a great deal, including the more affirming appraisals and the opportunity to explore important areas of overlap and similarity between these two writers. Following a brief assessment of the significance of Woolf's portrayal of Cavendish, I turn to consider the possible Cavendishian influences on Woolf's ideological investments and her political thought. Schlosser has suggested that Cavendish was more important to Woolf than is commonly acknowledged, and that the multiple references to her over a long period of Woolf's writing career indicate her influence on Woolf's internal conversation about the history of English writing (354). By the same token, I consider how our appreciation of the depth and nuance of Woolf's political thought might be enhanced if we consider Cavendish as one of Woolf's historical *political* interlocutors. I am curious about the role Cavendish's incisive analysis of women's position in the state, of war and conflict, and of the culture of honour might have had on Woolf who read voraciously—at times "like an express train" (Harris 44)—and who offered her own very distinctive but underappreciated analysis of political power in the early twentieth century. Both of these writers, in their own way, shared an impulse to innovate with literary genre "so that it could better communicate the world as they experienced it" (Schlosser 359). And, significantly, neither of them has been understood properly or valued for their contributions to political thought.

Cavendish scholars have tended to take at face value Woolf's rather scathing characterization of the Duchess of Newcastle and her writing, especially the most quoted passage from *A Room of One's Own* [AROO] (1929),

What a vision of loneliness and riot the thought of Margaret Cavendish brings to mind! as if some giant cucumber had spread itself over all the roses and carnations in the garden and choked them to death. What a waste that the woman who wrote "the best bred women are those whose minds are civilest" should have frittered her time away scribbling nonsense and plunging ever deeper into obscurity and folly[.] (75)

Here Woolf reveals both her fascination with Cavendish's range of interests, and her frustration with her lack of discipline in any of them. As much as *A Room of One's Own* calls into question male historians' absurd prejudices about women and their writing, Woolf's description of Cavendish may reinforce the very stereotype she is trying to undermine.

In likening Cavendish's mind and ideas to a plant—a wild cucumber, known for its capacity to stretch out indiscriminately, respecting no

⁶ Regarding the intertwining of transdisciplinary issues in current approaches to Woolf studies one can consider Jeanne Dubino et al.

⁷ Unaware of anyone having employed this term previously, I would like to introduce this neologism—"Woolf-fan"—to depict an individual who is both an enthusiast of Woolf, akin to a fan, and a scholar who applies zeal and scientific rigor to their investigation on Woolf's works.

boundaries, with its coiling tendrils attaching themselves to anything in its path—Woolf taps into a long discursive history of “woman as plant.” Cavendish’s other literary biographers have drawn upon similar imagery, as in Henry Perry’s description: Cavendish “lay[s] hold upon an idea, to envelop it with her formless images” (237). Or, in Sir Egerton Brydges’s phrasing, “she pours forth every thing with an undistinguishing hand, and mixes the serious, the colloquial, and even the vulgar” (9). In *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel offers a sexual typology associating men with animals and women with plants. Women are plant-like in that they are passive; they know only through imagination and intuition, their thought exceeding containment. Men’s thinking, conversely, is rational, universal, and concrete. French philosopher Michèle Le Doeuff unpacks this “Hegelian figure of the woman of taste and refinement, producer of lovely plantlike thoughts intuitively spreading throughout Nature,” showing that,

Women lose on all counts; no matter what the philosophical framework women are always on the wrong side. If intuition is devalued, it is said to be feminine; if reason is judged uninteresting, then suddenly it is reason that is deemed feminine. (16)

Not even Woolf, who sees the matter of men’s derision of women’s writing with (nearly) crystal clear vision, can avoid this rhetoric entirely; she is part of the culture even as she seeks to criticize it. Cavendish’s ideas *pour*, they *spread*, and they even *choke*—as Le Doeuff points out, these characterizations are far from unique; indeed, they have withstood the test of time.

Nevertheless, that we continue to read Cavendish in the present is due, at least in part, to Woolf “discovering” her dusty manuscripts on a shelf in the British Museum. Or, at least, this is how we often think about it, when in fact, what Woolf encountered was Thomas Longueville’s book, *The First Duke and Duchess of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne*. Woolf’s earliest writing about Cavendish took the form of a review with the same title for the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1911. Later, she revised her original review for an essay in *The Common Reader* (1925), making the Duchess the focus, rather than the marriage, and devoted other passages to her and other early modern women writers, including the well-known mention in *A Room of One’s Own*. Although Woolf’s portrayal of Cavendish and her writing is but one of many less-than-positive portraits by nineteenth and early twentieth century writers and literary biographers, it has no doubt taken on additional significance because of Woolf’s profile and the assumption that she should have known better.

Still, Woolf would have had to work hard to shake off all traces of Longueville’s (and others’) characterization of Cavendish. In speaking of the apocryphal ladies who slept outside Cavendish’s bedchamber in case she called for them to write something down for her, Longueville concludes: “The world would not have been very seriously poorer if the Duchess had omitted to ring her bell, and if these sage ‘conceptions’ had ‘escaped her memory’ in the morning” (253).

Yet Woolf’s purpose is entirely different from his. Her intent is to illustrate, in the boldest terms possible, the missed opportunities of an inequalitarian society and education system. Woolf’s assessment tends more toward that ascribed by Longueville to Isaac D’Israeli: “Her [Cavendish’s] labours have been ridiculed by some wits; but had her studies been regulated, she would have displayed no ordinary genius” (256). Indeed, this is how Woolf sees Cavendish (and other historical women writers), for the starker the contrast she can draw between Cavendish’s intuitive brilliance and the quality of her output, the stronger the case she can make about stifled opportunities. The result is disparaging to Cavendish, no doubt, but the strategy is a political one.

Foregrounding the political intent embedded in Woolf’s depictions of Cavendish opens the door to a greater appreciation of the overlap in their respective political analyses. Indeed, if we think back through the history of women’s ideas on the state and their place within it, Cavendish and

Woolf are each a participant in a larger conversation of women writers attentive to the injustice of women’s exclusion from political power and influence. The dominant narrative from Mary Wollstonecraft to Harriet Taylor Mill and beyond points to the need to remedy this exclusion of women *somehow*—to include women at some level or to listen to their voices—although exactly what form inclusion might take varies tremendously. If we position Cavendish and Woolf in relation to this argument of exclusion and inclusion, we find that they stand somewhat apart from the narrative. They are each attentive to the epistemological injustices associated with women’s exclusion from the discourses of political knowledge, with Cavendish writing in her *Sociable Letters* [SL] (1664): “Pardon me if I give not my Judgment or Opinion in a Publick Letter, concerning Publick Affairs, in which I ought not to meddle, being a Woman...” (122). Yet neither assumes that straightforward inclusion will be an uncomplicated remedy to this legacy of injustice.

When Woolf published *Three Guineas* [TG] in 1938, her most political text and the sequel to *A Room of One’s Own* that took a decade to research and craft, she received criticism for her advocacy of a Society of Outsiders. Rather than join the war effort, or darn socks for soldiers, women should completely disengage, a strategy which many saw as irresponsible in the face of the fascist threat in Europe. As Woolf’s nephew and biographer Quentin Bell suggested, “the true criticism of *Three Guineas* came from events; for the events of 1938 did not turn on the Rights of Women but upon the Rights of Nations” (Bell 1 205). While Bell was unable to see the vital interconnection between these issues, for Woolf, and Cavendish before her, the circumstances of war brought the precarious nature of women’s citizenship into sharper relief.

Cavendish wrote about women’s political status in her frequently quoted Letter #16 in *Sociable Letters*, among other places. In the business of statecraft, women, she posits, are “excluded from intermeddling therewith” and “are accounted neither Useful in Peace, nor Serviceable in War.” From here she suggests boldly that if women have no authority or status as citizens of the state, if “we are not tied, nor bound to State or Crown; we are free” (SL 61).¹ In this passage, Cavendish does not adopt an “add women and stir” remedy, possibly because a world in which women were full and equal citizens was simply beyond her horizon of vision in 1664. While Cavendish’s view of politics was conditioned by both the reality and discourses of exclusion, which Susan Wiseman has suggested was common in the early modern period (2), hers is a distinctively separatist or “opt out” approach. Here Cavendish pushes the logic of exclusion to its limits, positioning women outside the social contract, and outside the state and its legal boundaries. Indeed, it is passages such as we find in Letter #16 that undermine any notion that Cavendish was simply replicating the political thought of her husband, William Cavendish, or members of his intellectual circle, as has often been suggested.² Neither Thomas Hobbes nor William Cavendish would have had any truck or trade with the idea that one could simply declare oneself free of obligation to the state.

There was not enough attention paid to the specifics of Cavendish’s political thought in her own era, nor since, for this radical argument to disrupt the political status quo or cause a reaction. We do know that Woolf read much of the Cavendish corpus, including *Sociable Letters*, picking up more than just the broad strokes of her arguments. She read closely enough to be able to capture the details of Cavendish’s upbringing and family life, and quotes Cavendish on a range of subjects, including Letter #26’s critique of women’s educational opportunities. That Woolf plucks the phrase, “those Women are best bred, whose Minds

¹The quote proceeds, “we are free, not Sworn to Allegiance, nor do we take the Oath of Supremacy; we are not made Citizens of the Commonwealth, we hold no Offices, nor bear we any Authority therein [...]” (SL 61). Cavendish’s suggestive phrasing and her use of oath-taking as a determinant of citizenship status are discussed in my chapter, “Margaret Cavendish’s *Sociable Letter* #16.”

²Hilda L. Smith documents the differences in Margaret and William’s political thought in “‘A General War Amongst the Men...But None Amongst the Women’: Political Differences Between Margaret and William Cavendish.”

are civilest” (SL 74) out of Letter #26 is significant, even if she slightly misquotes it, as this letter is exemplary of Cavendish’s style of political argument in its circuitousness and punch. What begins as an instruction for women to obey their husbands leads ultimately to her central point that if women do not behave as rationally as we would wish, if they are unable to temper their passions, it is because “for the most part Women are not Educated as they should be” (SL 73). This is precisely the argument that Woolf makes about Cavendish’s lack of intellectual discipline, so whatever Woolf actually thought of her, she knew very well that Cavendish shared her judgment of society’s failure to allow women to live up to their potential.

We cannot be certain of Woolf’s reaction to Letter #16; still, it is worth considering what influence Cavendish’s separatist ideas about women and the state—what I label the “no citizen-no subject” argument (Wright 228) might have had on Woolf’s own thinking. As far as I am aware, Woolf would have found few to no other sources for thinking through the idea of women’s non-responsibility to the state, or what she considered their outsider status. In *Three Guineas* she builds her own scaffolding for this argument, beginning with the distinction between men and women’s desires to fight:

Though many instincts are held more or less in common by both sexes, to fight has always been the man’s habit, not the woman’s [...] scarcely a human being in the course of history has fallen to a woman’s rifle; the vast majority of birds and beasts have been killed by you, not by us. . . . (TG 9)

Here Woolf offers a generalization for rhetorical and political ends, yet *Three Guineas* makes room for the fact that not all men share in this drive and that women, if given the opportunity, can easily develop the fighting instinct (TG 210).³ In this passage she is seeking to bolster her argument about the various ways in which women are excluded, including most frequently from military service. Women can’t participate in the Stock Exchange, they “can’t preach sermons or negotiate treaties,” they exercise no control over the press, and their participation in the professions remains marginal. Working class women have at least one card to play—they can withdraw their labour, thereby generating a significant impact. In general, however, women across the board have little authority to exercise in any domain (TG 16).

For Woolf, the point of enumerating these exclusions is not to mount an argument for women’s straightforward inclusion in society as it currently stands, although inclusion was a process already underway. She notes the strong (read: violent) reaction of men to any such attempts: e. g., Newnham College’s proposal to have the letters of women’s degrees appear after their names was met with protest and the storming of Newnham’s gates,⁴ to say nothing of the reaction to women’s fight for the franchise (TG 193). While men’s enjoyment in the rights and benefits of society gives them a feeling of attachment to their nation, Woolf insists patriotism is a sentiment absent in women. For women, and here Woolf is referring specifically to the “daughters of educated men,” they can do no more than look on from the margins at these “unreal loyalties.” Woolf invites these daughters of educated men, who are uniquely disempowered in terms of their opportunities to effect change or exert authority over public matters, to join the Outsider’s Society, to “maintain an attitude of complete indifference” to their brothers as they go off to

³ While Woolf generally holds to the view that women are less prone to violence, she readily acknowledges their service in World War I and the Spanish Civil War. She cites with frustration the 1937 declaration by the Army Council that they would not be recruiting women (TG 126), meaning in this instance that “[p]acifism is enforced upon women” while “[m]en are still allowed liberty of choice” (TG 210). Additionally, she observes a double standard in societal responses to women’s violence (as in the fight for suffrage) as compared to men’s: “Burning, whipping and picture-slashing only it would seem become heroic when carried out on a large scale by men with machine guns” (TG 193).

⁴ See Woolf’s account (TG 37-38) as well as the following summary: <https://newn.cam.ac.uk/about/history/history-of-newnham/>.

war. When he says he is fighting to protect his country, “she will ask herself, ‘What does “our country” mean to me an outsider?’” (TG 127). Women’s exclusion from participation at so many levels of society and their lack of patriotism should inspire them to reject the whole business of seeking inclusion and to adopt instead a cosmopolitan political response, as we see in her most quoted passage from *Three Guineas*: “[A]s a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world” (TG 129).

Maintaining a posture of indifference, for Woolf, meant not engaging men in their quest for validation. Women should neither encourage men to go to fight, nor plead with them to stay back. They should eschew all honours, titles and other aspects of the highly competitive society that Woolf saw as stoking the fires of conflict. Here again, we can find significant overlap in the political analyses of Cavendish and Woolf, for although the Civil War context is very different from the interwar years in Britain, both thinkers interrogate the role that honour plays in fomenting competition and conflict.

A recurring theme in Cavendish’s *Orations of Divers Sorts* [DO] (1662) is the folly of men’s belief that they can win a war, and that engaging in conflict is better than living with an imperfect (but peaceful) political reality. Civil war is a “plague of the mind, infecting men with covetous desires, ambitious designs. . . .” (DO 148), and indeed, the real cause of men’s misery is their “pride, envy, factions, vanity, vice and wickedness” (DO 156). Men enter war “puffed up with pride”; prepared to “risk everything” without really thinking, they are “all body and no head” (DO 271).

While she acknowledges the societal function of honour in encouraging men to do good, and the belief that honourable and valiant men “ought to be remembered after their lives” (DO 160), she also itemizes its costs and benefits. She concludes that “fame or renown is given to the general alone,” while “common soldiers are never mentioned, although they are the only fighters [...] [and] when killed, are buried in oblivion’s grave [...] they lie and rot above ground or are devoured by carrion birds or ravenous beasts” (DO 148). She sees clearly what Lawrence Stone describes as the “large element of make-believe about the whole business” (66) of the culture of honour. In Cavendish’s words: “that which is called honour, it is but the opinion of some men, a mere fancy, not any real good, only a name to persuade men to do evil actions, as to fight duels, to make wars, to murder friends, nay, to murder themselves” (DO 185-86). With resignation, in Oration #166, she concludes that (hu) mankind is so restless as “to never be contented with what we have” (DO 281).

In *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas*, Woolf takes the critique of vanity and pride one step further, finding no end to the ways in which men will display their own status and position through dress and titles. She did not believe women should simply be included in all aspects of society because the institutions in question were themselves diseased to the core. This was particularly true of the education system. Woolf asks her readers to rationally look at educated men’s behavior and their desire to protect their own privilege: “does this not prove that the finest education in the world teaches people, not to hate force but to use it?” (TG 38). When Woolf imagines an alternative institution and what might be taught there, she asserts emphatically, “not the arts of dominating other people; not the arts of ruling, of killing, or acquiring land and capital” (TG 43).

In her January 1931 “Speech Before the London/National Society for Women’s Service” [SLS] that became the basis for her essay, “Professions for Women,” Woolf attempts to see the world from the vantage point of the entitled professional man, who naturally occupies his position and privilege without giving it a moment’s thought. By day, he is used to earning his living and providing for his household, and by night, he expects to return to the domestic haven where his daily needs are met and his superiority validated by his wife and servants.

Woolf uncovers the terms of the unspoken contract between men and women here, a contract that may seem to be for the woman's protection, but which actually turns on the man's need for daily affirmation and validation. He is used to being "master in his own house" (SLS xlii); if women fail suddenly to live up to their duty of holding up the mirror that allows his size to double in her image, all because they are chasing some dream of independent purpose and equality, then it is his dignity and his position that are compromised: "I am the breadwinner; how am I going to support a wife and family, if my wife and family can support themselves?" (SLS xliii).

In this we find the source of men's confusion and anger about women, and their reasons for railing against them, which Woolf summarizes in *A Room of One's Own*:

Possibly when the professor insisted a little too emphatically upon the inferiority of women, he was concerned not with their own inferiority, but with his own superiority. That was what he was protecting rather hotheadedly and with too much emphasis, because it was a jewel to him of the rarest price. (AROO 42)

Woolf suggests that the "chief source of the patriarch's power" lies in his feeling superior to at least half the human race; but the moment his female counterpart ceases holding up the looking glass, and begins "to tell the truth, the figure in the looking glass shrinks, his fitness for life is diminished" (AROO 44). Without this inflation of ego that Woolf associates with anxious masculinity, "the glories of all our wars would be unknown" (AROO 43).

Woolf was able to take the psychological critique of dominance behaviour and patriarchal privilege much further than Cavendish. There was simply more rhetorical space available for thinking through such a political critique than was available to Cavendish. Nevertheless, I suggest, there are significant connections between what Cavendish sees as a false and dangerous quest for reputation and honour, rooted in men's pride and vanity, and the relentless project of self-validation that Woolf identifies as the cornerstone of patriarchy. Such false relations were agreed to, in a sense by both genders, Woolf writes, "for reasons I cannot now go into—they have to do with the British Empire, our colonies, Queen Victoria, Lord Tennyson, the growth of the middle class and so on—[reality] <a real relationship> between men and women was then unattainable" (SLS xxx).

Unpacking what is political in the thought of Cavendish and Woolf is a challenge, as neither has ever been considered a traditional political thinker and, indeed, their political ideas have been consistently downplayed and misinterpreted. Cavendish's political thought has been labelled everything from unsystematic to merely derivative. And it is hard to imagine that Woolf, who researched *Three Guineas* for ten years and generated such a profound critique of the psychological motivations behind war, could be described by Leonard Woolf, her husband, as "the least political animal that has lived since Aristotle invented the definition" (Carroll 99). Or that Quentin Bell said of his aunt, "she had attempted to be politically active; it was the ability, not the inclination that was lacking" (Bell 1 122). Incredulous of her attempt to combine feminism with anti-fascism, Bell finds *Three Guineas* to be "the product of a very odd mind, and a very odd state of mind" and concludes that Woolf was "a much less influential writer than Harriet Beecher Stowe" (Bell 1 122).

Casting aside these layers of (mis)interpretation, I wish to note the powerful similarities in their thought, of which I have enumerated only a few. And I suggest that we consider the possibility of Cavendish's influences on Woolf. Perhaps the most important overlap is their shared sense of political vision—an ability to uncover the complex underpinnings of social and political relationships and an unusual sensitivity to power relations. Cavendish analogizes her own method of assessing causes and effects to the labor of sailors who "cast their line

and plummet to fathom the sea." Speaking in the first person, she says, "I 'give my advice, for I search the bottom, stirring up the very dregs [...] fathoming the depth'" (SL 122). Similarly, for an "apolitical" writer, Woolf has remarkable instinct for getting to the root of things. Among many examples is an anecdote recounted by Hermione Lee in which Woolf visited a military hospital in London. "[T]he nurses sat knitting, the wounded men stared out of the window or read," and Woolf "came away with 'a feeling of the uselessness of it all, breaking these people & mending them again'" (351).

Both Cavendish and Woolf stir up the dregs and fathom the depths. Perhaps it would be extending beyond what the sources can tell us to assert an unequivocal connection between Woolf's analysis of the futility of conflict, women's outsider status in the state, and the social construction of masculinity, and Cavendish's Letter #16 and her dire descriptions of the effects of war. At the same time, if Cavendish came to Woolf's mind when she was constructing one of her many narratives about the history of English writing, she may also have served as one of Woolf's interlocutors in the history of political thought and ideas of women's place within it.

Joanne H. Wright
Professor of Political Science
University of New Brunswick, Canada
jwright@unb.ca

Works Cited

- Bell, Quentin. *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972.
- Brydges, Samuel Egerton. "Preface." In Margaret Cavendish. *A True Relation of the Birth, Breeding and Life of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle*. Kent: Johnson and Warwick.
- Cavendish, Margaret. *Orations of Divers Sorts, Accommodated to Divers Places in Political Writings*. Ed. Susan James. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003.
- . *Sociable Letters*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2004.
- Carroll, Berenice A. "'To Crush Him in our Own Country': The Political Thought of Virginia Woolf." *Feminist Studies*. 4.1 (February 1978): 99-132.
- Harris, Alexandra. *Virginia Woolf*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2011.
- Le Doeuff, Michèle. *The Sex of Knowing*. Translated by Kathryn Hamer and Lorraine Code. New York and London: Routledge, 2003.
- Lee, Hermione. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Vintage, 1997.
- Longueville, Thomas. *The First Duke and Duchess of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910.
- Perry, Henry Ten Eyck. *The First Duchess of Newcastle and Her Husband as Figures in Literary History. Harvard Studies in English*. Vol. IV. Boston and London: Ginn Co., 1918.
- Schlosser, Lise Mae. "Mrs. Dalloway and the Duchess: Virginia Woolf Reads and Writes Margaret Cavendish." *Literature Compass* 5.2 (2008): 353-361. Web. 22 November 2023. https://doi-org.proxy.hil.unb.ca/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2008.00525.xopen_in_newISSN.
- Sigfried, Brandie. MarCav-L Listserv. 6 April 2016.
- Smith, Hilda L. "'A General War Amongst the Men...But None Amongst the Women': Political Differences Between Margaret and William Cavendish." *Politics and the Political Imagination in Late Stuart Britain: Essays Presented to Lois Green Schworer*. Ed. Howard Nenner. Rochester, NY: U of Rochester P, 1997. 143-60.
- Stone, Lawrence. *The Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558-1641*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965.
- Wiseman, Susan. *Conspiracy and Virtue: Women, Writing and Politics in the Seventeenth-Century*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview P, 2001.
- . "[Speech Before the London/National Society for Women's Service, January 21 1931]. In *The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of*

The Years. Edited with an Introduction by Mitchell A. Leaska. London: Hogarth, 1978: xxvii-xliv.

- . *Three Guineas*. Annotated and with an Introduction by Jane Marcus. Gen. ed. Mark Hussey. New York: Harvest/Harcourt, 2006.
- Wright, Joanne. "Margaret Cavendish's *Sociable Letter* #16: Women's Political Obligation and Independence." In *Margaret Cavendish: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*. Ed. Lisa Walters and Brandie R. Sigfried. New York: Cambridge UP, 2022: 219-30.



Photo by Han Chenxu on *Unsplash*

https://unsplash.com/photos/pink-petaled-flowers-wallpaper-tu_mv6p2p5U

Into the Orchid House with Virginia Woolf

We also went into the orchid house where these sinister reptiles live in a tropical heat, so that they come out in all their spotted & streaked flesh even now in the cold. They always make me anxious to bring them into a novel.

(Virginia Woolf, 26 November 1917, *Diary* 1 82)

Not exotic plants but ominous cold-blooded creatures are how Virginia Woolf views orchids when she records in her diary a Sunday afternoon visit to Kew Gardens, London, with her husband Leonard Woolf, in November 1917. Perhaps the unnerving folds, lips and spurs of orchids resemble for Woolf the scaly contours of lizards. But what is it about "their spotted & streaked flesh" that makes her so "anxious to bring them into a novel"? Why the anxiety? She was indeed as good as her word. Here is a hot and steamy scene from Chapter 25 of her second novel, *Night and Day* [ND] (1919), set in Edwardian London, where Ralph Denham's courtship of Katharine Hilbery seems to suffer a setback as he glimpses her engagement ring (she is engaged to William Rodney) while watching her silently unglow herself among orchids in the Orchid House at Kew:

For him there was safety in the direction which the talk had taken. His emphasis might come from feelings more personal than those science roused in him, but it was disguised, and naturally he found it easy to expound and explain. Nevertheless, when he saw Katharine among the orchids, her beauty strangely emphasized by the fantastic plants, which seemed to peer and gape at her from striped hoods and fleshy throats, his ardor for botany waned, and a more complex feeling replaced it. She fell silent. The orchids seemed to suggest absorbing reflections. In defiance of the rules she stretched her ungloved hand and touched one. The sight of the rubies upon her finger affected him so disagreeably that he started and turned away. But next moment he controlled himself; he looked at her taking in one strange shape after another with the contemplative, considering gaze of a person who sees not exactly what is before him, but gropes in regions that lie beyond it. The far-away look entirely lacked self-consciousness. Denham doubted whether she remembered his presence. He could recall himself, of

course, by a word or a movement—but why? She was happier thus. She needed nothing that he could give her. And for him, too, perhaps, it was best to keep aloof, only to know that she existed, to preserve what he already had—perfect, remote, and unbroken. Further, her still look, standing among the orchids in that hot atmosphere, strangely illustrated some scene that he had imagined in his room at home. The sight, mingling with his recollection, kept him silent when the door was shut and they were walking on again. (ND 351)

The voyeuristic narrator watches Denham as he watches Katharine fingering orchids in a complicated set of sentences in which he and or the narrator understand Katherine herself to be in turn apparently lewdly peered and gaped at by the orchids themselves "from striped hoods and fleshy throats" (D 1 82). How lewd is the juxtaposing of these unmistakably erotic images of protuberances and orifices with the saucily euphemistic observation (the narrator's or his own, we cannot be sure) that "his ardor for botany waned, and a more complex feeling replaced it" (ND 351). This innuendo is further strengthened not only by the observation that "next moment he controlled himself" but also by the observation a little further on that the sight of Katharine's "standing among the orchids in that hot atmosphere, strangely illustrated some scene that he had imagined in his room at home" (ND 351). The orchid's notorious association with the testicle (because of its testicle-like tubers) (Endersby 35) might well suggest to the reader that this young man is absorbed in this public place in a masturbatory fantasy already familiar to his overheating imagination. We cannot be sure from this if "his room at home" is the locus of the imagined "scene," or the locus of his imagining of the "scene" now being illustrated by the "remote" and inaccessible Katherine fingering orchids in the Orchid House with a ruby-ringed finger suggesting her betrothal to another man which in turn may contribute to his further arousal, as suggested by that semi-colon (where a full-stop might be more convincing) that follows and therefore undermines the assertion of Ralph's self-control.

And precisely what rules does Katharine defy with her "ungloved hand"? Presumably visitors, gloved and ungloved, are formally prohibited from handling the plants at Kew, but Denham is imagining, the reader may well find suggested, other more sensational, lubricious breaches of personal etiquette. And what follows that semi-colon suggests a complicated set of desires and erotics, given the shift in gender as it expands on the qualities Denham observes in Katharine's observing of the orchids: "he looked at her taking in one strange shape after another with the contemplative, considering gaze of a person who sees not exactly what is before him, but gropes in regions that lie beyond it." There are a number of ways to construe this with regard to agency: is it Katharine or Denham or the narrator who is "taking in one strange shape after another" with the "gaze of a person who sees not exactly what is before him, but gropes in regions beyond it"? The reader too is left groping for what is beyond this scopophilic *mise-en-abîme*, this heady compression of lookers who are looking at lookers. It is also possible that the words "with the contemplative, considering gaze" assign that gaze to "one strange shape after another"—that is, to the shapely orchids themselves which we already know "seemed to peer and gape at her." If it is Katharine who is doing the "taking in," then Denham's analogy for her as "a person who sees not exactly what is before him" is open to further complex construal, including that Katharine, the object of Denham's gaze has been reassigned as masculine in his fantasy. The orchid, while notoriously testicular, also has renowned feminine associations too, so the ambivalently gendered Katherine stands ungloved among these ambivalently gendered peering and gaping polymorphously perverse plants. Queer triangulations are at work here in which Katharine may be the vehicle for an expression of desire between men, and simultaneously may also be rapt in autonomous self-pleasure amongst the orchids—"She needed nothing that he could give her." Furthermore, "before him" may not be referring to the imaginary person of the analogy for Katharine but to Denham himself. If so, what is the 'what' that "is before him"?

Something is now “before him.” What is that something “in regions beyond which” Katherine or a person without exact vision is obliged to “grope”? An erection perhaps? Groping behind “what is before him,” would we (or he himself) find orchids?

To whom, then, do the orchids seem to “suggest” such “absorbing reflections” as these? Katharine who has fallen silent may seem to Ralph to be absorbed by them, but they may not be what captivates her at all; and Ralph himself seems to the reader to be absorbed in orchid prompted reflections which indeed are made available to us by this very sentence, which might itself be construed as accessing his interior thoughts. Katharine’s interior thoughts are entirely withheld. But this free indirect narrative also allows for the utterance to be that of the third person narrator who, in observing Ralph observing Katherine, may be making an observation with broader application—that in general these highly suggestive orchids in Kew “seemed to suggest absorbing reflections” to anyone who cares to look at them. And indeed they did, and do.

Endersby supplies numerous literary and cultural examples of sexually voracious women figured thus as orchids at the turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth. Compare Arnold Bennett’s novel *The Pretty Lady* (1918), for example, in which the narrator fantasizes over a *femme-fatale* as “orchidised” (Bennett 245 qtd. in Endersby 169). Is Katherine one such “repellent and seductive” woman (169)? “Predatory orchids who became female and predatory women who became orchids” (169), Endersby demonstrates, are cultural correspondences with rising political anxiety over threats to manly imperialism perceived in women’s sexuality and in women’s demands for political change, suggesting that the rise of the ‘New Woman’ is behind this particular orchid trope in the patriarchal imaginary (Endersby 169). But how did women themselves respond to such stereotyping in the same era? And what of Katharine’s response? Compare the episode prior to Kew, in Chapter 23, where Denham begins to disclose his feelings for her on a walk along the Embankment. The free indirect narration shifts to Katherine’s interior, and while Denham is declaring himself as “‘a person who feels’” (ND 316), Katharine too reverses traditional binary gender expectations by demonstrating herself as one who thinks, and harbors intellectual ambitions in mathematics and astronomy:

She listened to all this, so that she could have passed an examination in it by the time Waterloo Bridge was in sight; and yet she was no more listening to it than she was counting the paving-stones at her feet. She was feeling happier than she had felt in her life. If Denham could have seen how visibly books of algebraic symbols, pages all speckled with dots and dashes and twisted bars, came before her eyes as they trod the Embankment, his secret joy in her attention might have been dispersed. She went on, saying, “Yes, I see....But how would that help you?...Your brother has passed his examination?” so sensibly, that he had constantly to keep his brain in check; and all the time she was in fancy looking up through a telescope at white shadow-cleft disks which were other worlds, until she felt herself possessed of two bodies, one walking by the river with Denham, the other concentrated to a silver globe aloft in the fine blue space above the scum of vapours that was covering the visible world. (ND 316-17)

Katharine’s secret intellectual life makes her a kind of New Woman. The “speckled” symbols and “shadow-cleft disks” that absorb her while Denham is perorating on his prospects may prefigure the “striped hoods and fleshy throats” of the orchids he understands to be absorbing her reflections when they next meet at Kew where he hopes to restage their Embankment discussion: “‘There’s only one place to discuss things satisfactorily that I know of,’ he said quickly; ‘that’s Kew’” (ND 319). But, what is the significance of Woolf’s choosing Kew for Denham’s choice of venue? Is there something “before him” that is not visible to him yet somehow available to Woolf’s readers if we were to grope into the beyond of this scene? Elisa Sparks, in her compelling essay on Woolf’s garden settings, finds the scene affirms

the marital compatibility of Denham and Katharine because he is able to look beyond his initial comparison of her with the orchids “to appreciate Katherine’s [sic] autonomy” (“Everything” 47).¹ But I wonder if those possible queer triangulations among the orchids are already undermining the hetero-normativity inscribed in the novel’s conventional ending in which Denham and Katharine seem to be united, yet are precariously poised on a threshold where they remain mysteriously and ominously occluded from one another: “From the heart of his darkness he spoke his thanksgiving; from a region as far, as hidden, she answered him” (538).

Night and Day, written during the Great War, and published in the first year of the Peace, looks back to the Edwardian era which came to a cataclysmic close in 1910 when the death of the King coincided with a period of deep political unrest marked by the collapse of the Liberal government, industrial unrest verging on a national strike, agitation for Irish Home Rule, and the escalation of suffragette activism to a campaign of incendiary violence following the wide scale police brutality meted out against hundreds of peaceful demonstrators on what became known as Black Friday (18 November 1910).² There is no evidence that Woolf herself was present at the latter, but she had attended the advance mass rally of suffragists at the Albert Hall on 12 November 1910, which struck her as dull and ineffectual, the speakers’ voices “like the tollings of a bell” (Woolf, *Letters* [L] 1 438), and she also despairs that her “time has been wasted a good deal upon Suffrage” (L 1 438). This period of political crisis was later encapsulated by Woolf in her much-cited aperçu: “On or about December 1910 human character changed” (Woolf, “Character” 421).³ While these events are in a future unknown to Woolf’s Edwardian protagonists, her Georgian readers would be all too aware of them in 1919. So readers of *Night and Day* have the vantage of such hindsight when Katharine, in Chapter 6, well prior to the visit to Kew, visits her friend Mary Datchet in a Suffrage Office and encounters Denham there, and again when Denham, in Chapter 10, calls on Mary to confess his love for Katharine only to be regaled with feminist politics:

“Don’t you think Mr. Asquith deserves to be hanged?” she called back into the sitting-room, and when she joined him, drying her hands, she began to tell him about the latest evasion on the part of the Government with respect to the Women’s Suffrage Bill. Ralph did not want to talk about politics, but he could not help respecting Mary for taking such an interest in public questions. (ND 133)⁴

On or about December 1910 many peaceable suffragists like Mary and her colleagues, frustrated by Herbert Asquith’s government’s betrayal over the Conciliation Bill, angered by the mounting state violence against protesters, joined with the suffragettes whose truce, suspending

¹ In “‘Everything tended to set itself in a garden’: Virginia Woolf’s Literary and Quotidian Flowers A Bar-Graphical Approach,” Sparks observes that, “While visiting the Orchard House, Denham has a momentary vision in which Katherine’s beauty is ‘strangely emphasized by the fantastic plants, which seemed to peer and gape at her from striped hoods and fleshy throats’” (331), but instead of indulging in the comparison, he looks beyond it to appreciate Katherine’s autonomy, her “contemplative, considering gaze,” her lack of need of anything he could give her (332). It is this ability to grant Katherine her independence that lays the foundation for their agreement to have a “perfectly sincere and perfectly straight forward friendship” (337), which of course opens up the possibility of their eventual union” (46).

² See Diane Atkinson’s “‘Black Friday’: The Mood of the WSPU Grows Darker”; see also George Dangerfield’s *The Strange Death of Liberal England* and Jane Goldman’s *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*.

³ See also Woolf’s “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown,” published as a pamphlet by the Hogarth Press in 1924 and in the same year, in the *Criterion*, with minor variants, under the title “Character in Fiction.” The version cited here is the latter from the collection of Woolf’s *Essays*. See also Makiko Minow-Pinkney.

⁴ See Michael Whitworth’s note on page 606 of this edition of *Night and Day*: “Asquith’s broken promises were the subject of the NUWSS pamphlet *Unfulfilled Pledges: Our Case Against Mr Asquith* (pamphlet A103) (April 1914).”

violent action during the passage of the Bill, ended after the “police’s heavy-handed tactics” on Black Friday (Atkinson 224). A fresh campaign of window-smashing, picture-slashing, and arson ensued. And on 8 February 1913 suffragettes attacked the Orchid Houses at Kew, smashing window-panes, and systematically ripping out and destroying the orchids. The culprits escaped and were never identified. Twelve days later, on 20 February 1913, suffragettes burned down the tea-room at Kew. Both attacks made headlines around the world. The tea-room arsonists, Olive Wharry and Lilian Lenton, were arrested, and a “search of the grounds revealed several cards reading ‘Two voteless women,’ and ‘Peace on earth and good will when women get the vote’” (Atkinson 378).

In his report to the government, Kew’s Director, Sir David Prain speculated that the “housebreakers” assumed the orchids which for “special reasons connected with culture must be grown under bell jars” must therefore “be of particular value took off the bell-jars and placed them on the floor [...] without breaking them, and confined their attention to the plants under the jars which they wantonly destroyed” (RBGK Metropolitan Police). Sparks offers a more nuanced reading of this feminist targeting of the orchids, which “rated banner headlines in *The Daily Express*—‘Mad women raid Kew Gardens’”—and drew heated rhetoric from the *Gardener’s Magazine*: “An attack on plants is as cold and cruel as one upon domestic animals or those in captivity” (Ray Desmond qtd. in Sparks, “[No] ‘Loopholes’” 40).⁵ In less frantic tones, *The Times* presented an even more provocative analogy: “It is said that in one of the houses was found a piece of paper saying that orchids could be destroyed, but not woman’s honor,” evidence suggesting that some feminists saw the flowers as symbols of male power to collect and display the feminine (“Attack on Kew Orchid House” qtd. in Sparks, “[No] ‘Loopholes’” 40).⁶ Sparks’ argument may serve to point up a motive of feminist rebellion against patriarchy’s orchidising of women as high-maintenance, decorative objects of beauty or as monstrous, sexually voracious predators. Yet it is also possible that it was the testicular aspect of orchids’ symbolism that spurred the suffragettes to target them—a kick in the balls delivered to patriarchy before the tea-table is torched. The perpetrators themselves left no such explication, but by then the motto of the suffragette Women’s Social and Political Union, coined in 1903, was well established—“Deeds Not Words.”⁷ Sparks also makes perceptive observations on the resonances of the arson attack on Kew’s tea-room for Woolf’s frequent satire on the misogyny of tea-table politics across her oeuvre, and which is indeed the topic that opens *Night and Day*:

It was a Sunday evening in October, and in common with many other young ladies of her class, Katharine Hilbery was pouring out tea. Perhaps a fifth part of her mind was thus occupied, and the remaining parts leapt over the little barrier of day which interposed between Monday morning and this rather subdued moment, and played with the things one does voluntarily and normally in the daylight. But although she was silent, she was evidently mistress of a situation which was familiar enough to her, and inclined to let it take its way for the six hundredth time, perhaps, without bringing into play any of her unoccupied faculties. A single glance was enough to show that Mrs. Hilbery was so rich in the gifts which make tea-parties of elderly distinguished people successful, that she scarcely needed any help from her daughter, provided that the tiresome business of teacups and bread and butter was discharged for her. (ND 1)

⁵ See Ray Desmond’s *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens* (London: The Harvill Press with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 1995).

⁶ “Attack on Kew Orchid House” is from page 9 of issue of *The Times* published 10 February 1913.

⁷ Editorial note: see “Deeds Not Words!” for a brief illustrated historical overview of the suffrage movement: <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/tQUB0ZJ-jCyelA>.

With the arson at Kew’s tea-rooms visible to the reader on the horizon of the novel’s timeframe, we might well read such scenes with close attention to the increasing toll that tea-parties are taking on women’s patience. Sparks points out the possible joke hidden, among the flower beds in Woolf’s short story “Kew Gardens” [KG] (1921), behind the “queer, sly look” exchanged by the “two elderly women of the lower middle class, one stout and ponderous, the other rosy cheeked and nimble” (KG 93), which takes on “a new significance in light of the two women who were arrested for setting fire to the tea pavilion, which is perhaps why no one ever seems to actually find their way to tea in the story” (Sparks, “[No] ‘Loopholes’” 41). And the same ironical hindsight on the absent tea-house applies to *Night and Day* when Denham and Katharine end their visit to Kew’s Orchid Houses, “both convinced that something of profound importance had been settled, and could now give their attention to their tea and the Gardens” (ND 359).

So, how might knowledge of the suffragette assaults on Kew’s orchids, still in the future for the characters in *Night and Day*, affect our reading of the Orchid House scene? For Sparks, “Ralph’s insistence on meeting at Kew and his and Katherine’s declaration of mutual independent friendship in the beech glade surrounded by paths angling off in different directions [...] take on” (ND 330) a “new resonance knowing that the garden had long been a battleground for the rights of women and the working classes” (ND 332). As Sparks states, “When Ralph’s moment of possessive jealousy with Katherine in the orchid house is followed by a vision of her independence from him[,] [...] it becomes a repudiation of colonial exploitation and an affirmation of the possibility of female autonomy” (“[No] ‘Loopholes’” 40).

Is Katharine’s fingering of the orchids proleptic, a kind of early casing for the militant feminist assault to come? And further questions are begged—not least, how come Katharine is able to touch one of the orchids without apparently having to lift off the protective bell-jar we are given to understand the suffragettes so carefully removed without breakage before desecrating the plants? Is there a feminist slogan written on the “certain paper” in the handbag she temporarily loses at Kew “so folded that Denham could not judge what it contained”? (ND 352). And, *pace* Sparks, the queer triangulations among the orchids and the novel’s closing scene of hesitancy on the threshold of compulsory heterosexuality, informed by hindsight access to the trajectory towards the violent militancy of suffragette campaigns, might combine to “suggest absorbing reflections” on a less conventional fate than the compulsory heterosexuality for Katharine and Denham that Sparks envisages in such resonances. For orchids, simultaneously testicular, labial, and vulvic, sporting myriad protuberances and orifices, presenting themselves in “one strange shape after another,” cannot be reduced to simplistic signifiers of femininity or masculinity or of any one sexual orientation, as Endersby compellingly illustrates. One example he cites is Oscar Wilde’s engagement with orchid tropes, not unexpectedly in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), but also in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891), where the discourse of public repudiation of art is examined:

Within the last few years two other adjectives, it may be mentioned, have been added to the very limited vocabulary of art-abuse that is at the disposal of the public. One is the word “unhealthy,” the other is the word “exotic.” The latter merely expresses the rage of the momentary mushroom against the immortal, entrancing, and exquisitely lovely orchid. It is a tribute, but a tribute of no importance. (Wilde, *The Soul of Man*, qtd. by Endersby 169)

The exotic orchid becomes here the emblem of a visionary Wildean queer socialist politics, and the “momentary mushroom” an emblem of all that opposes it. Perhaps the orchids in *Night and Day* allude too to this Wildean trope? (And Woolf was partial to Wilde.)⁸

⁸ See page 119 in volume 2 of *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, where she boasts in 1916 that a feminist friend “always assumes that I think what Oscar Wilde thought in the 80ties.”

In *Night and Day*, Mary Datchet, furthermore, not only furnishes a suffragist (or proto-suffragette) link to the occluded history of feminist activism in the Orchid House scene, she is also simultaneously a queering presence in the courtship of Denham and Katharine. For while she is at the beginning of *Night and Day* in love with Denham and hurt by his interest in Katharine, she clearly becomes, by Chapter 21, erotically attracted to Katharine:

Her hand went down to the hem of Katharine's skirt, and, fingering a line of fur, she bent her head as if to examine it.

"I like this fur," she said, "I like your clothes. And you mustn't think that I'm going to marry Ralph," she continued, in the same tone, "because he doesn't care for me at all. He cares for some one else." Her head remained bent, and her hand still rested upon the skirt. [...] Mary had no wish to speak. In the silence she seemed to have lost her isolation; she was at once the sufferer and the pitiful spectator of suffering; she was happier than she had ever been; she was more bereft; she was rejected, and she was immensely beloved. Attempt to express these sensations was vain, and, moreover, she could not help believing that, without any words on her side, they were shared. Thus for some time longer they sat silent, side by side, while Mary fingered the fur on the skirt of the old dress. (ND 289-290; 293)

Mary's erotically charged fingering of the fur on the hem of Katharine's dress surely continues its queer resonance in the scene in the Orchid House two chapters later where Ralph watches Katharine fingering orchids, and equally surely "suggests absorbing reflections" on the fingered orchid's transgressively capacious and polymorphous gendering. Mary Datchet's window shines on Denham and Katharine at the close of *Night and Day* as they reflect on the "queer combination" of people in their lives who appear to Ralph "to be more than individuals; to be made up of many different things in cohesion" (ND 536). The word "queer" peppers *Night and Day*, and its deployment as sexual innuendo climaxes in Katherine's exchange with her cousin Cassandra who clearly loves Katharine's fiancé William Rodney more than she does:

"D'you know, you're extraordinarily queer," she said. "Every one seems to me a little queer. Perhaps it's the effect of London."

"Is William queer, too?" Katharine asked.

"Well, I think he is a little," Cassandra replied. "Queer, but very fascinating."

(ND 384-85)⁹

In 1932 Woolf "got a handful of wild anemones & orchids" on a hillside in Hymettus, Greece (24 April, D 4 93). In 1933, she remarks of Henry James's *The Sacred Fount* (1901), "how could anyone, outside of an orchid in a greenhouse, fabricate such an orchid's dream!" (14 May, D 4 157). And she was overwhelmed in 1934 when her translator sent her orchids, writing to her lover, Vita Sackville-West "I have had to stop Victoria Ocampo from sending me orchids. I opened the letter to say this, in the hope of annoying you" (29 December, D

⁹ By 1919 the term queer was in usage with reference to sexual orientation. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites Arnold Bennett, no less, a famed pantomime rival of Bloomsbury, as the earliest source in Britain of queer's modern "chiefly derogatory" usage in a diary entry of 26 March 1915 (published in 1932)—although it is difficult to assess how derogatory, if at all, Bennett's usage in fact is: "An immense reunion of art students, painters, and queer people. Girls in fancy male costume, queer dancing, etc." Bennett's evening with "queer people" and "queer dancing" was a Bloomsbury pacifist party hosted by Lady Ottoline Morrell where Bennett encounters amongst others "Lowes Dickinson, Bertrand Russell, Whitehouse. All these very much upset by the war, convinced that the war and government both wrong, etc." (Bennett 127). Woolf and her sister Vanessa Bell were regulars at these weekly gatherings during the Great War. See Jane Goldman, "Queer Woolf/Queer Bloomsbury: A Poem": *Queer Bloomsbury* and *Queer Poetic Effects*" (172).

5 359).¹⁰ Aside from their sapphic and queer connotations, Woolf also elsewhere associates them with a femme-fatale and with aristocratic excess.¹¹ The words "orchid" and "orchis" make infrequent but provocative appearances in Woolf's fiction, suggestive perhaps of further "absorbing reflections" on the convergence of queer sexualities and militant feminism.¹² One such appearance, in a soliloquy by Susan in *The Waves* [TW] (1931), Woolf's seventh novel, for example, seems to refer back to *Night and Day*'s Orchid House scene at Kew as well as to Wilde's *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*:

I feel through the grass for the white-domed mushroom; and break its stalk and pick the purple orchid that grows beside it and lay the orchid by the mushroom with the earth at its root, and so home to make the kettle boil for my father among the just reddened roses on the tea-table. (TW 78)

This deeply subversive sentence ostensibly recounts a dutiful daughter's foraging in nature (and not a glass-house) for tributes with which submissively to adorn patriarchy's tea-table. Yet this sentence is simultaneously shot through with queer feminist portent. Woolf has the speaker menacingly cutting the white-domed mushroom to lay beside the uprooted purple orchid, "the earth at its root" suggesting transplantation or extirpation, but either way prompting the reader to ponder from what ground have these figures been plundered. If one recognizes the careful arrangement of purple and white as an elliptical signifier of feminist colors (purple, white, and green), then the uprooted purple orchid may be read further as an allusion to the suffragette assault on Kew's Orchid House, as well as to Wilde's queer, exotic orchid defiant against the raging abuse of the adjacent mushroom ignoramus—quite a centerpiece for any patriarch's tea-table.

And when we encounter the lush green terrace in Woolf's final novel, *Between the Acts* [BTA] (1941), published posthumously following Woolf's suicide at a low point in World War II, perhaps a glimmer of queer feminist hope becomes likewise available. Here on patriarchy's terrace, the roots of trees "broke the turf, and among those bones were green waterfalls and cushions of grass in which violets grew in spring or in summer the wild purple orchis" (BTA 8), the latter we might note unaccompanied by mushrooms of ignorance. Among these feminist greens and purples, we might find ourselves tentatively groping 'in

¹⁰ See also D 5 348, 350, 351, 358, 359 and D 4 264.

¹¹ Woolf notes, writing in 1920 to her sister, Vanessa Bell, of her brother-in-law, Clive Bell's mistress, Mary Hutchinson, "who should trip from her taxi but the blue one, with plovers' eggs and orchids of course, all dressed in yellow with purple spots and as daring and devilish as I was muffled and discreet" (L 2 425), and, in a letter to Lady Robert Cecil in 1915: "I shall smuggle into your Receptions and hide behind the vast pyramids of orchids and peaches" (L 2 66).

¹² In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Septimus Smith experiences a homoerotic vision of his war-dead comrade Evans: "The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids" (63). In the same novel, Richard Dalloway thinks of buying his wife "any number of flowers, roses, orchids" (103) yet settles on "red and white roses" (106). Clarissa Dalloway's old aunt, Miss Helena Parry (who "could not resist recalling what Charles Darwin had said about her little book about Orchids in Burma" that "went into three editions before 1870") ascends the staircases at the Dalloways' party, "beheld, not human beings—she had no tender memories, no proud illusions about Viceroy, Generals, Mutinies—it was orchids she saw, and mountain passes and herself carried on the backs of coolies in the 'sixties over solitary peaks; or descending to uproot orchids (startling blossoms, never beheld before) which she painted in water-colour; an indomitable Englishwoman, fretful if disturbed by the War, say, which dropped a bomb at her very door, from her deep meditation over orchids and her own figure journeying in the 'sixties in India—but here was Peter" (159-60). Miss Parry owes something to Lady Dorothy Nevill (1826-1913) who "made a hobby of growing orchids, and thus got in touch with 'the great naturalist'" (E 4 202), referring to Charles Darwin, himself author of the *Fertilisation of Orchids* (1862). Compare the presumed patriarchal hetero-normativity associated with the orchid in Sara's description, in Woolf's penultimate novel *The Years* (1937), of looking for office work from a "stout man with red cheeks. On his table three orchids in a vase. Pressed into your hand, I thought, as the car crunches the gravel by your wife at parting. And over the fireplace the usual picture—" (308).

regions that lie beyond’ for an implicitly queering ‘e’ silently appended to the ‘wild’ of this Woolf’s last “wild(e) purple orchis.”

Jane Goldman
University of Glasgow

Works Cited

- Atkinson, Diane. “‘Black Friday’: The Mood of the WSPU Grows Darker.” *Rise Up, Women! The Remarkable Lives of the Suffragettes*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018. 219-39.
- Bennett, Arnold. *The Journals*. London: Cassell, 1932-1933.
- . *The Pretty Lady*. New York: George H. Doran, 1918.
- Dangerfield, George. *The Strange Death of Liberal England*. London: Constable, 1936.
- Endersby, Jim, *Orchid: A Cultural History*. London: Kew Publishing, 2017.
- Goldman, Jane. *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism, and the Politics of the Visual*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1998. 117-22.
- . “Queer Woolf/Queer Bloomsbury: A Poem: *Queer Bloomsbury* and Queer Poetic Effects.” *Virginia Woolf and the World of Books*. Ed. Nicola Wilson and Claire Battershill. Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2018.
- Minow-Pinkney, Makiko, ed. *Virginia Woolf and December 1910*. London: Illuminati Press, 2013.
- RBGK Metropolitan Police, Misc. Papers Volume 1845-1920, f. 51. <https://www.kew.org/read-and-watch/fire-and-broken-petals-how-the-suffragettes-made-their-mark-on-kew>.
- Sparks, Elisa Kay. “(No) ‘Loopholes of Retreat’: The Cultural Context of Parks and Gardens in Woolf’s Life and Work.” *Woolf Across the Generations: Selected Papers from the Twelfth International Conference on Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Merry M. Pawlowski and Eileen Barrett. Clemson: Clemson UP, 2003. 36-54. <https://virginiawoolfmiscellany.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/woolf-conference-2002-selected-papers-across-the-generations-publication-12.pdf>.
- . “‘Everything tended to set itself in a garden’: Virginia Woolf’s Literary and Quotidian Flowers A Bar-Graphical Approach.” *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*. Ed. Kristin Czarniecki and Carrie Rohman. Clemson: Clemson UP, 2011. 42-57.
- Whitworth, Michael H. “Editorial Notes.” *Night and Day*. By Virginia Woolf. Ed. Michael H. Whitworth. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2018.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Between the Acts*. 1941. Ed. Mark Hussey. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011.
- . “Character in Fiction.” *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*. 6 vols. Ed. Andrew McNeillie (vols. 1-4) and Stuart Clarke (vols. 5-6). London: The Hogarth Press, 1986-2011.
- . “Kew Gardens.” 1921. *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Susan Dick. London: The Hogarth Press, 1989.
- . “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown.” London: The Hogarth Press, 1924.
- . *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). Ed. Anne Fernald. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015.
- . *Night and Day*. Ed. Michael H. Whitworth. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2018.
- . *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. 5 Vols. Edited by Anne Olivier Bell assisted by Andrew McNeillie. London: The Hogarth Press, 1977-1984.
- . *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. 6 vols. London: The Hogarth Press, 1975-80.
- . *The Waves*. 1931. Ed. Michael Herbert and Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011.
- . *The Years*. Ed. Anna Snaith. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012.



Photo by Henry Lai on *Unsplash*
https://unsplash.com/photos/pink-and-white-flower-in-close-up-photography-NUzGe_-DIJ4

A Fossil from the Waves

Language is fossil poetry. As the limestone of the continent consists of infinite masses of the shells of animalcules, so language is made up of images or tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Poet”

*The waves broke on the shore.*¹

The shores of southeast England are famous for their striking white chalk cliffs. Like many non-English people, I had heard of the White Cliffs of Dover but didn’t know about their less famous, smaller versions further west on that same coast, about an hour and a half walk directly south from Virginia Woolf’s country home, Monk’s House.

Staying in a small coastal town just east of Brighton this summer, I learned a lot about that landscape. Appropriately named Telscombe Cliffs, the tiny town is not a tourist destination—it has about two pubs, two restaurants, a barber shop, a school, and a gas station, along with some other everyday resources that one expects a town to contain. Telscombe Cliffs seems to be mostly locals and therefore no attempt to cater to tourists is made—to stay in this town is to find your own amusement and wonder. The first evening in Telscombe Cliffs we went to a tavern at the edge of the cliffs and sat on the windy deck overlooking the choppy water. The low sun kept intermittently breaking the clouds, shining in spotlights on the water and sea birds hovered on the wind, looking for something. Further down the road that runs along the coast we found a restaurant called Kappadokya—a modest but polished Mediterranean place where everything was strangely delicious, simple, and beautifully plated—much better than all the food we had in London.

¹ The full text of *The Waves* can be accessed here: <https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0201091h.html>.

The Airbnb I rented with my boyfriend and best friend is a ten-minute walk downhill to the cliffs overlooking the English Channel—it was a one-bedroom mother-in-law suite attached to a home in a modest neighborhood and when we first entered it smelled damp, which, we quickly learned, is because it scarcely stops raining there. The double-paned windows had about an inch of water that had seeped between the panes and stayed there.

In the opposite direction from the cliffs, walking north, are the South Downs, which I learned from Google are what the hills specific to that region are called—they are chalk mounds with mostly grass and a few trees growing atop the chalk. The cliffs are merely hills that the water and weather have cut and exposed. And walking along or beneath these cliffs is what I spent most of my time doing for the several nights I stayed—what else is one to do but admire the landscape and the way each wave erodes the whiteness a tiny bit more, giving the water a surprising, cloudy glacier color?

Walking along the rocky shore below these cliffs one afternoon, I was lost in my own thoughts—the wind and clamor of the waves created a white noise that I found highly conducive to long periods of ponder as I walked slowly, examining the rocky formations exposed on the ground during low tide. As I walked carefully to avoid slipping, head bent in watchful contemplation, I thought about Woolf’s country house that I would walk to the next day. Monk’s House is a less than two-hour walk directly from the house I rented, and I felt exhilarated by the knowledge of its proximity—of *her* proximity—to where I stood. *She surely walked here too*, I mused, as my eyes took in the endless textures and tones of the sometimes sea floor. Thinking of Woolf’s “playpoem” *The Waves* didn’t even feel like a choice—it flowed into my mind on its own, beckoning me to muse on it, to wonder about it, to ask questions about its aim.

Being near large bodies of water has a way of making me very moody, broody, and thoughtful—I think it is because I can’t stop myself from being in awe of the difference in timescales: my life versus the life of the English Channel—these are lives that cannot really be thought about together—they exist so differently in time and therefore have such different relationships to the concept of life. I find thinking about deep time to be at once comforting and disturbing. Deep time puts everything on the human scale in its insignificant place, which provides a bit of crucial cold comfort to someone like me, who agonizes over everything with equal energy.

The Waves was on my reading list for my PhD comprehensive exam—a crucial text to know for a scholar of modern British literature and especially essential for one specializing in Virginia Woolf. Looking back at my copy of the book, I remember the hell I lived in during those months leading up to the biggest exam of my life—I was so stressed that I started getting mysterious fevers that would come and go—this went on for the entire month that my exam spanned. My doctor, when I explained my symptoms and asked if I was dying, said “stress can do things that we don’t understand.” And she was right in more than the way she meant. The incredible stress of that time, while it made me literally sick, shifted my mind’s ability to access new layers of thought: I started conceiving of the literature I read as more real than my own life, its passages more concrete than my daily experiences. Being ill provided a hallucinatory quality to my studying—I understood things about the texts that are etched into me, for better or for worse. Looking back on this version of myself, I understand, for the first time, what Woolf argued in “On Being Ill”²: that one gains access to singular perspectives—to perhaps a more creative, generative, vantage point—than one can while well. What you pay for with your health you gain, I guess, in creative and intellectual output.

Since that unhappy time, what has stuck with me most about this book—what I thought about as I walked along the rocky beach that day—is its form and the way Woolf presents the lives of people, but punctuated by “chapters” of a few pages, written in italics like the stage directions in a play. Little from the plot (what little there is of it) sticks with me. But the narrative form haunts me: the matter-of-fact narrative presence of these natural scenes all begin with some version of “*The sun had risen to its full height*”—and they aren’t comforting or tranquil, but have a quiet and unsettling violence to them: “*At midday the heat of the sun made the hills grey as if shaved and singed in an explosion, while, further north, in cloudier and rainier countries, hills smoothed into slabs as with the back of a spade had a light in them as if a warder, deep within, went from chamber to chamber carrying a green lamp*” (82). In the blank space at the top of that page is an annotation from my past self: “These sections of narration that fall between, rhythmically, the sections of dialogue between the people (like waves lapping, or phases of the day) show the contrast between the vastness and the predictableness of nature’s rhythms, compared w/ the uncertainty of human life.” As I walked along the beach, I felt in my bones that this wonderfully ponderous interval—this time to myself with the sea before me and the waves and wind filling my ears—was part of the rhythm of my life, was the setting of my life that I often forget to notice, that I am reminded of when I am immersed in a natural scene. In that moment, my selves from the past and future felt present together, pressed and held by the clearness and focus of my mind as I walked and looked. Time was something layered, something in me, not at all fleeting—it just was.

While in Berlin a few weeks before traveling to East Sussex, I attended the *Pergamonmuseum* for the first time and saw objects made thousands of years ago such as the bust of Nefertiti and the Ishtar Gates—objects that were created so long ago that I have a hard time conceiving of the finesse and time required to make them so beautiful and exact. I was then told by a good friend who lives in Berlin that the Pergamon will be closing soon for renovations and won’t open again for 14 years. My jaw dropped hearing this number. *Fourteen years?* Neither of us could conceive of that much time passing, of a museum being closed for that long. “I could be dead by then!” my friend, who is in her 60s, quipped (only slightly grimly) with a wry smile. I shook my head and looked away, unable to imagine the timescale of the museum renovation and unwilling to imagine my friend’s death.

Fourteen years, for the English Channel, is a laughable interval—I imagine it is perhaps equivalent to the time it takes me to glance out the window: I don’t even register this act, let alone consider it as time that has passed. This insignificance of time, that the English Channel takes all this for granted, frustrated me as I tried to imagine that difference in time scale and I scrambled along the exposed, wet sea floor.

It was as I thought about *The Waves* and the way it juxtaposes deep time with human time that something caught my eye among the rounded gray rocks and debris further up the beach closer to the cliffs. The object was dark gray, the color of a late-afternoon desert monsoon sky when a storm is imminent, as were the stones around it—it wasn’t very unique. It was round-ish and the size of a small apricot—but what grabbed my attention first was a bone-colored pattern—*was it an etching? Human-made?*—that delicately and distinctly covered its rounded surface. It looked as though someone had dipped a sewing needle in paint made from crushed bones to make precise dots and lines. “What is that?” I shouted to no one as I strode to the object and picked it up—its heaviness surprising me. The patterns on the rock looked at once hand-done and otherworldly. *Must be made by aliens*, I thought, only half ironically.

As I turned the object over in my hand, I found that although it looked like a mostly round stone, the other side of it was flat, making the thing resemble a drawer knob. I could also see small chips off of its matte surface that revealed a black, glassy material. I remembered that I had also seen black rocks protruding from the white chalk cliff faces at

² The full text of “On Being Ill” can be accessed here: <https://thenewcriterion1926.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/woolf-on-being-ill.pdf>

certain levels—*was this one of those?* I thought, as I squinted up at the cliffs.

That night I lay in bed, face aglow with phone light, as I went down a Google research rabbit hole. I started by searching for images of “weird rocks chalk cliffs East Sussex,” as the incessant wind whistled through the slightly ajar window of my bedroom—the wind did not stop for our entire stay. My poorly composed search yielded almost immediate results: I found images of stones resembling mine a bit, which led me to articles about fossils written by fossil hunters and geologists. Knowing almost nothing about fossils (my short lessons on geology in grade school hadn’t quite stuck around that long), I read several articles about how they form and others about my particular sort of fossil, which I have concluded is a variety referred to as a “flint sea urchin”—a sea urchin that was fossilized in flint. I found this information in a few niche sources, one being an article called “Humble Flint Sea Urchins and the Stories They Tell” in a venue called *Deposits Mag: Fossils, Geology, Minerals. The highly acclaimed international earth sciences magazine with over 700 articles and book reviews.* This poetic article title and the odd magazine name hooked me—I like stories and sea urchins and fossils are neat, I thought, as I became more and more delirious from Googling in the dark when I should have been sleeping. That my alien stone could be a fossil really excited me and I messaged my family group text (since it was a reasonable time in Arizona now that it was 2:00 AM in England): “I found a fossil!! This article I am reading says it could be between 120,000-80 million years old!”

From the depths of my research rabbit hole, I was thrilled by what the article’s author, “Joe Shimmin (UK),” was telling me about my fossil: that it could possibly be that old made my head swim. I reached over to my nightstand and felt the fossil in the dark—I could feel the sea urchin’s trace—a thing that lived so long ago was in my palm.

The next morning, I awoke and went into the living area of the suite—my friend, who slept on the pullout couch, was already awake, drinking instant coffee, the wind hissing through the slightly open window. “Good morning,” we said. I opened the sliding glass door that overlooked the front yard—it had been raining since the day before: slanted rain punctuated by heavy, wet misty drizzle. The wind hadn’t stopped coming off the channel for days, and I had the suspicion that a lack of wind was mostly unheard of there. Woefully, I stuck my head outside to get a feel for the day’s weather, although I already knew: it would stay wet and blustery. When I made a reservation for the three of us to visit Monk’s House I had had idyllic visions of walking over the downs in a sun dress in glorious weather and to arrive at the house looking aesthetic—I wanted my first time being in her house to be a vision, *I’ll have my photo taken in the garden, in the sun, everything aglow.*

I, with the encouragement of my intrepid friend, did not cave and order a cab, although I was tempted. I *would* have my pilgrimage, even if the weather would not be fine. There was, therefore, no choice but to wear ugly clothes: quick drying pants and a rain jacket. My only consolation was that I tied my pretty vintage silk scarf—purchased at a second-hand shop in Brighton called Snoopers Attic (an overwhelming axis of aisles with an incoherent order)—around my neck beneath my jacket.

Having no food in the house aside from instant coffee and digestive biscuits that we bought at the gas station down the road, we searched for a place to have breakfast. The closest open place was a Yemenite café the next town over—Peacehaven—about a 15-minute walk. We ordered very large Full English breakfasts, cake, baklava, and various types of coffee. The café walls were covered with selfies the owner had taken with regulars and I had the feeling that this place, perched on the windy street, was important—very dear—to many people.

We finally set out, walking north through a park and a neighborhood street, relying on Google Maps mostly—it told us we had a 1-hour-and-35-minute walk. “If it starts raining harder, we will call a car,” we each

said at least once. But a car would not be able to reach us for most of the walk, which took many rural paths through farm fields, down dirt roads, and over grassy hills. While walking along a wide-open space—probably some farmland—the mist was so thick and the wind so strong that all we could see were dark shapes far off. There were hazy black shapes of trees that were permanently bent in the direction of the wind. Some of the dark shapes started moving and darting—a man with many large dogs, some of which ran to us and streaked past us and boomeranged back to their owner in the fog.

We walked downhill through a very small, very old village that was a collection of grand houses not in their prime, but lovely still. As we walked past one house, an old man came out in his pajamas and began crossing the street with purpose (I think he had mail clutched in his hand) and said, without our asking, “My excuse is that I am sick!” “Okay!” we chirped and exchanged looks—unsure what he meant.

The chalky dirt road we took after the village had dark, glassy hunks of flint embedded in it—making the white cliffs, composed exactly of this, feel close by. As we walked, I noticed particularly interesting shapes in the chalk—the flint looked so malleable, and I could easily imagine it still in its liquid form. To me, the thing in nature that these pieces of flint most resemble is the cavities inside saguaros that are sometimes called saguaro boots: when a bird or other creature creates a hole in the cactus flesh between its surface and its ribs, a scab forms, providing a dry hollow for its dweller. These hollows also resemble the shape of tubers—and when the cactus dies the preserved, hard hollow remains with the woody ribs on the desert floor. The irregular, tuber-like shape of these cactus homes is the shape of the flint. As we walked, I would pause and run my finger along the glassy, smooth surface of a slit-open piece of flint. When they leveled the road, the flint tubers were sliced in half, exposing impossibly smooth, cold black insides—insides that were once hot liquid.

We came to a dairy farm, whose road we needed to use to get to the last grass hill to climb before reaching Rodmell, Woolf’s village. We gingerly picked our way around farm equipment and tiptoed through mucky puddles—blackish and oily with manure and mud—as the farm workers looked at us, but not with too much curiosity; we clearly were not the only out of place people to use their road. Wearing my worn-out running shoes, I imagined myself slipping and falling into the farm ooze, arriving at Monk’s House looking frightful, tracking mud across the holy floors.

The last hilly field was steep, and the ongoing windy drizzle damply twirled my hair. As we climbed there were cows grazing and we remarked at how much we’d like to pet them, wet as they were.

At the hill’s top was a neighborhood with a small gate and a paved road leading downward into the heart of Rodmell. We passed by a cozy, very old pub, The Abergavenny Arms, that I had seen on Google Maps while reviewing our route—*we’ll eat dinner there*, I thought with longing, as we wetly tramped past.

We arrived at Monk’s House suddenly—our only warning that we were upon it was that there was a trio of artsy, nerdy looking folks under an umbrella coming out of what looked to be an old garage attached to an old house—tittering excitedly. Having read almost nothing about the historical site before visiting, I had no idea what to expect, but I had assumed the place would be like the many other museums I had been to: very clean, everything behind glass, security guards, perhaps a café and an expensive gift shop. Monk’s House had none of these qualities. There was a 20-something year old woman working behind a small desk, verifying reserved time slots. There were a few, inexpensive souvenirs for sale: some post cards, a guidebook with pictures published by the National Trust, and some other objects I didn’t register. We were told to let ourselves into the yard through an ancient, wooden gate and to follow a path to the door to the house, where a docent would greet us.

The yard was overwhelmingly lush and beautiful and there were large millstones that had been inlaid—perhaps as pavers, perhaps as art—into the earth. We walked, entranced, to the door to the house and came to a small greenhouse that formed the house’s entryway. Here sat a docent who told us we could also look around the small green house vestibule before entering the house. The enclosed glass space had lush plants growing inside and there was a healthy grape vine bejeweled with grapes that were surely not fake but that we were sure were fake—“those have to be fake, right?” we said in near-unison, as we walked down some steps into the house.

I felt that I had entered the cottage of my good friend whom we had just visited in Berlin—her country home (which is a one-hour train ride north of the city) is small, very old, and so homey. *This is her home*, I thought as I peered around in small amazement. *These are her things*. There were only a few duos and trios of people looking around the living room, some of them asking the docents questions relevant to a research project, perhaps, some quietly talking, pointing to things, shaking their heads, nodding. There was no glass, no partitions, no corded-off areas. I could have sat at the desk, could have rocked in a chair, could have lain on the lovely rugs, could have built a fire in hearth. I took photos a bit shyly, unsure how to capture the space.

We looked at the dining room area and the kitchen. The National Trust has caretakers live in the house year-round “for security,” the docents said. They sleep upstairs and have part of the kitchen partitioned off for their own use. *I guess I’ll quit my job and do that job*, I thought, dreamily. A docent told us facts about some of the art hanging on the walls done by Vanessa Bell, told us that when Woolf and Leonard bought Monk’s House that it would flood with muddy water every time it rained a lot, and directed us up and out the small kitchen door and down a path to Woolf’s room, which has its own entrance from the yard and no connecting door to the house. Being in her room felt strange to me even though I hadn’t felt that way being in the rest of the house. Her small double bed up against the wall, her writing chair, her bookshelf with her handmade paper covers. I am not sure what I felt, but it was something like a light, alert sadness or melancholy and I half-listened to the docent as she told us something about Woolf making paper covers for her books when she was having bouts of mental illness. *The room is so small and lovely, so enclosed, so complete*.

I was relieved to be out in the yard again, walking among brilliant flowers and fruit trees, heavy with fruit. Her memorial bust stood under a large tree and I asked to have my picture taken with it and was distinctly aware of my feet on the damp earth, shoes wet from the walk and the grass.

Her writing lodge, at the back of the yard under a very large tree, contained her writing desk strewn with her precious objects: eyeglasses, papers, letters, pens. This room was partitioned off.

Behind this structure was a large vegetable garden with someone busily tending to it. Over the stone wall was an old church with a very sharp steeple. “Was she very religious?” my friend asked.

Exhausted and still damp, we happily walked to the pub and sat at a cozy, dark booth and ordered rich, warm food—stewed meats, mash, gravy, a pot pie, and a pitcher of Pimm’s Cup, that day’s drink special, which felt strangely summery for the wet chill around us. Everything tasted impossibly delicious, and we stayed for hours, avoiding the topic of how we planned to get home, which we knew would have to involve calling a car.

As I walked back to our booth from the restroom, I passed by what looked to me like an old well and I paused and peered over the edge—black and bottomless, but didn’t seem at all strange to me after the day I had had. I passed by a table of four friends with their sleepy dog—all in their 70s at least (we were the youngest people in there by about three

decades) and I felt I could happily come to this pub every day for the rest of my life. “Did you see that—what was it—a well?” I said, once back at the booth.

We got back to our Airbnb with an hour left of light and my friend ran to catch the bus to Brighton to meet a childhood friend for dinner. My boyfriend and I walked downhill to the cliffs as the light dimmed, trying to avoid crushing the innumerable snails on the sidewalk but nevertheless hearing a crunch now and again and making eye contact, wincing the first few times.

Down on the pebbly shore it was hightide and not raining, finally, but the wind was stronger than ever. We stood looking. Each wave that lapped dragged gray stones back with it, and the noise it made caused us to look at each other and exclaim “that noise! What a noise!” although we could hardly hear each other. The scraping, clattering, sliding clamor continued as we asked each other how, after this, we could ever go back.



The \$.99 Kindle eBook version of Woolf’s entire body of writing yields 27 results when I search for “fossils,” but all seem to be offhanded remarks made in her more obscure fiction and essays. There is no mention of fossils in *The Waves* and there are no profound moments in which she dwells on the idea or the fact of a fossil—no ruminations in her diary or letters. I find each mention of fossils to be annoying, dull, disappointing, shallow—I can’t find the moment I want where a fossil is an important metonym in her diary, say. In her *Biography of Roger Fry*, Woolf uses the word metaphorically and says of Fry that “he was often to maintain that it is only by changing one’s mind that one can avoid the prime danger of becoming either a fossil or a figurehead” (3609).³ To become a fossil is for one’s ideas to harden—a thing that Woolf likely feared a great deal. Ideas and so much time being hardened—the sea urchin that once was is now a heavy, ghostly trace in my palm.

Perhaps “sea urchins,” I thought and searched that term—only four results. Sea urchins, those I have seen when swimming in the ocean in the Sea of Cortez, are wavy, dynamic, and will also pierce your flesh, leaving painful spikes embedded in your foot if you step on one (as my sister did—she still has faint black dots in her foot that hurt for years after the incident if she stepped in the right place). In a 1932 letter to Vita, Woolf writes from Greece, from Hotel Majestic Athens. Woolf is clearly enamored of the sea, saying “Pure sea water on pure sand is almost the loveliest thing in the world.” She goes on: “So yesterday we plunged into the sea and swam about in the Aegean, with sea urchin and anemones, all transmuted, waving red and yellow beneath our feet” (10090). Woolf ends her letter curiously, spanning both time and place:

And when shall I see you? Before I see Ethel? Please say yes. We stay a day or two at Rodmell.

Yes, it was so strange coming back here again I hardly knew where I was, or when it was. There was my own ghost coming down from the Acropolis, aged 23: and how I pitied her! Well: let me know if you’re up and forgive scrawling scribbles. (10091)

Woolf’s letter to Vita has a palimpsest quality—spanning from the ocean floor with the sea urchins to Rodmell, and then to her younger self at 23 up at the Acropolis, then back to her present self writing the letter from Athens. Time and place are compressed, layered, in her words—*transmuted*.

Sovay Muriel Hansen
University of Arizona

³ The full Kindle text can be accessed here:
https://read.amazon.com/?asin=B0B4P4877S&ref_=dbs_t_r_kcr.

Works Cited

- Shimmin, Joe. "Humble Flint Sea Urchins and the Stories They Tell." <https://depositsmag.com/2017/11/02/humble-flint-sea-urchins-and-the-stories-they-tell/>.
- Woolf, Virginia. "On Being Ill." 1926. Kindle. https://read.amazon.com/?asin=B0B4P4877S&ref_=dbs_t_r_kcr.



Photograph of the fossil found by Sovay Muriel Hansen

In Conversation:

Conversations with Friends and *Mrs. Dalloway* as Internet Novels

1.

"What is a friend? [...] What *is* a conversation?" (Rooney 289).

Conversations With Friends by Sally Rooney is an Internet novel which, by its very insistence intruding into the literary canon, is engaged in an imaginary conversation with Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* [MD]. I took a photo on my phone of the covers of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Conversations with Friends* and posted it to Instagram:

wendyanmcgrath Clarissa. Melissa?

[#mrsdalloway](#) [#clarissadalloway](#) [#virginiawoolf](#)
[#modernism](#) [#Internetnovel](#) [#sallyrooney](#)
[#conversationswithfriends](#) [#frances](#)

I waited for a party invitation from Clarissa or Melissa. I wonder if Clarissa and Melissa would invite each other to their respective parties in real life. My Instagram post had a dozen likes. "Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself" (Woolf, MD 1). What flowers might she buy in June? "Delphiniums, sweet peas, bunches of lilac; and carnations, masses of carnations...roses; irises" (Woolf, MD 9). *Mrs. Dalloway* is a day with flowers liked by others. "I have begun to buy cut flowers with abandon. 'Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself'" (Zambreno 189). A dozen likes and dozens of flowers. I'd rather have a bouquet of likes.

2.

His fun, for it was half made up, as he knew very well; invented, this escapade with the girl; made up, as one makes up the better part of life he thought – making oneself up; making her up; creating an exquisite amusement, and something more (Woolf *Dalloway* 45).

Peter Walsh says, "his fun" is "making oneself up" (Woolf, MD 45). Peter sees with portal-portent, looking forward and back, inward, and outward, foretelling *Mrs. Dalloway* as an Internet novel (Garber). Peter could be describing this "making oneself up" (Woolf, MD 45) as the

modern-day obsession with creating an individual brand, the outward-facing self on Instagram, or Twitter, or Facebook.

3.

I took another picture of the cover of *Mrs. Dalloway* and posted it to Instagram:

wendyanmcgrath "...invented, this escapade with the girl; made up, as one makes up the better part of life, he thought – making oneself up; making her up..." (Woolf, 45)

[#mrsdalloway](#) [#virginiawoolf](#) [#mrsdalloway](#) [#Internet-novel](#) [#writinglife](#) [#artistlife](#) [#Internetwriting](#) [#instailusion](#) [#instafiction](#)

I make myself up every day. Everyone does it now, maybe everyone has always done it in some way or another. I wake to the possibility of my own re/invention.

The other day I gathered my hair into an elastic and used it as a guide to cut my hair. I looked in the mirror with my new haircut, new look, new brand, and thought, "I should secretly rename myself and create another Instagram account. On this imaginary, clandestine Instagram account, I could engage in conversations with Clarissa Dalloway and Frances-with-no-last-name. Maybe someone will answer back." I'll wait. But until then, I'll keep making shit up every day all the time.

4.

"I didn't feel like watching the film on my own so I switched it off and just read the Internet instead," Frances says (Rooney 62). I read *Conversations with Friends* and understand I am reading an Internet novel. Sometimes I feel as if I've guessed all the characters' passwords and can intrude on their private conversations, surveil their text messages, emails, phone calls.

But sometimes, when reading *Conversations with Friends*, I'm like Frances, not even one side of a one-sided telephone conversation. When Melissa is in London, Frances stays over at her and Nick's house and when Melissa calls him, he makes sure he's out of Frances's earshot. "Once I watched an entire episode of *Arrested Development* before he came back in the room, it was the one where they burn down the banana stand" (Rooney 74). I imagine Frances and I bonding with the Bluthes and feel I'm watching TV with her, but I hear the conversation between Nick and Melissa. On speaker. But it wouldn't be a conversation then, not really. It would be more like surveillance. Surveillance of a conversation, a surveillance of friends.

Then, just as Frances does, I ask myself, "what *is* a friend? we would say humorously. What *is* a conversation?" (Rooney 289). All my life I have struggled to make conversation, small talk, big talks. It seems I can never decide on the results of either small talk, big talks, or what those talks might even mean.

I took another picture of the cover of *Conversations with Friends* and posted it to Instagram with a question.

wendyanmcgrath Are they conversations? Are they friends...

[#sallyrooney](#) [#Internetnovel](#) [#mrsdalloway](#) [#writinglife](#) [#artistlife](#) [#irishnovel](#) [#frances](#) [#clarissa](#) [#virginiawoolf](#)

This post got 14 likes and a couple comments. I felt like it had been a good conversation.

Just as I read *Conversations with Friends* as an Internet novel, I read *Mrs. Dalloway* as an Internet novel. Woolf "explored the ideas that shaped her time: inclusion and exclusion, the public and the private, the

consequences of mutualized surveillance” (Garber). Today’s definition of surveillance of the self must include the selfie. This form of self-surveillance, this mirrored conversation could then be shared with others, but could still be private. Such a scene of private self-surveillance plays out in *Mrs. Dalloway* and were the reader not aware this novel was written almost a century ago, it could describe the pose-testing, preening, and preparation in advance of taking, posting, or sending a selfie. Taking this idea one step further, Clarissa’s facial contortions compare the effect of applying filters to a photo; however, in Clarissa Dalloway’s selfie preparation in front of the mirror, she is deconstructing, reconstructing, and defining herself all at the same time.

How many million times she had seen her face, and always with the imperceptible contraction! She pursed her lips when she looked in the glass. It was to give her face point. That was her self—pointed; dartlike; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together. (Woolf, MD 30)

5.

A username assumed the apprehension and ballast of a first impression: it was the skeleton that others on the Internet had to start with to assemble a notion of your identity. This name was a term of endearment that you christened yourself. (McNeil 39)

I had no notion what Clarissa Dalloway’s username might be. I’d have to make one up. It would be: **shoesandgloves52**. “Her old Uncle William used to say a lady is known by her shoes and her gloves” (Woolf, MD 8). I can imagine Clarissa taking a photo of her gloves and shoes. The shoes would be black leather t-strap. The gloves would be grey kid. Clarissa would post the photo of her kid-gloved hand reaching toward her t-strap shoes to Instagram. “Gloves and shoes; she had a passion for gloves” (Woolf, MD 8). I imagine that Clarissa’s Instagram post might say:

shoesandgloves52 so happy so happy to share this moment of transcendence, a moment when gloves and shoes become so much more than mere objects, become part of and yet apart from my username I want to say look! look! here are the gloves, here are the shoes, here I am looking at them and at that same moment here you are looking at me.

[#thismoment](#) [#clarissadalloway](#) [#mrsdalloway](#) [#virginia-woolf](#) [#Internetnovel](#) [#shoesandgloves](#) [#Internetwriting](#) [#instailusion](#) [#instafiction](#)

“How droll and indifferent I had pretended to be in all our e-mails” (Rooney 52). Frances’s imagined online brand: droll and indifferent but pretending not to be. Frances’s imagined online username might be: **drollandindifferentpretender**. Were Frances to write an Instagram post it might say:

drollandindifferentpretender I am a good writer I know I am a good writer I am a poet I know I am a good poet but don’t tell anyone well okay go ahead and tell someone I know I’m smart but don’t tell anyone I’m smart because I’ll show them I’m smart don’t tell anyone I’m poor but

[#Internetnovel](#) [#Internetwriting](#) [#instailusion](#)

Of course, the reader is given no direct insight into what brand, if any, Frances might be trying to create for herself, but Frances admits that she tries to foster a cool façade—making light of the insecurity she feels about her lack of money, her working-class roots—in her e-mails to Nick. “I’m glad my ancestral homeland could help nourish your class identity. P.S. It should be illegal to have a holiday home anywhere” (Rooney 42).

6.

“Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement” (Cixous 27). Cixous’s declaration could very well describe Instagram or Facebook posts, text messages, or emails. The text and movement to which Cixous refers can also be associated with the female protagonists in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Conversations with Friends*. Text and movement are two words that help frame these Internet novels—text delivered and communicated in different ways (i.e., via letters and/or text messages) chronicling Clarissa’s and Frances’s movement, literally and figuratively, through time. *Conversations with Friends* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, metaphorically, communicate with each other as both source and destination.

Both Clarissa and Frances write themselves and their bodies into these respective Internet novels. Clarissa feels motivated to write but associates the act with the tactile objects of needle, thread, and thimble—all manifestations of a physical connection that creates a pattern written on fabric and in/on herself.

She would take her silks, her scissors, her—what was it?—her thimble, of course, down into the drawing-room, for she must also write, and see that things generally were more or less in order. (Woolf, MD 31)

If Clarissa might be identified by the hypothetical username **shoesandgloves52** her writing might be defined as the actions of those objects as she fixes them to her body, not just writing defined by the movement of pen on paper. In other words, her definition of writing could be broadened to include the act of stitching meaning into fabric and clothing, fastening meaning to the buckling of shoes or the putting on of gloves. These activities are the type of action or activity writ large, or small, on Instagram, Facebook, in a selfie, or text message. These activities help Clarissa counter feelings that “this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing—nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown” (Woolf, MD 7).

Frances, alternatively, is a spoken-word poet, already actively writing and sharing her work in real life. Her version of writing herself and her body into the Internet novel *Conversations with Friends* involves secretly mark making or writing on her own body. “I privately termed these behaviors ‘acting out’” (Rooney 275-76). To manifest a physical connection and reconcile her internal and external self, Frances substitutes Clarissa’s needle, thread, and thimble for nail scissors, or parts of her own body, that she turns on her physical self. After a break-up with Nick, Frances says “[I] took a small nail scissors and cut a hole on the inside of my left thigh. [...] I sat on the floor of my room bleeding into a rolled-up piece of tissue paper and thinking about my own death” (Rooney 274-75). Returning to Ballina from the hospital, Frances uses her fingernails as ersatz writing instruments. “I reached for the soft part on the inside of my left elbow and pinched it so tightly between my thumbnail and forefinger that I tore the skin open” (Rooney 165).

From Clarissa in a drawing room, to Frances in a bedroom, the physical and metaphoric space Clarissa and Frances occupy in their respective Internet novels depicts public and private space. As Frances secretly commits violence on her physical self, she acknowledges her secret psychic self. “My privacy extended all around me like a barrier protecting my body. I was a very autonomous and independent person with an inner life that nobody else had ever touched or perceived” (Rooney 275). However, as the narrator/curator of herself and life, Frances cannot be trusted, she is an unreliable narrator/curator. Just as an image, a posted selfie cannot be trusted as an accurate reflection of reality, Frances’s description of herself, life, and body cannot be trusted.

As Frances acknowledges her private inner life, she extends herself outward and acknowledges her desire for a broader audience. “That wasn’t what my biographers would care about later” (Rooney 275).

Frances's hypothetical username **drollandindifferentpretender** seems a perfect fit, even if Frances has not chosen it.

On a broader scale, the idea of the Internet being able to reach beyond the private, individual space of “a room of her own and five hundred a year” (Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* 90) to a controlled, yet infinite, possibility audiences of readers and viewers on Instagram, Facebook, email, or text messages is empowering. Megan Garber describes the narrator of *Mrs. Dalloway* “as that most contemporary of things: a gatekeeper.”

7.

wendyannmcgrath One novel ends with a party and one novel begins with a party.

[#clarissa](#) [#melissa](#) [#virginiawoolf](#) [#sallyrooney](#)
[#Internetnovel](#) [#conversationswithfriends](#)

This post got eight likes. It's still early.

8.

The “whole panoply of content” (Woolf, MD 9) is a phrase with multiple meaning—and so much of the meaning relies on emphasis. The word, content, has the potential to become two different words, with two different meanings when emphasis is placed on different syllables. Content becomes two different words. What is “the whole panoply of content”? (Woolf, MD 9). Such a metaphor for the Internet and, by default, the Internet novel: beautiful and beastly.

How should content be read, which syllable gets the emphasis, first or second? Should it be: **content** or **content**—as in, I am **not content** with the **content** or as in, I **am content** with the **content**?

Again, this phrase has multiple meaning—so much of the meaning relies on when and where the word “content” is used. One of Clarissa Dalloway's central motivations is “Being loved and making her home delightful” (Woolf, MD 9). For her content signifies a state of ease connected to positively manipulating what others might think about her. The party she is giving is a way to influence this positive perception. In that regard, she could be described as an influencer. “She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on” (Woolf, MD 5). This description of place and time could describe the taking of a selfie. **Content**.

9.

What did the young people think about? Peter Walsh asked himself. Those five years—1918 to 1923—had been, he suspected, somehow very important. People looked different. Newspapers seemed different. (Woolf, MD 60)

Peter Walsh, a character in *Mrs. Dalloway*, might as well be speaking about five years a century later: 2020—2025. These five years will also be viewed as important. Will masks ever come off? Now, it is not newspapers but the Internet novel that has changed a genre and rearranged the literary canon. I think of *Conversations with Friends* and *Mrs. Dalloway* deconstructing and reconstructing the image of the novel, even though they were written almost a century apart.

10.

I am compelled to take another photograph of the two Internet novels and post it to Instagram.

wendyannmcgrath These two Internet novels have begun a conversation and it will continue. Let's see where we are in 2025.
[#Internetnovel](#) [#mrsdalloway](#) [#conversationswithfriends](#)
[#sallyrooney](#) [#virginiawoolf](#) [#novel](#)

11.

The Internet novels *Conversations with Friends* and *Mrs. Dalloway* invite readings that reflect their time and changing time: past, present, and future, while inviting metaphorical discussion directed from one novel to the other, back and forth through real time and digital space. By analyzing these two works as Internet novels, a reader accepts a definition of them as synecdoches of the Internet. The novels create space in a traditional literary canon for a deconstruction and reconstruction of the novel as a form in reform.

Wendy McGrath

Métis writer/poet/artist

Winner of the inaugural *Prairie Grindstone Prize*

Instagram: [@wendyannmcgrath](#)

Works Cited

- Cixous, Helene. “The Laugh of the Medusa.” *The Portable Cixous*. Ed. Marta Segarra. Trans. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. New York: Columbia UP, 2010.
- Garber, Megan. “The Great Novel of the Internet Was Published in 1925.” *The Atlantic* 8 October 2021. <https://www.theatlantic.com/books/archive/2021/10/mrs-dalloway-virginia-woolf-Internetnovel/620341/>
- McNeil, Joanne. *Lurking: How a Person Became a User*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2020.
- Rooney, Sally. *Conversations With Friends*. New York: Hogarth, 2017.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. New York: Penguin Books, 2021.
- . *A Room of One's Own*. London: Granada Publishing, 1983.
- Zambreno, Kate. *Heroines*. South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2012.



By Campbell-Gray - Agius WW1; cf. [1] p. 13; cf. also this postcard: [2], Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=113688954>

Thunder (and Reckoning) at Wembley: Virginia Woolf's Anti-Imperialist Activism Against the British Empire

Virginia Woolf was committed to anti-imperialist ideals and used her own *modus operandi* to try to influence social change as various scholars including Jane Marcus, Kathy J. Phillips and Anna Snaith have shown.¹ An example of how Woolf deployed her art as activism can be seen in her political satire, “Thunder at Wembley.”² Virginia Woolf had been commissioned by *The Nation and Athenaeum* (which had merged in

¹ See Jane Marcus's “Britannia Rules the Waves,” Kathy J. Phillips's *Virginia Woolf Against Empire*, and Anna Snaith's “‘The Exhibition is in Ruins’: Virginia Woolf and Empire” and “Leonard and Virginia Woolf: Writing against Empire.”

² Woolf originally titled the essay “Nature at Wembley” (see Wusow xv).

1921) to review the Exhibition and visited on 29 May 1924 with her husband, Leonard Woolf, who worked as editor at the newspaper from 1922 until 1930 (Leventhal and Stansky 99; 102). Her review was published in *N&A* on 28 June 1924 as “Thunder at Wembley.” Over the years, both *The Nation* and *The Athenaeum* featured anti-imperialist articles critiquing Britain’s colonial policy; contributions included Leonard Woolf’s “The End of Our Government of Ireland,” published in *The Nation* in 1920 (21-24). Therefore, Virginia Woolf’s essay sits within the context of anti-imperialist journalistic propaganda.³ In “Thunder at Wembley,” Woolf recounts a literal and spiritual reckoning through her apocalyptic vision of the collapse of the Empire in a cloud of dust:

Dust swirls down the avenues, hisses and hurries like erected cobras round the corners. Pagodas are dissolving in dust. Ferro-concrete is fallible. Colonies are perishing and dispersing in spray of inconceivable beauty and terror which some malignant power illuminates. (“Thunder,” *Essays* [E] 3 413)⁴

In this essay I build upon the work of scholars such as Mark Wollaeger, Scott Cohen, and Kurt Koenigsberger by further discussing the political context surrounding the British Empire Exhibition and using the work of historians such as John M. Makenzie and Jan Morris; in doing so I examine Woolf’s anti-imperialist advocacy in “Thunder at Wembley.” Leonard and Virginia Woolf shared a growing conviction that the British Empire’s hold was no longer tenable. Through their political activism and literary work, they opposed imperial policies while also exploring Britain’s evolving role in the modern world. In “Thunder at Wembley,” Virginia Woolf destabilizes the idea of London as the center of the British Empire by evoking storms which seem to signify an ethical judgement from the outposts of Empire, encouraging readers to question imperialist ideology. Woolf uses a storm as a metaphor for nature’s resistance to commerce and industrialization in the guise of empire.

As Phillips has argued, “Woolf’s whole oeuvre, in fact, can be said to have as a central project what her short essay ‘Thunder at Wembley’ (1924) attempts: to sweep away this imperialism” (xxix). Reading Woolf in the context of left-wing intellectual opposition to imperialism reveals “Thunder at Wembley” to be a more powerful protest against the colonial policy of the British Empire than has been fully recognized.

Due to the Allies’ victory in the First World War and the resulting mandate system, despite the international turmoil in the aftermath of the conflict, Britain and France were still actively extending their empires (L. Woolf, *Downhill All the Way* [DAW] 221-22). However, amid the rapidly changing world and growing revolt within the colonies, the concept of empire was being challenged. The anti-imperialist ideas advocated in Leonard Woolf’s political tome, *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (1920) were likely at the forefront of the Woolfs’ minds when they visited the British Empire Exhibition given their close collaboration on the study.⁵ The Woolfs were part of a shared conversation among intellectual political figures on class, gender, and racial issues as these were fomented around the time of the Exhibition.

The Exhibition evoked strong reactions across the political divide from both supporters and critics. Tobah Aukland-Peck astutely observes that it was arguably the tensions rather than the triumph of the British Empire that underpinned the Exhibition (209). This dichotomy is explored by Woolf in “Thunder at Wembley.” Running from 1924 to 1925, the Exhibition was intended to emphasize the stability of the empire and

³ See also Byrne 7-13.

⁴ These ideas reverberate with those expressed earlier by Leonard Woolf in *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (1920) where he warns of an impending Armageddon with a judgment of biblical proportions against the imperial power (see 367).

⁵ Michèle Barrett discusses the extent of Virginia Woolf’s role as a research assistant for Leonard’s *Empire and Commerce in Africa* in her essay “Virginia Woolf’s Research for Empire and Commerce in Africa (Leonard Woolf, 1920).”

to foster a sense of pride and belonging among British and colonized peoples at a time when the British public was increasingly hostile to foreigners and outsiders. The Exhibition was conceived in 1902 in the rooms of the British Empire League (Cohen 89) by pro-imperialists who wanted to maintain the image of a powerful empire to counter those calling for its dismantling. In 1913, the idea was again mooted by Lord Strathcona, “the great empire builder,” with the project gaining momentum when it received the support of the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) in 1920—he became the Exhibition’s patron (Stevenson 610). When the Exhibition was finally opened by George V in April 1924, the Empire was at its zenith, before its accelerating denouement with independence movements gaining momentum and support both from within colonized countries and in Britain itself.

The British public were still coming to terms with their losses in the First World War and were not yet ready to relinquish the idea that their loved ones had died for a glorious cause, and that the empire was valuable and worth defending. The Wembley Exhibition was extremely popular with the public, with over 26 million visitors (MacKenzie “The First World War” [FWW] 28). The Exhibition tapped deeply into the psyche of many of the British public to provide much needed optimism and national pride after the wartime period of death and devastation. Cohen observes: “Wembley allowed visitors to inspect their empire, either while strolling the fifteen miles of roads named by Rudyard Kipling or riding in one of eighty-eight carriages circling the park on the Never-Stop Railway” (88). Leonard Woolf noted that, at the time:

The vast majority of Frenchmen and Britons were extremely proud of their empires and considered that it was self-evident that it was for the benefit of the world as well as in their own interests that they ruled directly or dominated indirectly the greater part of Asia and Africa. (DAW 222)

The British Empire’s Wembley Exhibition could be described as an early iteration of an imperialist Disneyland featuring the latest in technological advances with immersive theatrical displays designed to represent the arts, culture, and commerce of countries across the British Empire.⁶ This was epitomized in the magnificent pageant of empire, a show featuring 12,000 performers which had repeated performances (MacKenzie, FWW 28-29) and in the spectacular theatrical recreation of the First World War naval battle of Zeebrugge (Aukland-Peck 209). The Exhibition started with a triumph of the latest technological feats, with the King’s speech opening the event being witnessed live by 80,000 visitors in the stadium as well as being broadcast directly into a million homes via the wireless radio and made into a gramophone record that same afternoon, while his closing message was cabled immediately across the empire (Cuddy-Keane 45-46; Morris 300).

However, the Exhibition faced criticism that was growing louder at both intellectual and political levels as the British Empire started to destabilize. Left-wing anti-imperialist intellectuals who opposed the ideology formed a society called “The Won’t-Go-To-Wembleys,” also known as “WGTW” (Morris 302). Political satire emphasized the ridiculousness of the Exhibition, reducing its lofty imperial ambitions to the entertainment value of a funfair. *Punch* magazine featured cartoons lampooning the Exhibition. These included Frank Reynolds’ “Recruiting at Wembley” in the 23 July 1924 issue with a cartoon of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, dressed as a police officer, declaring to a young man: “Now, young fellow, you’re the sort of lad that ought to join our British Empire Constabulary and keep the peace in Europe.” The man replies, “First to the left for the amusement park” (87). Similarly, in the 28 May 1924 issue, a cartoon by H. M. Bateman depicts a rollercoaster ride with the play on words caption “Do you Wemble?” (591). And, emphasizing the scope the Exhibition had in attracting international visitors from across the British Empire, the 18 June 1924 issue of *Punch* features

⁶ Disneyland evolved from these types of exhibitions. The World Fair, held in 1964 in Queens, NY, was a template for future versions that were permanent. See Glover.

a racist cartoon by William Leigh Ridgewell of an Indian man and a British police officer on a London street with the caption, “*Chota Lal Charbutty (just arrived)* [...] ‘Salaam, Officer Sahib. I wish the Wembley Dak Bungalow. Thanking you not half’” (653).

Satire is an important political tool because the British Empire’s power relied on its majesty as well as its military. To poke fun at the empire was to puncture imperial policy. Jan Morris notes that, while P. G. Wodehouse and Noël Coward⁷ both depicted the British Empire Exhibition as a key cultural event, they mocked its seriousness by suggesting the imperial message was lost on the general public who reveled in the more entertaining attractions. In Wodehouse’s 1924 short story “The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy,” a satire on the upper-class “Bright Young Things” which was part of his *Carry On, Jeeves* collection (1925), the prospective father-in-law of Bertie Wooster’s friend Biffy encourages him to visit the Exhibition to “broaden [his] mind,” stating:

And there exists at this very moment, not twenty minutes by cab from Hyde Park Corner, the most supremely absorbing and educational collection of objects, both animate and inanimate, gathered from the four corners of the Empire, that has ever been assembled in England’s history. I allude to the British Empire Exhibition now situated at Wembley. (Wodehouse 136)⁸

However, despite the lauded educational aspects of the Exhibition, Bertie and Biffy are more interested in the “Green Swizzles” cocktails served in the Planters Bar in the West Indian section (Wodehouse 141). Similarly, in David Lean’s 1944 film adaptation of Noël Coward’s play, *This Happy Breed*, a depiction of the lives of an ‘ordinary’ family amid a backdrop of personal and political events between the World Wars, the family visits the British Empire Exhibition where the father laments, “I brought them here to see the glories of the Empire and all they think about is going on the Dodgems”⁹ (Lean 1944).

Woolf recognizes the public’s preoccupation with the entertainment aspects which come at the expense of the natural environment:

Down in the Amusement Compound, by some grave oversight on the part of the Committee, several trees and rhododendron bushes have been allowed to remain; and these, as anybody could have foretold, attract the birds. As you wait your turn to be hoisted into mid-air [rollercoaster ride], it is impossible not to hear the thrush singing. (“Thunder” E 3 412)

As the thrush’s song implies, these motivations cannot be entirely controlled. The manufactured arena intrudes on but does not eradicate nature.

⁷ Noël Coward (1899-1973) was a friendly acquaintance of Virginia Woolf’s, having met through their mutual friend Sibyl, Lady Colefax (1874-1950). Coward satirized British imperial attitudes throughout his work, most notably in songs such as “Mad Dogs and English Men” (1931) and “I Wonder What Happened to Him?” (1945).

⁸ Editorial note: Wodehouse’s short story, published originally in the *Strand Magazine* (October 1924), was illustrated by A. Wallis Mills and is available online at: https://www.madameulalie.org/strand/Rummy_Affair_of_Old_Biffy.html.

⁹ Editorial note: dodgems, developed in the US in the very early 1920s, are bumper cars. Multiple sources confirm that they were more popular than the exhibits. For instance, Ian Lacey notes that: “The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924 was meant to remind people of the importance of Empire but many went to the Exhibition for the wrong reasons preferring the dodgems and the dance halls to the exhibits of New Zealand or Ceylon” (see “Elgar and Empire” on this webpage: https://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2007/Apr07/Elgar_Empire.htm). The originally published format is in *The Elgar Society Journal* 10.3 (November 1997): 127-41. https://www.elgarsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/JOURNAL_1997.11-VOL10-NO3.pdf. Both of these links must be pasted in. See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bumper_cars and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire_Exhibition.

The imperial propaganda employed at the Exhibition was inescapable but on a political level, its construction was blighted by industrial unrest. The funding for the Exhibition was opaque with £12 million allocated to the project (see MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* [PE] 108) from a combination of British Government financial guarantees against any losses, bank credit, the promise of private investments, expected contributions from the participating Dominions and Colonies and anticipated ticket sales (*Hansard* HC, 2 March 1925).¹⁰ Given the Exhibition’s high public profile, the industrial unrest was a topic of much political and media discussion, which reached both parliamentary and cabinet levels (*Hansard* HC, 10 December 1925; Auckland-Peck 218). In early 1924, there were labor disputes culminating in a three-day strike that April.¹¹ The strike protested the use of non-union labor, wage disputes and workplace safety (Auckland-Peck 217). An Inquiry Committee was formed, which included representatives of the Labour Party’s Executive and the General Council of the Trade Union Congress, indicating the gravity of the dispute and the political importance of the Exhibition (Britton 75). The committee listed the workers’ opposition to “low wages, long working hours, lack of free lavatory facilities and transport expenses” and drafted their own resolutions, which included a Works Council to formally represent Exhibition workers (Britton 75).

The committee attempted to negotiate with the Exhibition authorities in a conference on 30 May facilitated by William Lunn, parliamentary secretary to the Department of Overseas Trade (Britton 75-76). As several of the larger employers at the Exhibition refused to concede to the workers’ demands, the committee wrote to the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, and the cabinet withdrew its support for the Exhibition, expressing its belief “that Exhibition authorities had ‘shown no concern for the upholding of the best standard of labor conditions prevailing throughout the British Commonwealth’” (Britton 76). Given the press coverage of the labor dispute, and Leonard’s close involvement in Labour Party politics, Virginia Woolf would likely have had a good understanding of these issues.¹²

Despite the Official Guide to the Exhibition stating that its aim was “To make the different races of the British Empire better known to each other” (MacKenzie, PE 108), racial tensions were amplified by the political climate surrounding the Exhibition. As MacKenzie has noted, “it was living anthropological exhibits, villages of colonial people only recently ‘pacified’, that most reflected European man’s control of his contemporary natural history” (PE 99). The Union of Students of African Descent (USAD) protested the racist press treatment of workers in the model West African village.

An article in the *Evening News* (5 March 1924) observed that “Cannibalism, slave-trading, obscure black-magic rites of almost incredible barbarity” were commonplace in Nigeria, and the *Sunday Express* (4 May 1924) published a salacious article, entitled “When West Africa Woos,” that features racist, sexual fetishism aimed at an African, female worker from the British Empire Exhibition’s West African Village (Britton 72). Similarly, a popular song by Billy Merson, inspired by the Exhibition, contains racist lyrics such as the following: “There you will find me in a costume gay / In charge of the girls from Africa. / All they wear is beads and a grin; / That is where the Exhibition comes in” (Merson qtd. in MacKenzie, PE 110). The USAD’s protest gained the support of influential figures such as the British Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Frederick Gordon Guggisberg (Britton 73), and resulted in a re-framing of the West African village for the 1925 season with the living spaces closed to the public. Thus, the visitors were able to watch

¹⁰ Although the exhibition was a financial loss for its organizers, the propaganda value was incalculable and businesses who exhibited there received a commercial boost.

¹¹ See *Hansard* HC, 10 December 1925; “May Retard”; “Work Resumed”; “Wembley Exhibition Strike.”

¹² These events unfolded in the days after the Woolfs’ visit to the Exhibition on 29 May 1924.

the workers undertaking traditional craftwork but without mingling (Skotnes-Brown 14).¹³

There was a broad range of literature and debate which critiqued the Exhibition's stated philanthropic and paternalistic posturing for Woolf to draw on. Woolf's understanding of the labor dispute and class injustice also gave her tools to shape her approach to thinking about racial discrimination.¹⁴ Although Woolf is making a primitivist connection between colonized people and nature, her stance was firmly anti-imperialist. Through the potent, multi-layered image of the storm that disrupts the Exhibition, Woolf represents the abiding power of nature over human structures. The British Empire is as impermanent as the fallible ferro-concrete used to construct the pavilions housing the exhibits; a single storm could sweep away such an edifice. There is a sense that the exotic natural phenomenon of the thunderstorm (the desert "dust" being dramatized as dangerous "cobras" with the power to dissolve "pagodas") has an invasive power over the Wembley climate and therefore that the political unrest in colonized countries represents a threat to the natural order in Britain ("Thunder," E 3 413). Woolf exults in the idea of nature eradicating the commercialism of the Exhibition with: "But then, just as one is beginning a little wearily to fumble with those two fine words—democracy, mediocrity—Nature asserts herself" ("Thunder," E 3 411).

Woolf is hinting at the demise of commercialism, which the organizers of the Exhibition had seen as paramount. In the media coverage of the time, the Exhibition was described in the language of commerce, with the organizers describing the British Empire Exhibition as "a stock-taking of the whole of the resources of Empire" (*The British Empire Exhibition* [Official Guide] qtd. in MacKenzie, PE 108). This view reflected Joseph Chamberlain's economic perspective on the Empire, which was opposed by Leonard Woolf in *Empire and Commerce in Africa*. Addressing the leaders of the Empire's commerce assembled in London in 1896, Chamberlain exclaimed: "I believe that the toast of Empire would have carried with it all that is meant by Commerce and Empire, because, gentlemen, the Empire, to parody a celebrated expression, is commerce" (Chamberlain qtd. in L. Woolf, *Empire* 18).¹⁵

The Woolfs both found deeply disturbing the imperial celebration in place of the defense of empire and believed the British Empire was being used as a pretext for profit cloaked in the guise of a moral crusade for civilization. Snaith has suggested that, "For [Virginia] Woolf, the violence and chaos of the storm represents the exploitation and inequality that this version of the Empire as harmonious trading network hides" ("The exhibition is in ruins" 10). Woolf describes the Exhibition in the language of trade, reducing it to an exercise in shopkeeping, satirizing Chamberlain's view:

for six and eightpence two people can buy as much ham and bread as they need. Six and eightpence is not a large sum; but neither is it a small sum. It is a moderate sum, a mediocre sum. It is the prevailing sum at Wembley. ("Thunder," E 3 411)

The repetition of "for six and eightpence" in the essay is also a way for Woolf to stress the profit-driven motives and penny-pinching economics of the Exhibition organizers. For a contemporary audience it would perhaps reflect the economic exploitation of the striking workers by

¹³ In her novel, *Small Island*, Andrea Levy depicts a very complicated meeting between a young working-class white British girl and an African man who is 'on display' at the Exhibition (6-7).

¹⁴ As Woolf does not mention the model village in her essay, we do not know whether she visited it. Woolf (in)famously mentions in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) that, "It is one of the great advantages of being a woman that one can pass even a very fine negress without wishing to make an Englishwoman of her" (*AROO* 39). Jane Marcus suggests the West African model village at the British Empire Exhibition "is another source of Woolf's troubling encounter with 'a very fine negress'" (Marcus, *Hearts of Darkness* 30).

¹⁵ See Gary William Poole's "Joseph Chamberlain" for more information.

the Exhibition management. The reduction of the British Empire to a marketplace for commodities is epitomized in the representation of the Prince of Wales in a sculpture created out of butter to promote the Canadian dairy industry. In a scene reminiscent of Wodehouse's stories and Coward's lyrics, Virginia Woolf writes: "Clergy, school children, and invalids group themselves round the Prince of Wales in butter" ("Thunder," E 3 413) for shelter from the storm. Woolf enjoys the irony; seeking protection from a dissolving statue of butter is as hopeless as putting one's faith in the unpredictable survival of the British Empire.

Woolf makes a deliberate political decision not to promote the Exhibition by refusing to present the imperial elements as 'attractions.' These included replicas of renowned architecture throughout the empire such as the Indian Pavilion built in the style of a palace from the Mughal Empire and the Burmese Pavilion, which included a reproduction of the Arakan Pagoda at Mandalay (Stevenson 615)—and the exciting military displays or popular exhibits such as the "Pears' Palace of Beauty," featuring models representing great beauties from history. Woolf directly asks how the visitors can absorb the imperial propaganda employed at the Exhibition without question, noting that, "Indeed they are the ruin of the Exhibition[.] [...] And what, one asks, is the spell it lays upon them? How, with all this dignity of their own, can they bring themselves to believe in that?" ("Thunder," E 3 412). Significantly, Woolf adds, "But this cynical reflection, at once so chill and so superior, was made, of course, by the thrush,"¹⁶ suggesting that, while humans can be corrupted by imperialist ideology, nature remains inviolable ("Thunder," E 3 412).

Emery notes the official guide asked visitors to see the Exhibition "with Empire Eyes" (*The British Empire Exhibition* qtd. in Emery 31); Woolf's objective in the essay is to raise the blinders from visitors' eyes so they can see the glaring, brutal reality of colonial oppression. Woolf suggests the imperial propaganda of the Exhibition seeks to distort the visitors' vision of the British Empire: "they stand in queues to have their spectacles rectified gratis" (E 3 411). Throughout the essay Woolf reiterates that the Exhibition is an epic piece of propaganda designed to seduce the public. By turning her gaze away from the imperial, grandiose Exhibition buildings to unusual details—the woman outside, the failure of the weather, the mockery of the prince in butter—Woolf removes the materialistic sheen covering the economics of the event. Questions of class and social unrest were increasing during the period of the Exhibition and may very well have fueled Woolf's satirical purpose in opposing both the imperial and the manufactured. "Thunder at Wembley" uses the same light, satirical strategies as the cartoonists in *Punch's* magazine and in Wodehouse's and Coward's work. Woolf's strategy, however, also functions as a form of political critique which raises awareness about racial hierarchies, class inequality and the unjust exploitation of colonialism.

By focusing on the ferro-concrete building materials rather than the aesthetic spectacle, Woolf exposes the Exhibition's foundations, thus turning to questions about the workers responsible for them. Woolf observes that:

As for the buildings themselves, those vast, smooth, grey palaces, no vulgar riot of ideas tumbled expensively in their architect's head; equally, cheapness was abhorrent to him, and vulgarity anathema. Per perch, rod, or square foot, however ferro-concrete palaces are sold, they too work out at six and eightpence. ("Thunder" E 3 411)

This move from an emphasis on stately grandeur to a more rapid style of construction could be interpreted as disrespect for skilled laborers who had constructed enduring buildings. Woolf's solidarity with the striking workers suggests that one way the British Empire Exhibition mirrored the British Empire itself was by being built on the exploitation of workers.

¹⁶ Mark Wollaeger calls the thrush "an obvious surrogate for Woolf" (51).

Woolf's perspectives on class politics align with her views of gender equality and come together in "Thunder at Wembley" through the figure of a working-class woman. The woman shows that the working class and the reality of poverty cannot be airbrushed out of this idealized portrait of the British Empire presented at the Exhibition. Like colonized people, the working-class of Britain are also disenfranchised by the exploitative work practices the Empire employs. As Woolf writes, "And then some woman in the row of red-brick villas outside the grounds comes out and wrings a dish-cloth in the backyard. All this the Duke of Devonshire¹⁷ should have prevented" ("Thunder" E 3 412). Virginia Woolf refers to Victor Cavendish, the 9th Duke of Devonshire, repeatedly in "Thunder at Wembley" and makes him an object of satire for the inability to regulate nature or, for that matter, to control the neighborhood around the Exhibition. In a particularly stinging passage, Woolf writes, "It is nature that is the ruin of Wembley; yet it is difficult to see what steps Lord Stevenson, Lieutenant-General Sir Travers Clarke, and the Duke of Devonshire could have taken to keep her out" ("Thunder" E 3 410).

The dreariness conveyed by the working-class woman doing housework is in stark contrast to the majestic fantasy of Empire the Exhibition attempts to conjure.¹⁸ For Virginia Woolf, this figure offers a way to critique the commercial glitz of the Exhibition by comparing the reality of a working-woman's lived experience of washing dishes with the fabricated pomp of a patriarchal imperialist display. Woolf is not seduced by the allure of the Exhibition's charms. Her gaze reaches beyond this ring-fenced pleasure dome to the reality of working women's lives and homes beyond. The essay is an early iteration of the working-class woman evoked in *A Room of One's Own* [AROO] (1929) who misses the lecture due to having to do the washing up (AROO 85), where Woolf also uses the symbolism of female domestic labor to indicate how women are excluded from traditionally masculine spheres, whether that be imperialistic or educational.

Virginia Woolf's response to the British Empire Exhibition in "Thunder at Wembley" reflects an anti-imperialist stance and a socialist concern for the working classes and colonized peoples. The essay can be seen as Woolf's way of aligning herself in writing with left-wing opposition to the Exhibition both in terms of the workers' rights and the wider public demoralization and class conflict of the post-war era. In the essay, Woolf describes the decline of the British Empire as "Cracks like the white roots of trees [that] spread themselves across the firmament. The Empire is perishing; the bands are playing; the Exhibition is in ruins" ("Thunder" E 3 413). Woolf uses biting satire as she downplays the attractions of the Exhibition, describing them as mediocre. Her extended metaphor of nature disrupting human ambitions demonstrates to readers of *The Nation* and *Athenaeum* the unethical realities of imperial ideology. Woolf's political satire shaped the public opinion on imperialism through the medium of a popular left-leaning weekly newspaper, thus reaching a like-minded anti-colonial audience.

Marielle O'Neill
Leeds Trinity University

Works Cited

Aukland-Peck, Tobah. "'The Abbey in Ruins and Ablaze': Staging Disaster at the 1924 and 1925 Empire Exhibitions." *Imagining The Apocalypse: Art and the End Times*. Ed. Edwin Coomasaru and Theresa Deichert. London: The Courtauld, 2022. 205-08. Web. 18 September 2023. <https://courtauld.ac.uk/research/research-resources/publications/courtauld-books-online/apocalypse/>

¹⁷ The Duke of Devonshire himself served as Secretary of State for the Colonies between 1922 and 1924 and was Chairman of the British Empire Exhibition.

¹⁸ Koenigsberger equates this figure with a character from Woolf's "Character in Fiction" (1924) arguing that: "This woman [...] shows what the economy of realism must thrust aside in order to establish itself, thereby exposing the Exhibition's illusion of realism by contact with what Woolf calls in 'Character in Fiction' 'the spirit we live by, life itself'" (110).

- the-abbey-in-ruins-and-ablaze-staging-disaster-at-the-1924-1925-british-empire-exhibitions/.
- Barrett, Michèle. "Virginia Woolf's Research for Empire and Commerce in Africa (Leonard Woolf, 1920)." *Woolf Studies Annual* 19 (2013): 83-122. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 October 2023. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24906937>.
- Bateman, H. M. "Do You Wemble?" *Punch* 166. 28 May 1924: 591. *Punch Historical Archive, 1841-1992*. Web. 27 November 2023. link.gale.com/apps/doc/ES700039458/PNCH?u=tasc&sid=bookmark-PNCH&xid=4293f20d.
- Byrne, Anne. "The Nation and the Woolfs." *Virginia Woolf Bulletin* 16 (2019): 7-12.
- The British Empire Exhibition, 1924*. Official Guide. London: Fleetway P, 1924.
- Britton, Sarah. "'Come and See the Empire by the All-Red Route!': Anti-Imperialism and Exhibitions in Interwar Britain." *History Workshop Journal* 69 (2010): 68-89. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 September 2023. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40646094>.
- Cell, John W. "Hailey, (William) Malcolm, Baron Hailey (1872-1969), Administrator in India and Writer on Africa." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 7 January 2010. Oxford UP. Web. 3 December 2023. <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-33636>.
- Cohen, Scott. "The Empire from the Street: Virginia Woolf, Wembley, and Imperial Monuments." *Modern Fiction Studies* 50.1 (2004): 85-109. *JSTOR*. Web. 21 March 2023. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26286283>.
- Cuddy-Keane, Melba. *Virginia Woolf, The Intellectual, and Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003.
- Emery, Mary Lou. "Woolf Re-visits Wembley: Pre-War Bloomsbury Aesthetics and Interwar British Empire." *Woolf: Across the Generations: Selected Papers from the Twelfth International Conference on Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Merry M. Pawlowski and Eileen Barrett. Bakersfield, California: The Center for Virginia Woolf Studies at California State University, 2003. 26-36. <https://virginiawoolfmiscellany.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/woolf-conference-2002-selected-papers-across-the-generations-publication-12.pdf>.
- Glover, Erin. "The 1964 New York World's Fair—A New Disney Technology is Born." *Disney Parks Blog*. 21 April 2011. Web. 7 November 2023. <https://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2011/04/the-1964-new-york-worlds-fair-a-new-disney-technology-is-born/>.
- Hansard* HC. Deb 2 March 1925. Vol. 181, cols. 109-133. Web. 28 December 2023. [https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1925-03-02/debates/20111245-cfcd-4700-a03b-4eb3a590fa7a/BritishEmpireExhibition\(Guarantee\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1925-03-02/debates/20111245-cfcd-4700-a03b-4eb3a590fa7a/BritishEmpireExhibition(Guarantee)).
- Hansard* HC. Deb 10 December 1925. Vol. 189, cols. 803-836. Web. 26 September 2023. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1925-12-10/debates/5e690823-fe8c-4632-ba8a-915e0d13af8f/BritishEmpireExhibitionGuarantee>.
- Koenigsberger, Kurt. "Virginia Woolf and the Empire Exhibition of 1924: Modernism, Excess, and the Verandahs of Realism." *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Place and Space*. Ed. Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 99-114.
- Lean, David, dir. *This Happy Breed*. Eagle-Lion Gaumont, 1 June 1944.
- Leventhal, Fred and Peter Stansky. *Leonard Woolf: Bloomsbury Socialist*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2019.
- Levy, Andrea. *Small Island*. London: Headline, 2004.
- MacKenzie, John M. "The First World War and the Cultural, Political, and Environmental Transformation of the British Empire." *The Great War and the British Empire: Culture and Society*. Ed. Michael J. K. Walsh and Andrew Varnava. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016. 23-38.
- . *Propaganda and Empire*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986.
- Marcus, Jane. "Britannia Rules The Waves." *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century 'British' Literary Canons*.

Book Reviews

- Ed. Karen R. Lawrence. Urbana, Illinois: U of Illinois P, 1992. 136-62.
- . *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race*. Piscataway, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 2004.
- “May Retard Exhibition by Strike.” *New York Clipper*. 27 March 1924. Web. 14 December 2023. <https://idnc.library.illinois.edu/?a=d&d=NYC19240327.2.37&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->.
- Morris, Jan. *Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998.
- Phillips, Kathy J. *Virginia Woolf Against Empire*. Knoxville, Texas: U of Tennessee P, 1994.
- Poole, Gary William. “Joseph Chamberlain.” *Britannica*. Web. 10 December 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Joseph-Chamberlain>.
- Reynolds, Frank. “Recruiting at Wembley.” *Punch* 23 July 1924. 87. *Punch Historical Archive, 1841-1992*. Web. 27 November 2023. <https://magazine.punch.co.uk/image/I0000sJMLDti.NP4>.
- Ridgewell, William. “Chota Lal Charbutty (just arrived). ‘Salaam, Officer Sahib. I Wish the Wembley Dāk Bungalow. Thanking You Not Half’.” *Punch* 18 June 1924, 653. *Punch Historical Archive, 1841-1992*. Web. 27 November 2023. <https://magazine.punch.co.uk/image/I0000e8hQrA5rBEU>.
- Skotnes-Brown, Jules. “From the White Man’s Grave to the White Man’s Home? Experiencing ‘Tropical Africa’ at the 1924-25 British Empire Exhibition.” *Science Museum Group Journal* 11 (Spring 2019). Web. 28 October 2023. <https://journal.sciencemuseum.ac.uk/article/experiencing-tropical-africa/>.
- Snaith, Anna. “‘The exhibition is in ruins’: Virginia Woolf and Empire.” *Sixth Annual Virginia Woolf Birthday Lecture*. Southport: Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain, 2005.
- . “Leonard and Virginia Woolf: Writing Against Empire.” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 50.1 (2014): 19-32. Web. 4 November 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021989414555207>.
- Stevenson, Lord. “The British Empire Exhibition.” *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 73.3783 (1925): 609-19. *JSTOR*. Web. 27 October 2023. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41356976>.
- “Wembley Exhibition Strike.” *The Register (Adelaide, SA: 1901 - 1929)*. 3 April 1924. Web. 14 December 2023. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article64202224>.
- Wodehouse, P[elham]. G[renville]. “The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy.” *Carry On, Jeeves*. 1925. *Project Gutenberg*. 2021. 121-47. Web. 28 November 2023. https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/65974/pg65974-images.html#c6_The_Rummy_Affair_of_Old_Biffy.
- Wollaeger, Mark. “Woolf, Postcards, and the Elision of Race: Colonizing Women in *The Voyage Out*.” *Modernism/modernity* 8.1 (Jan. 2001): 43-75. Web. 14 December 2023. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/23374>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.2001.0014>.
- Woolf, Leonard. *Downhill All the Way*. Orlando, Florida: Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975.
- . *Empire and Commerce in Africa: A Study in Economic Imperialism*. 1919. London: Forgotten Books, 2012.
- . “The End of Our Government of Ireland.” *The Nation* 4 September 1920: 684-85. Rpt. In *Virginia Woolf Bulletin* 61 (May 2019): 21-24.
- Woolf, Virginia. “Thunder at Wembley.” *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume Three: 1919-1923*. Ed. Andrew McNeillie. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988. 410-13.
- Wussow, Helen. *Virginia Woolf “The Hours”: The British Museum Manuscript of Mrs. Dalloway*. New York: Pace UP, 1996.
- “Work Resumed at Wembley.” *The Times* 4 April 1924: 12. Web. 25 September 2023. *The Times Digital Archive*. link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS202708612/TTDA?u=tasc&sid=bookmark-TTDA&xid=117154f3.

FROM THE BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

All publishers, authors and scholars should direct inquiries regarding books to Karen Levenback, the Book Review Editor, as should anyone interested in reviewing books for the *Miscellany*.

Please direct any queries to Karen Levenback at kllevenback@att.net



REVIEW

VIRGINIA WOOLF'S APPRENTICESHIP: BECOMING AN ESSAYIST

by Beth Rigel Daugherty. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022. 416 pages. \$165.00 cloth.

From the opening nine pages of acknowledgments to the concluding index, with the two prefaces, introduction, three parts, five appendices, six illustrations, one table, and sources in between, *Virginia Woolf's Apprenticeship: Becoming an Essayist* is a prodigious study of Virginia Woolf's formative years as a teacher and essayist. In the opening to the “Acknowledgements,” Beth Daugherty announces that her “work on this project began decades ago” (vii), and the result of her years of research and drafting and writing quickly becomes evident to her readers. The 39 pages of sources are just one confirmation. But she does not just list and cite works; she engages with all scholarship on Woolf that appeared up to the moment she submitted the *Apprenticeship* for publication. Furthermore, Daugherty did not just read all matter of published material—books, articles, essays, websites—but also traveled to several dozen archives, libraries, and collections, and talked with hundreds of Woolfians, Victorianists, and modernist scholars. She acknowledges them all and carefully attributes the sources for her ideas. As a scholar, Daugherty is among the most thoughtful and conscientious I have ever encountered.

To use what is now a truism: Daugherty “turned every page” (*Turn*). As a result of her diligence, Daugherty makes her readers want to turn every one of her pages. She distills the immense amount of research she undertook into a highly readable, engaging, and well-organized intellectual biography. The endnotes are as engaging as the body of the text, and readers will derive great pleasure by reading both in concert. Indeed, the experience of reading *Apprenticeship* is akin to reading a novel; one becomes thoroughly absorbed in the story of the young Virginia Stephen and the context in which she lived. This book is not just a story of Stephen's life but of the world that shaped her. Daugherty begins by positioning herself in her own world: she grew up, she writes, in mid-twentieth century Appalachia as “a hillbilly, a hick, a ridge runner, a yokel” (xxi). By starting with her own experience as a self-declared common reader of Woolf's essays, Daugherty further draws in her readers. She models herself for her readers in the same way, *Apprenticeship* shows, Woolf modeled for her own. *Apprenticeship* goes on to describe the process by which Woolf—whom Daugherty refers to throughout her book as Stephen, because it was the unmarried Virginia Stephen who served this apprenticeship—became such an effective teacher/critic. Daugherty sets up a tripartite structure—divided into Woolf as a student, teacher, and apprentice—and delves into and



expatiates on each section in detail. In addition, with her meticulous research, she challenges, as I note below, a range of received wisdom and offers fresh insights.

Woolf's education was typical for a middle-class girl in nineteenth-century Great Britain: she was primarily home-schooled (1-3), with both her parents shaping the kind of education she received. Daugherty makes the point that they came of age in mid-Victorian England and were in their "second childbearing round" (13) when Woolf was born. Woolf, thus, was raised with mid-Victorian values (13-14), especially those of her mother, Julia, who believed in separate spheres for men and women (16). While her father, Leslie, did believe that women should have the same education as men, he provided only a fraction of the money he spent on his sons' education for his daughters' (17). It is well-known that Woolf resented not having a formal education (14). Yet she more than made up for this lack. Daugherty examines in fascinating detail the dimensions of Woolf's schooling, both inside the home—22 Hyde Park Gate, South Kensington, London—and outside. Within 22 Hyde Park Gate, "the dining-room table was the formal classroom," with two emblematic locales, Leslie's library and Julia's tea-table, the "two most important classrooms" (23). When Woolf reached the age of eight, her education was augmented by her ten-year-old brother Thoby, who bridged the link between home and school (35). Thoby introduced Woolf to "the Greeks" (35), and through him she learned oral arguments and how to be a more active reader (40). Anne Thackeray Ritchie, Leslie's sister-in-law, Julia's close friend, and Woolf's aunt, was a frequent visitor at 22 Hyde Park Gate (42) and played an important role as well. The novelist and writer "Aunt Anny" taught her niece about writing essays and women writers. She modeled for her niece a writer's life and enabled her to envision a "women's literary community" (42). The next dimension of Woolf's home-schooling entailed not people but the children's publications *Atalanta* and *Tit-Bits* (46). While *Atalanta* brought "schoolroom assignments and questions" to an audience of girls who "were serious, knowledge-seeking and eager to take advantage of increasing opportunities" (47), *Tit-Bits* was more inclusive in terms of class (49) and served as a model for *The Hyde Park Gate News*, the family newspaper written primarily by Woolf (50). Starting then in her early childhood, she wrote and wrote—essays and notes—and she read and read.

Woolf's informal education soon extended outside of 22 Hyde Park Gate to two major institutions—libraries and King's College—and to a tutor. Daugherty explains the value of libraries for the outsider (64), and the ways they gave Woolf "new content to explore, including the lives of the obscure" (63). As a girl, Woolf also began to build a library of her own (106). In the same year that she took out her first loan from the London Library in 1897, she began to take classes at King's College Department for Ladies. Daugherty emphasizes that Woolf was a non-matriculated student (65, 67) who graduated without a degree. This point is important, Daugherty notes: Woolf was not fully enrolled "insider." However, in this community of women, she did learn a "new and more complex content" through the classes she took in Greek, Latin, history, and German (69-71) and, also, different kinds of pedagogies (73). Her instruction at King's College led her to take lessons in Greek with a private tutor, Janet Case (74), with whom she was close friends until Case's death in 1937. Woolf's informal and what Daugherty calls her "lonely" education may have taught her how to "talk as an educator" (116) through her writing.

Daugherty's section on Woolf as a teacher from 1905-1907 is fascinating, especially for its contextualization of Morley College, the near-absence of pedagogical instruction, and the students Woolf taught, one of whom may be a model for Septimus Warren Smith (Daugherty even reproduces a poem by him [176]). Woolf took her teaching duties seriously and did whatever she could to reach her students even though, like other teachers, she had no teacher-training, no framework for understanding her students, and no information about them (135). Yet, just as she sought to be educated, so did she learn how to be a teacher.

She was invited to teach at Morley College for Working Men and Women by Mary Sheepshanks, the Vice-Principal and an occasional guest at the Thursday evening gatherings in Bloomsbury (138, 140). Sheepshanks only occasionally provided minimal—and mildly critical—feedback on her teaching. Daugherty emphasizes that Woolf above all learned from her working-class students, who enlarged her world (145). They gave her "practical pedagogical information about what they lacked—contextual framework, background for making sense of everything their intellects could take in, method for synthesising—but also about what they possessed—intelligence, desire, curiosity, wonder, ability" (146). At first Woolf lectured but then learned to be more interactive by incorporating pictures, through talking and humor, and by engaging with students with questions and comments (159). She first taught history, and then literature and composition. Teaching composition was perhaps the most frustrating. Through much of the twentieth century, the teaching of writing focused on grammar and the "facile treatment of meaningless topics" (165). The most meaningful pedagogical lesson Woolf may herself have learned from her students was, "however briefly" (191), to identify with them and their lives. From this "community of learners" (194) within the institutional context of Morley, Woolf went on to become part of a more diffuse community, that of the readers of her essays.

Even as Woolf was setting up her classes at Morley, she was also breaking into this community—the world of publishing. As the daughter of an esteemed man of letters, Woolf had, one might assume, connections. At the same time, in her onset of her career, none of them asked her for contributions. Starting in 1904, she actively sought out editors who might publish her work: she wrote to Mrs. Arthur Lyttelton (not to be confused with her daughter, Margaret Lyttelton, as she sometimes is, Daugherty notes), a friend of Woolf's friend, Violet Dickinson, who was the editor of the weekly Anglican *Guardian*. By the end of the following year, Woolf was also writing for *The Academy*, the *National Review*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*. She quickly established writing routines, habits that would stay with her through her life (214). She was never late with a review (213). Woolf may have disdained the notion of professionalism in *Three Guineas*, but as a reviewer, she was a thorough professional; furthermore, she loved earning money and being paid (215). As an apprentice, she assiduously sought to learn the art and craft of reviewing and writing essays. She practiced, observed, used a journal, and took notes. She read the work of other essayists: her own father Leslie Stephen, and Robert Louis Stevenson and Walter Pater (218-19), among many others. She read more than essays; she imbibed whole literary traditions and the contemporary books of her day: fiction, history, biography, and autobiography—and so developed an understanding of the very idea of genre, its "definitions, boundaries and potentials" (275). She developed the "knack" of writing (272) by writing for a variety of publications and under a range of editors. In the *Guardian*, a publication geared toward women readers (230), Mrs. Lyttelton allowed Woolf to write on "any subject" (223) she chose while Harold Child of *The Academy*, a literary weekly, rejected one of Woolf's submissions and edited another without her consent, thus giving Woolf the experience of handling rejection (232). Leo Maxse of the *National Review*, a "male preserve" (227), gave Woolf the opportunity to consider audience in an intentional way, and Bruce Richmond of the still-renowned *Times Literary Supplement* worked with Woolf nearly to the end of her life. With the security of a steady venue for her reviews, Woolf honed her skills and learned the "discipline of anonymity" (242-43). Daugherty takes issue with critics who believe that Woolf's writing suffered under her editors. Woolf may have bristled under some of the criticism she received, but as Daugherty emphasizes, she also, quickly benefited from it.

A great part of the pleasure of reading *Virginia Woolf's Apprenticeship* is the knowledge that Daugherty brings to bear on Woolf's early life through the beginning of her career. One can trust that Daugherty has turned every extant page in the world of Woolf scholarship. *Apprenticeship* sets the groundwork for Woolf as a student, teacher (in

training), and apprentice. Daugherty offers abundant evidence to show how Woolf's somewhat piecemeal and fragmentary education and her lack of pedagogical training in fact prepared her to become a teacher through her essay-writing. Readers can be confident that Daugherty's next volume, *Virginia Woolf's Essays: Being a Teacher*, will thoroughly explore Woolf as an essayist, educator, and mentor—"a common reader teaching" (xix). I, for one, await it with eager anticipation!

Jeanne Dubino
Appalachian State University

Works Cited

Turn Every Page: *The Adventures of Robert Caro and Robert Gottlieb*.
Lizzie Gottlieb, dir. Left/Right, Topic Studios, and Wild Surmise,
2022.



REVIEW

SENTENCING ORLANDO: VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE MORPHOLOGY OF THE MODERNIST SENTENCE.

edited by Elsa Högberg and Amy Bromley. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018. 232 pages. \$120 cloth; \$29.95 paper.

MODERNIST INTIMACIES

edited by Elsa Högberg. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021. 248 pages. \$110 cloth; \$24.95 paper.

Expanding the range of recent work focused around aesthetics, intimacy, politics and ethics by writers including Jessica Berman, Jesse Wolfe, Lauren Berlant, and Eva Illouz (among many others), Elsa Högberg has shepherded two important collections (one co-edited with Amy Bromley), in addition to a 2020 monograph on Woolf, that contribute substantially to Woolf and modernism studies. (Many will also have heard her plenary talk, "Virginia Woolf's Reparative Ethics," at the 2022 annual conference on Woolf, organized by Amy C. Smith at Lamar University.) Meditations on single sentences drawn from one Woolf novel demonstrate a uniquely textual form of intimacy between readers and writers across multiple temporalities (i.e., Woolf and her readership upon *Orlando's* 1928 publication, readers across subsequent decades, and more recently, the contributors to *Sentencing Orlando*—and these writers and *their* readers—us). Considering this landmark project in conjunction with Högberg's most recent edited collection, *Modernist Intimacies*, broadens the constellations of intimacy still further, offering an expanded yet intricate reappraisal of Woolf's work in the context of her contemporaries.

Sixteen scholars clearly delighted in choosing a single sentence from *Orlando* as point of departure, creating a brilliant critical palimpsest for exploring how this genre- and gender-shifting novel/mock biography signified Woolf's own reading practices and how it related to her literary and critical output more generally, not to mention how it captured her intimate experience and relationship with Vita Sackville-West. The contributors' mosaic of intertextual, contextual, rhetorical and historical analyses provides a fitting companion to such a complex yet playful novel, while also bringing to sharp critical focus the role of the sentence—in all its connotations—in modernism. Co-editors Högberg and Bromley, who together provide an introductory map to the collection in addition to their own individual essays, credit the unique approach to a pedagogical performative model inspired by Jane Goldman, whose lively chapter opens the collection; Rachel Bowlby maintains that performative spirit in her clever "aftersentence" (210-16), which concludes it. The editors' careful thematic arrangement of these essays

rewards a reader who starts at the beginning and moves consistently to the end, as organizing frames gain thickness through a kind of dialogic overlap, though a reader may also range through the volume freely and find just as much to savor.

The volume aligns itself with the novel in providing intellectual density in a relatively compact space, paced in a way that students and common readers will find navigable while offering seasoned scholars fresh perspectives. These well-researched meditations on the dynamics of the chosen sentences, which vary in length from short declaratives to multi-clausal paragraphs, stimulate and suffuse readers' thinking, engaging in a textual intimacy that encourages readers to slow down and reflect deeply on the sentences themselves and the wide range of intertextual connections the contributors explore. The collection can also serve as a useful pedagogical addition to an upper-level undergraduate or graduate seminar across a number of disciplinary categories, offering diverse critical approaches that savor Woolf's sentences while opening out to her own rich contextual reading practices. That pedagogical function is borne out in Benjamin Hagen's contribution, which compellingly begins: "Virginia Woolf's sentences prompt us—indeed, they train us with continued engagement—to become more agile, creative and discerning readers" (175). His intriguing focus on the "philosophical implications of Woolf's fascination with ruins and remains, as well as the legacy and contemporaneity of colonialist and imperialist violence" (175) opens a thoughtful essay assessing the impact of Sir Thomas Browne on *Orlando* and Woolf's thinking more broadly, revealing a deeply intimate human and textual encounter.

The web of intimacies enfolding language with sexuality, parturition, writing and landscape yields further revelatory contexts: Jane Goldman's opening tour de force on queens (living, dead, and queer), orgasm, and genealogy launches the volume's attention to the archive while honoring the multiple pleasures of the word. Anna Frøsig continues that focus, suggesting that:

Writing about a woman writing, we can conclude, looks a lot like writing about sex. The irony in this dismissal of "thought and imagination," of which the text itself is the product, reminds us that bodily experience and identity are equally shaped *by* the mind in a process of mutual constitution. (41)

Högberg's essay picks up the "legacy of 'impassioned prose'" to connect the novel's biographical, legal, and aesthetic registers: "Aesthetically, Woolf's sentence unravels the time of the legal sentence and generates its own temporality: the unbounded time of the gift, female sexual pleasure, and gender equality" (45). She reads this "lyrical experiment" through Woolf's engagement with Thomas De Quincey's "dream-fugue" in "The English Mail Coach" (45), bequeathing Sackville-West a uniquely intimate gift that doubles as political intervention in the legal structures of gender privilege. Jane de Gay offers a companion meditation on syntax and subversion with her chosen sentence, which is "left in suspense" (58). "This incompletion challenges the fixity of the conventional sentence and [...] challenges the force of the law: the (legal) sentence, the opinion of judgement of the spirit of the age, is likewise left in suspense, allowing other meanings to come into play" (58). Noting the care that Woolf had to use to pass the censors, de Gay examines the intertextuality and "creative anachronisms" (62) within the text that help Woolf challenge the "censoring ideology that had excluded women and lesbians from literary history" (66), opening out to parallel projects (such as *A Room of One's Own* and "Anon") to rewrite that history.

Sanja Bahun also takes up a syntactic focus to offer a Kristevan/Bakhtinian twist on the ways in which Woolf adopts intertextual practices—here, invoking T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"—to achieve "a necessary 'transposition' of texts, or systems of signs/symbolic orders, into each other, and a creation of a text as a 'mosaic of quotations': that is, a continuous dialogue based on

absorption and transformation” (69). Vassiliki Kolocotroni connects aesthetics and topography as she unpacks her chosen sentence’s exploration of Mt. Athos as a site of Orlando’s gendered trespass while yet invoking her sense of privilege: “still bound by the wrong kind of yearning, that sensibility which turns land into landscape and living space into a still life with figures” (96). Her essay richly details Woolf’s “Harrisonian Hellenism and her own passage through the Greek landscape” (92).

Playing with the idea of “obscurity” in her chosen sentence, Angeliki Spiropoulou traces “the dialectics of obscurity, fame and history” (104) in *Orlando*, touching on Renaissance intertexts, Nick Greene’s striving for “Glawr” and the intricate ways in which the novel “historicises fame and tradition, and thus problematises them by putting into question their naturalised permanence” (113). A different way of considering fame is traced by Alice Staveley, who connects it with parturition, babies, and books. “At the gates of Kew Gardens, both Orlando’s son and her poem, ‘The Oak Tree,’ emerge into a defiantly anti-Eliotic paradise, where survival, suffrage, and sublimity telegraph in colour-coded semaphore” (117). Noting the 1927 reissue of “Kew Gardens” as a “reaching out both to the luxury book market, and to a popular readership alongside *Orlando* itself” (124), Staveley reads Orlando’s poem as “a hybrid text” that brings Woolf’s reissued story, the present novel, and Sackville-West’s poem “The Land” together in a fascinating expression of female creative freedom. Bryony Randall offers yet another way of considering “the language of maternity and engendering” (136) in this mock biography, as she details the subversive manner in which *Orlando* rewrites literary history while also “undoing traditional history” itself through her provocative argument that the novel unfolds in a single day (129):

In characteristically Woolfian style, there are aspects of the novel which celebrate conventional historical narratives even while the text as a whole parodies the historical panorama it surveys. On the other hand, arguably its most important aim is rewriting history: not just producing a new version of it, but fundamentally challenging the discourses and paradigms through which history is constructed. (128)

The Great Frost scene provides Steven Putzel the occasion to analyze the “polyvalent audience,” observing Woolf’s deep reading in Shakespeare through the lens of theater and performance studies as well as Roman Ingarden’s aesthetic theory. He notes a textual variant between the Harcourt and Hogarth Press versions of his chosen sentence, one that makes a difference in how readers key into the multiple levels of audience enacted in the scene. Amy Bromley takes up the “amorous dedication” of *Orlando* and its multi-layered figurative and metaphorical invocations of “lovers’ discourse” through a Barthesian lens, noting that “the creation of a lover as a subject, a discursive site in interaction with another, is in some ways violent” (158). She offers a nuanced reading of this delicate, intimate aspect of the novel. Illustrating a different kind of intimacy, Todd Avery considers “the spirituality of *Orlando* [that] emerges from a deep wonder before the mystery, strangeness and absurdity of life” (163), a wonder that animates many of Woolf’s novels. Noting the “chock-full of appurtenances of Christianity” (163) in the novel, Avery draws on Walter Pater, Charles Darwin, and Pope Pius X to explore the ways that “faith” factors in the text.

Randi Koppen’s insightful exploration of philosophy and colonialism as the foundation for modernist aesthetics revolves around her chosen sentence’s “unequal juxtaposition” of a “negress” and a bishop, an “oxymoronic mating of chains of signification” that invoke *The Voyage Out* (186). Koppen concludes that, “It is only if we think of *Orlando*’s negress as intertextually connected with the disturbing gaze of the native women” in Woolf’s first novel that affords a sense of the “different epistemological breakthroughs that feed into the development of modernist fiction” (196). Through her chosen sentence, Judith Allen considers the “political implications of the text’s rhetorical

strategies,” which in her reading, “function [...] to expose the hybrid and inconclusive qualities of *Orlando*’s genre, the transformative nature of gender, the plurality of identity, and, importantly, Woolf’s interrogation of the referentiality of language” (199).

Readers can be especially grateful for the late Suzanne Bellamy’s rich contribution to the volume which situates a reading of the “continuously eruptive” form of *Orlando* between *To the Lighthouse* and Gertrude Stein’s *Composition as Explanation* (published by the Hogarth Press in 1926), drawing as well as Laurence Sterne’s pioneering *Tristram Shandy*. Bellamy’s meditation on the “nothing” that happens in her chosen sentence leads to a brilliant focus on abstraction as newness:

Orlando is thus a text about modernist creativity and the nature of the space within, breaking, as it does, the frame and the idea of representation. Like the painters of her circle, Woolf was freeing herself from the accepted representation and meanings of things. (87)

Commenting on the critical work explored in *Sentencing Orlando*, Högberg notes in her Introduction to *Modernist Intimacies* that “The intense focus on small aesthetic units demands a close intimacy with this text and its alluring range of literary-historical contexts, but it also reveals how modernist art and literature frequently resist intimacy defined as familiarity” (4). That resistance is one of the key themes of the latter volume, especially in connecting modernism to our contemporary occasion:

If intimacy in the twenty-first century is an intriguing crossing of public and private relations, the central argument ... is that many of these convergences date back to the modernist period, and that modernism played a vital role in the constructions of intimacy specific to the age of modernity. (2)

One of the most intriguing, and perhaps unsettling, tensions elucidated by the 12 contributors to this collection revolves around modernist intimacy’s situatedness in both the private and public arena, where it “can be a structuring principle of conservatism and socio-economic inequality, but also a progressive force dis-composing patriarchal, heteronormative and nationalist perceptual regimes,” Högberg notes (5).

This tension plays out strongly in Högberg’s own essay on Nathaniel West’s 1933 novel *Miss Lonelyhearts*, for example. And it plays differently again in Bryony Randall’s consideration of intimacy, drawing on thing theory, to elucidate the protagonist’s relationship to herself, her surroundings, and her housemate in Dorothy Richardson’s *The Trap*. Randall’s essay helps foreground the ways in which modernist intimacies are imbricated by and contribute to modern capitalism, a thematic that many of the contributors explore. The essays comment on a wide range of (mostly Anglo/American) literary texts and genres (e.g., Sanja Bahun on Mina Loy’s ethnography; Anna Watz on Leonora Carrington’s “poetics of listening”) while expanding the focus to take in Wagnerian opera (Axel Englund), the BBC’s wartime “Russian fever” (Claire Davison), Dada performance (Marius Hentea) and a celebration of Indian provincialism as “the modernist nonmodern” (Saikat Majumbar): the resulting volume reveals the intricate ways in which modernist aesthetics (re)constructed subjectivity by expressing and representing the body in both public and private spaces and through diverse, often violent, social and political practices.

Those looking for readings of Woolf and Bloomsbury will be especially drawn to essays here by Jane Goldman and Todd Avery as well as Laura Frost. Goldman opens her essay with a poem she constructed highlighting Woolf’s usage of “feminism” and “feminist” from 1916 to 1938, revealing the “astonishingly infrequent” “arc of usage” (52-53) of these terms for a writer so closely identified with feminism. Taking the laboratory in *A Room of One’s Own* where “Chloe liked Olivia” as her “intertextual hot-spot” (57), Goldman pursues the intimate connections of eugenics with fascism and its linkage to other modernist feminisms,

such as those expressed by Marie Stopes. Goldman's apt title, "Burning Feminism: Virginia Woolf's Laboratory of Intimacy," signals a nuanced understanding of that symbolic textual act in Woolf's later text, *Three Guineas*. Frost, in "Stories of O: Modernism and Female Pleasure," invokes Woolf's liberatory expressions of female orgasm (such as in *Mrs. Dalloway*) within the regulatory climate of the 1920s, comparing Woolf favorably with, among others, Stopes, Anaïs Nin, D. H. Lawrence, and Mabel Dodge Luhan as they navigated literary female orgasm as not only about female pleasure but as "an intimate gauge of women's agency and power" (46), the latter often to "conservative and reactionary ends" (46).

Todd Avery focuses particularly on Duncan Grant's relationship with the poet, translator, and Catholic priest Paul Roche as he discusses Grant's commissions for murals in Berwick Church and Lincoln Cathedral to create "a Jesus that Bloomsbury could live with" (92). Such religious paintings not only helped "memorialize his close friendship" with Roche, but more broadly, provided avenues for Grant to give "shape to a vision of queer desire that celebrates Christian intimacy" through thematically subversive depictions of Jesus as the Good Shepherd (96). Although Woolf is not the focus of the late Laura Marcus's essay exploring "The Intimacies of the Modernist Diary," her own intimate reading of the diaries of David Gascoyne, Anaïs Nin, and Antonia White reveals the increasingly political demands on diarists of the 1930s, to which Woolf was obviously also attuned.

While space doesn't permit a more extensive engagement with the other important essays in this collection, all the contributors expand upon the ways in which the attention to modernist intimacies yields new understandings of the often-contradictory manner in which modernism shaped the aesthetics, technologies, politics and social spaces of its time, in turn, redefining the very idea of intimacy in our historical moment.

Jeanette McVicker
State University of New York at Fredonia

Work Cited

Högborg, Elsa. *Virginia Woolf and the Ethics of Intimacy*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020.



REVIEW

A COMIC ABSURDITY ENTITLED:

A SOCIETY BY VIRGINIA WOOLF

by Leslie Kathleen Hankins. Iowa City, Iowa; Shallotte, North Carolina: Making Waves Press, 2021. N.p.¹ \$25 paper.

A ROOM OF YOUR OWN:

A STORY INSPIRED BY VIRGINIA WOOLF'S FAMOUS ESSAY

by Beth Kephart; illustrated by Julia Breckenreid. Petaluma, California: Cameron Kids, 2022. 24 pages. \$18.99 cloth.

As I have become increasingly enamored in recent years of graphic memoirs and novels, I am thrilled to review two new publications on Woolf that combine text and image in creative, evocative ways—not least of which is their (mostly) unnumbered pages, establishing a flowing reading experience Woolf would likely have appreciated. Leslie Kathleen Hankins takes on a perhaps lesser-known story in her Centenary Cinematic Edition of "A Society," while Beth Kephart takes inspiration from Woolf's famous injunction regarding the spatial and psychic room essential to women writers.

¹ Editorial note: the page numbers in this volume appear only intermittently. This review refers to several of the numbered pages.

"*Every Story has a Backstory*." So begins Leslie Kathleen Hankins's innovative edition of Virginia Woolf's story, "A Society." As Hankins explains at the outset:

The story originates in a public debate about the limits of women's intelligence and creativity—a frosty one between Virginia Woolf and Desmond McCarthy (and Arnold Bennett) in the *New Statesman* 'Letters to the Editor' pages in October 1920. Yet, it reaches far beyond that, still resonating with new generations of activists who wink back at Woolf and applaud her delicious skewering of male privilege.

And, Hankins continues, "Every edition has a backstory, too. This one emerges from immersion in Woolf studies, silent cinema, and the book arts—and the challenges and delights of bringing those together to dance across these pages." And dance together they do.

I was intrigued from the moment I first beheld the book, created at Hankins's own Making Waves Press. This 7x5" oblong is a multimedia feast with its black-bordered pages and white print resembling titles from silent cinema. It also includes historical photographs, film stills, postcards, newsprint, and collage; literary and film criticism; and Hankins's explanations of her choices and intent in making the book. Then comes "A Society," "a roller-coaster burlesque of male privilege with all of its unexamined (often to such males, invisible) assumptions," as Hankins writes—"the feisty prototype of *A Room of One's Own*, *Three Guineas*, and the hilarious speech that evolved into 'Professions for Women.'"

The first portion of the book contains brief sections titled **Backstory**, **Early Responses to "A Society,"** **The Suffragette Movement between the lines of "A Society,"** **Virginia Woolf and Cinema**, and **Illustration Choices for this edition of "A Society."**² I appreciate this comprehensive treatment of Woolf's piece along with a bird's-eye view of Hankins's creative process—the sense of looking over the shoulder of the writer/artist as she devised the layout of each page; selected visuals to accompany, complicate, or ironize Woolf's words; and dipped into first-wave feminism, the silent film era, and the ideological sparring match that prompted Woolf's still timely piece.

"A Society" begins with a group of women idling around a tea table. "After a time," the narrator says, "so far as I can remember, we drew round the fire and began as usual to praise men...". The topic becomes more complex than they had thought, however, and soon, they decide to form a society charged with the task of asking questions to determine whether men, in fact, deserve such praise. *Do* they make the world better? *Do* they write good books? The women reconvene five years later with more questions than answers on the matter.

In her "cinematic" edition of "A Society," Hankins places a line or two—or three—from the story on each page with an accompanying image or images. On two occasions, she places Woolf's words on the left-hand page and Arnold Bennett's odious ideas on the right, lending insights into what the women of the Society had to contend with: "In creation, in synthesis, in criticism, in pure intellect women, even the most exceptional and the most favoured," Bennett writes in *Our Women*, "have never approached the accomplishment of men." In Hankins's hands, Woolf's story becomes a visually stimulating and thought-provoking *mélange* that serves up a century-spanning spoof of the patriarchy. In presenting "A Society" in this way, in isolating certain words and phrases on the page, Hankins defamiliarizes Woolf's ideas and yields fresh insights into their development.

At one point, the women exclaim, "'Why [...] do men go to war?' 'Sometimes for one reason, sometimes for another,' [Poll] replied calmly" (154), naming wars of past centuries. "'But it's now 1914!' we

² The bold font here emphasizes the style of the volume and deliberately avoids using quotation marks.

cut her short. ‘Ah, I don’t know what they’re going to war for now,’ she admitted” (154). Following this discussion are two pages with no words, just three asterisks apiece, evoking the “Time Passes” section of *To the Lighthouse*, particularly when the next page featuring words declares, “The war was over...”. A few pages later, Castalia laments her daughter’s learning to read, which exposes her to the miseries of the world and to dreadful books by men. “‘How can I bring my daughter up to believe in nothing?’ she demanded” (162), anticipating Woolf’s insistence in *Three Guineas* that women free themselves from unreal loyalties.

Hankins’ interventions into “A Society,” her juxtapositions of words and images, allow us to appreciate anew how Woolf’s revolutionary ideas percolated and simmered over the years, turning first this way, now that in her writing across genres. I stepped away from Hankins’ Centenary Cinematic Edition feeling refreshed and eager to open my books by and about Woolf—a welcome and reassuring situation as I recalibrate my relationship with Woolf since leaving academia. For that, I am grateful.

I am also grateful for the soothing yet effervescent tones and images in Beth Kephart’s book, illustrated by Julia Breckenreid. A lovely, peaceful-looking Virginia Woolf ambles through the pages of *A Room of Your Own: A Story Inspired by Virginia Woolf’s Famous Essay*. “Through the jam and cram / of her house she goes,” the story begins, “Through the kitchen. / Up the steps, into the garden, onto the path.” The two-page spread that opens the book comes alive with shades of green and depictions of Woolf throughout: emerging from her house, sniffing plants, reading on a bench. “The sky is steel, but there will be blue. / The rooks are quiet, but soon they’ll swoon. / And on and on and on she goes, / to that room she calls her own.”

The next two pages warrant description as well: “Here it is,” the text says in the upper right-hand corner. “Her place to **think**. / Her place to **dream**. / Her place to **be**.”³⁴ Breckenreid’s beautiful illustration shows a house with its roof wide open on a hinge, with Woolf sitting inside, hands clasped around drawn-up knees, gazing serenely into the sky while colorful books fly above and away from her, their pages like wings. The illustration perfectly depicts the flight of the mind—ideas taking shape and soaring. The next page initiates a shift to address the reader directly:

And you?
Where do you go
to **think**,
to **dream**,
to **be**?

as nine illustrations depict children looking out of windows: plain windows, fancy windows, windows with shutters, windows with curtains or blinds—and in the upper left-hand corner, a small illustration features Woolf typing at a desk and leaning forward to peer through the glass.

A special place might be a room inside, but it could also be a hayloft, a kitchen cupboard, a canopied bed, or outside in the snow. “Your room is your room—it can be anything,” Kephart writes.

Is it the cool step
of a city stoop—
near the jump rope’s swish
and the sidewalk talk—
or it is the spill of a sill
with a view,
or the back of a bus,
as it zooms by?

Amid the children, there’s Woolf, standing inside the bus and clasping a handrail. There she is again, browsing the Literary Fiction section of a library, with a child on the facing page lying on her stomach, engrossed in a book: “Is the rug on the floor of the store your room,” the narrator asks, “all those books / and all those tales / just within reach, / just for you?” Another two-page spread presents a gorgeous nightscape, with a child reading “inside a bedsheet fort” illuminated by a firefly.

On the penultimate two-page spread, we see a child with her eyes closed as her thick hair in various shades of red flows out beside her and morphs into stars, butterflies (perhaps moths?), the moon, and a sailboat evoking for this reader Mr. Ramsay, Cam, and James’s long-awaited trip to the lighthouse. “One needs a room,” the narrator declares again,

to be one’s
excellent,
imagining,
day—
and night-dreaming self.
One needs a room
to think,
to dream, to be...

and “To write,” states the final page, which situates us in Woolf’s writing shed at Monk’s House, her wooden desk adorned with a typewriter, glasses, and bouquet of flowers in a vase as she, on the facing page, sits in a comfortable chair, fountain pen in hand, with “A room of one’s own” written on the paper on her writing board.

A photograph of Woolf in the garden at Rodmell adorns the second-to-last page surrounded by Breckenreid’s colorful trees, flowers, and a wheelbarrow. The Author’s Note on the last page provides a bit of biographical information on Woolf and explains the book’s genesis. “I like to think about the places where [Woolf’s] stories came to be,” Kephart writes. “Sometimes it was that chair beside the fireplace. Sometimes her bed. Sometimes the mess of a space plunked down in the midst of a clattering printing press.”

The tone of the Author’s Note, which includes Woolf’s declaration “that a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction,” seems geared toward a more mature audience than the rest of the book, with its simple text and illustrations of children as young as three or four (and up to 11 or 12, it seems). “We might not have all the choices she had,” Kephart goes on—also a bit surprising when considering Woolf’s early and young adult years in an over-crowded and emotionally fraught Victorian home. But Kephart’s overall message rings true, and I appreciate her consideration of social and class disparities. I imagine children would, too: “We might not have a lock and a key, four walls and a roof, our very own castle, even,” she writes, “but we can imagine our way towards the rooms of our own.” She concludes by considering her young readers above all: “I like to think about you, in your own room, making your own spectacular new things.” These intellectually and visually stimulating books by Hankins and Kephart will make for beautiful additions to our shelves.

Kristin Czarnecki
Independent Scholar



³ The bold font is used in the poem.



REVIEW

MR KEYNES' REVOLUTION

by E. J. Barnes. N.p.: Greyfire Publishing, 2020. 376 pages. \$12.19 paper.

MR KEYNES' DANCE

by E. J. Barnes. N.p.: Greyfire Publishing, 2022. 378 pages. \$12.07 paper.

FIREBIRD: A BLOOMSBURY LOVE STORY

by Susan Sellers. Brighton: Edward Everett Root Publishers, 2022. 217 pages. \$28.95 cloth.

THE GUEST LECTURE

by Martin Riker. New York: Black Cat, 2023. 236 pages. \$17 paper.

Biofiction starring Virginia Woolf remains a concern as going as any in the popular marketplace for modernism. Four recent novels about John Maynard Keynes, three of which dramatize his relationship with Lydia Lopokova, expand the boundaries of Bloomsbury biofiction. As with Virginia Woolf-centric biofiction, this is fitting, for, together with her, Lytton Strachey, and Harold Nicolson, Keynes helped to shape biography into a hybrid form marrying what Woolf called the granite of fact and the rainbow of creative imagination.

E. J. Barnes, an English novelist who studied economics at Cambridge University, Keynes's alma mater, portrays her subject with a combination of technical expertise and dramatic flair. At the 2022 Annual Virginia Woolf Conference, she spoke of the challenge of writing novels about Keynes:

I am not writing for an audience of economists—but I do owe it to them and to Keynes to convey the originality, the creativity and the world-changing nature of his ideas. An “ideas book” demands commitment to understanding the concepts, finding ways to convey them simply while hinting at their complexity, and most of all perhaps, sharing their *excitement*. [...] When you introduce a subject as esoteric as the gold standard, then it's essential!¹

This passage constitutes a biofictional mission statement for *Mr Keynes' Revolution* and *Mr Keynes' Dance*, both of which bring Keynes to vivid life while serving as a joint primer on Keynesian economics.

Mr Keynes' Revolution begins during the Paris Peace Conference immediately following the Great War and traces Keynes's personal adventures and intellectual development through the 1920s; important publications from this time include *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919), *A Tract on Monetary Reform* (1923), and *The End of Laissez-Faire* (1926). *Mr Keynes' Dance* then follows Keynes as he juggles a great many personal and public commitments and interests into the late 1930s and the publication of *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (1936) and the establishment of the Cambridge Arts Theatre in the same year.

The intellectual and political drama of *Mr Keynes' Revolution* juxtaposes the drama of Keynes's surprising relationship with Lydia Lopokova, one of the most famous ballet dancers in the world when he met her in the late 1910s. For many years, most of Keynes's Bloomsbury friends, including Virginia Woolf and, especially, Vanessa Bell, treated Lopokova with cutting superciliousness. Barnes emphasizes and subtly differentiates the sisters' attitudes toward her. “She reminds me,” Woolf says to her sister in the latter's studio in Gordon Square, “of a sparrow.

Hopping and fluttering. After a while that incessant chirping must get irritating.” “Oh, it does,” Bell replies (172), as Lydia continues to practice in the room overhead, prompting a flurry of barbed comments. “My word,” Virginia says:

“is that the happy couple? Well, at least they won't be long. I've always heard that Maynard had no stamina...with women.” She thought about this a moment. “Though how does anyone know, when Maynard only ever liked men before? [...] If they get married [...] I see her as a fat, society hostess; the overstuffed wife of an eminent man, devoting herself entirely to Maynard.” (172)

Later in the same scene of *Mr Keynes' Revolution*, while Bell remains obdurate in her dislike, Woolf is “unable to avert her eyes” from Lydia, whose naked dancing gives off an “overall impression of strength and grace” (173)—qualities artistically and sexually attractive to Virginia. In *Mr Keynes' Dance*, Vanessa's wariness continues (she and Duncan Grant depended on Keynes for financial assistance, and she was anxious about being left in the lurch), while Virginia's appreciation of Lopokova's great vitality grows: “Lydia did have something” (*Dance* 173).

Mr Keynes' Revolution offers a compelling dramatization of intellectual struggle and emotional growth against a background of world-altering economic and artistic events in which Keynes and Lopokova played significant parts, and against a dark fictional sub-plot of threatened blackmail by one of Keynes's (fictional) servants, whose deviousness ultimately rests on fascinating upstairs-downstairs social class tensions and a sad instance of gay self-loathing. This dramatic quality also permeates Barnes's sequel, *Mr Keynes' Dance*. In it, the Keyneses build a marriage; Maynard navigates his bisexuality in its confines; Lydia struggles to retain her self-worth as an aging dancer and as mistress of the couple's new home, Tilton, near Charleston farmhouse and the ever-present threat of Vanessa; Maynard formulates his new economic theory, pulling down his mentor Alfred Marshall's neoclassical foundations. A common reader interested in the personal and public lives of Bloomsbury's core members could hardly do better than these quick-paced, intellectually and historically grounded novels.

A complementary and equally fascinating approach to Barnes's third-person narration is taken by Susan Sellers in *Firebird: A Bloomsbury Love Story*. An eminent Woolfian, a fine writer of fiction, and the author of one previous novel about Bloomsbury, *Vanessa and Virginia* (2008), Sellers has long embraced fiction, which, as she explains in her own 2022 Woolf Conference paper, is “the ideal medium for exploring the tangle of personal history and emotions that drives our reactions to others.”² The story of Lydia Lopokova and of her relationship with Keynes provides abundant such tangles. *Firebird* is divided into acts roughly mimicking the structure of Stravinsky's ballet—Introduction and two Tableaux—with each act being introduced by a synopsis of the ballet's action serving as a metaphorical gloss on Lopokova's pursuit of personal and artistic freedom. *Firebird's* first and third acts, in third-person narrative, detail the Keyneses' courtship and marriage; it sets these within the broader historical context, as well as in the narrower contexts of Bloomsbury's evolving friendships of the early 1920s and Lopokova's anxious efforts to maintain her skills and reputation in the closing years of her career. In imagined conversations—between Vanessa and Virginia; Vanessa and Lydia; Lydia and Virginia; Lydia and her friend Vera Bowen (a Russian theater designer who also married an Englishman in the 1920s); Keynes, Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, and Duncan Grant—Sellers places Lopokova at the heart of Bloomsbury, revealing how integral she was to Bloomsbury's self-understanding when the group's now most famous members were just starting to earn the acclaim that had been Lopokova's for years. These conversations are as vivid as one might expect from the author of *Vanessa and Virginia*, and from a scholar so steeped in Bloomsbury's lives and works. They

¹ E. J. Barnes presented the unpublished paper “Telling Lies to Tell the Truth: The Ethics of Writing Biofiction” at the “Biography, Biofiction, and Ethics: Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group” roundtable held at the 31st Annual International Virginia Woolf Conference.

² Susan Sellers presented her unpublished paper on *Firebird* at the “Biography, Biofiction, and Ethics: Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group” roundtable.

bring Bloomsbury's prickly denizens alive to a degree that few works of fiction or biography have done in recent memory. What Lopokova says to Lytton Strachey of *Eminent Victorians* applies as well to Sellers's novel: "Your book on Victorians is [sic] most exquisite rub of research and invention I've read" (191).

Bloomsbury aficionados will be afforded the pleasure of recognition by many of the scenes covered in the first and third acts. By shifting the narrative perspective to first-person, the middle act lifts Sellers's *Firebird* into rarefied biofictional air. Here, Lopokova tells her own life story in a series of evocative vignettes. Sellers has done an extraordinary amount of research, not only into Lopokova's life itself, but also into its many contexts: early-twentieth-century Russian history; the internal politics of the Imperial Russian Ballet and the Ballets Russes; the techniques of classical dance and its modern successors; and the role of the American press in fostering celebrity culture in the decade spanning the first World War. *Firebird* wears its learning lightly, enthrallingly telling the remarkable story of a life fully lived before Lopokova met Keynes in 1918. Moreover, it vividly helps us to feel Lopokova's hopes and fears, her certainties and anxieties. Sellers, like Barnes, also shows us how perplexing and frustrating it must have been for Lopokova to navigate the foreign mores and emotional dynamics of Bloomsbury. Sellers in no way belabors this point but reveals how thoroughly cosmopolitan Lopokova's life was compared to those of most of Bloomsbury's members, who appear, for all their accomplishments, relatively parochial. Is it going too far to suggest that Sellers's Lydia Lopokova will now be Lopokova in the way that Woolf predicted, in 1921, that Strachey's Queen Victoria would forever be Victoria? Regardless, one now feels better than ever the dynamic personality that led even Lopokova's physically awkward husband to perform, with Lopokova, the exuberant dance they called the Keynes-Keynes (Mackrell 279).

Keynes the economic revolutionary. Mr. Lydia Lopokova a dancer. Keynes a...ghost? Keynes-centric biofiction takes an unexpected turn in Martin Riker's most recent novel, *The Guest Lecture*. The story happens over the course of one night during which a young economist, Abigail, thrown into personal and professional crisis after being denied tenure, lies awake in bed and prepares a lecture on Keynes's 1930 essay "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren." The novel also happens entirely in Abigail's thoughts, guided by the specter of Keynes. Abigail pictures the porch of her home, steps up onto it and realizes, "I'm not alone because here waiting for me is a familiar face, the kind eyes, horsey features, white push-broom mustache: *it's Keynes*" (4). "We haven't officially met," Abigail thinks, "but we've known each other all along" (4). The ghost of Keynes has haunted her work in economics; she feels a strong personal connection to him. The spectral Keynes recites basic biographical facts. Just as with Barnes's novels, Riker's serves as a primer on Keynesianism and an introduction to Keynes's life and times; it also acknowledges Woolf as a thinker in economic principles, with ideas articulated in *A Room of One's Own* "in a way Keynes probably appreciated" (134).

Beyond the overt fantasticality of its spectral premise, Riker's novel is striking for the implicit commentary it offers on biofiction's relationship to historical and scientific fact and on our perennial fascination with ghosts—and, for avid Bloomsburyists, on the intrinsic and extrinsic excitingness of Keynes, both as an economist and as a Bloomsburian at ethical and aesthetic heart. For instance, Abigail describes Keynes as "more like a poet than a math guy. As an economist myself, and painfully conscious of my profession's need to see itself as objective, as a 'science,' what excites me most about Keynes's essay is how [...] literary, how improvisational he allows himself to be. Even the history he gives is like something out of a novel" (9). Reading Keynes's essays, Abigail thinks a half-dozen times in a single paragraph of "the life in his voice," "the life in the language" (136). In this internal monologue filled with intellectual life, Abigail examines her life through a Keynesian lens as she thinks through the night.

In the course of her thinking, the Keynes-haunted Abigail reflects on the nature of ghosts in a way that sums up the guiding purpose of all of these novels. She reminds us that the past happens both then and now, epistemologically and perhaps with ghosts ontologically, too. Abigail remembers a night in college walking through a cemetery: "Living people are the ghosts here. We pass through their domain imperceptibly, outside of the reality they occupy. [...] They have so much to say to one another, but no way to talk" (116). And yet, in a way, they do; they have novelists like Martin Riker, Susan Sellers, and Emma Barnes, all of whom know that, as Abigail thinks, "History is made out of realities but comes to us through stories" (147). These four works of biofiction galvanize the dead and bring Maynard Keynes and Lydia Lopokova to vivid life.

Todd Avery
University of Massachusetts Lowell

Work Cited

- Barnes, E. J. "Telling Lies to Tell the Truth: The Ethics of Writing Biofiction." "Biography, Biofiction, and Ethics: Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group." Roundtable. Co-moderated by Todd Avery and Laura Cernat. 31st Annual International Virginia Woolf Conference, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, 9 June 2022.
- Mackrell, Judith. *Bloomsbury Ballerina: Lydia Lopokova, Imperial Dancer, and Mrs. John Maynard Keynes*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008.
- Sellers, Susan. Roundtable paper. "Biography, Biofiction, and Ethics: Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group." Roundtable. Co-moderated by Todd Avery and Laura Cernat. 31st Annual International Virginia Woolf Conference, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, 9 June 2022.



REVIEW **TWO SEASONS**

by J. D. Engle. Columbus, Ohio: Gatekeeper Press, 2022. 188 pages. \$14.95 paper.

Two seasons, Autumn and Spring, make up this novel of two marriages and a death. Part 1 begins with the unlikely partnership of the independent woman, artist Lily Briscoe, now Lily Ramsay, wife to patriarch, Mr. [Andrew] Ramsay, this suggesting the premise of the novel: that people can change. In the preface to this, a first novel, the author, J. D. Engle, says that in writing this homage to Virginia Woolf and *To the Lighthouse*

[they] observed the slow emergence of themes familiar in Woolf but true to [his] own character as well, like belief in the human capacity to change in later life, the desire to awaken within oneself complementary or opposing aspects of personality, and, once again, the vital role of affectionate personal relations and art's creative power to bring to being the only meaning available in an otherwise, pitiless, senseless universe. (Engle 7)

The question is, does the author do so effectively?

While Woolf's novel contours the constraints of personal relations within the dynamics of family and friendships, opportunities for freedoms from these constraints are concentrated in the figure of Lily Briscoe. To engage with Woolf's multi-perspectival narrative for creative inspiration requires an act of courage and also invites the risk of comparison not only with the author herself but with those who retell her works from contemporary vantage points or imagine Virginia Woolf in modern

settings, like Maggie Humm's excellent *Talland House* (2020) and Maggie Gee's *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* (2014).

In Engle's reimagining of *To the Lighthouse*, to see Lily married to Mr. Ramsay takes a great effort on the part of this reader but as Lily has learned to call him Andrew, so must I. The action is set in the marital home of the Ramsays, five years after the concluding scene of Woolf's novel. Lily has followed her artistic vision but how can marriage to the demanding, self-centred and overbearing Andrew further her ambitions? Indeed how can she even love him? For Engle, the character of Lily Briscoe, now Mrs. Ramsay, has "an independent foundation of character and human depth" that provide sufficient justification for extending the novel with the "construction of a meaningful stand-alone narrative" (7). In extending aspects of Woolf's novel, readers familiar with it will find resonances and associations with the original in Engle's work. *Two Seasons* explores a specific premise—that people can change personality, demeanor, and modes of interacting with others. The unfolding action reveals the success and failure of those possibilities as refracted through each character's consciousness, particularly as they involve the new Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay.

The Autumn section consists of 16 chapters. Each character is introduced through their anxious thoughts and troubled feelings as they variously travel towards the home of the ailing and dying patriarch for a family gathering. In the opening chapter, Lily reassures Ramsay that Nancy will come, "of course" (17). In opposing her father by her refusal to marry an Oxford boy of "celebrated lineage," Nancy fled to Paris to become a writer (21). Siblings Rose, a designer, and Cam a nurse, are already present. Roger, a solicitor, arrives promptly from Lewes. Surrounded by her fabrics and sewing materials, Rose agrees to sit with her father, to watch over him until he wakes. Her hostility towards the new Mrs. Ramsay is evident, a resentment shared by her siblings who call Lily, "Madame" or "Libby" (69). Jasper has become an "eminent physician" and is married to Phoebe (67). James is studying philosophy, is in love with Anthony whom he met at Cambridge and continues to hate his father. Neither are the dead forgotten. The deaths of the other Andrew, killed in the war; Prue and her baby's death in childbirth; and, the sudden death of Lily's beloved friend, the first Mrs. Ramsay, are recalled. The guest list includes Charles Tansley, preoccupied with "what had possessed great Ramsay" (27) to marry Lily Briscoe. Through his eyes, Lily is "shy, unfailingly polite but an insubstantial waif, much younger but no girl, retiring and somehow not equal to the illustrious man" (27-28). However, Lily has had success exhibiting and selling her art. In fact, Augustus Carmichael recognized her modern talent, no dauber or leisure painter, Lily is "the very future of English painting" (38). Lily invites William Bankes, her friend and one-time confidante to the family gathering (34).

Throughout *Two Seasons* scenes from *To the Lighthouse* are woven into the text, layering story lines, leaving the reader in no doubt that it is intended as a sequel. Lily's view of the small boat with its passengers on their return journey from the lighthouse is recalled. The reader is reminded of Tansley's pronouncement that women can't paint or write. William Bankes remembers her "bouts" (37) with the canvas:

Advancing to peer at some invisible conundrum in a tangle of colour, withdrawing in sighs to adjust her hat, a hopeless look at the heavens, the vexed squinting, sipping the undrinkable cold tea, an affair of patience, of endless parry and counter-parry, the riposte, and at last, the moment come, the pensive, trembling feint and, when it in turn arrived, fearless hit. (38)

The effect works as a constant tether to Woolf's novel to the extent that I am curious whether a common reader unfamiliar with *To the Lighthouse* could enjoy *Two Seasons* as a stand-alone read. Because Engle mirrors Woolf's sentence structure, interior monologues, shifting perspectives and writerly style with the same cast of characters (despite their changed circumstances), both books make demands of the reader. However, a

minor quibble with Engle's novel concerns some slight spelling and punctuation errors, one in the very first sentence of the *Two Seasons*.¹

With the exception of Cam and James, Lily remains the invader in the eyes of Ramsay siblings as Part 1 draws to a close. Lily's power to "newly temper the angry judgement and unquestioned certainty of what all recognized as his great unvarying patriarch nature, the very stripes of his preening tiger being" (54) is demonstrated. *Two Seasons* explores the possibility of going against one's nature, altering one's personality later in life. Weakened by illness, the death of his wife and two children, the loss of his status as the authoritative intellectual, the failure to control and determine the future lives of his children, Engle presents the reader with a more humbled version of Andrew Ramsay. Though his bullying and careless arrogance burst out on occasion, the case for change is somewhat credible in Ramsay's instance. He is soothed by Lily's words and healing hands, constantly tended to with careful watchfulness while comforted by her polite presence at his side. Cam observes that Lily "had wrought certain change in the great brute unalterable matter of her father. He had perhaps done the same for her" (55). In seemingly abandoning her resolute desires for life as a single independent woman, Lily has become wife and stepmother. Has the conventional demeanor of these roles pushed the artist aside? I am not sure I like the new Lily, this quiet, shy, muted, modest, behind-the-scenes, retiring manager of family life. It is as if the ghost of Mrs. Ramsay with her infinite patience and exacting kindness has taken forceful possession of Lily's vital mind and creative spirit, commanding Lily to take on a burden of care, disguised as love. And yet, Mr. Andrew Ramsay takes an "exacting interest" in her life as an artist, his gaze "chiming deeply with some part of her wholly concealed to others" (99). Is that what sustains her as she faces the conflicting emotions and challenging feelings of his children, for both him and her? What now does she discover about herself?

In Part 2, Spring, consisting of 15 chapters, the setting is an island in the Hebrides, five years later. Once more the Ramsay family are called to gather, this time in honor of Rose's marriage to John. The reader learns of the different and sometimes unpredictable fates of each person after the death of the patriarch Mr. Andrew Ramsay. Rose remains aloof with Lily but is soon transformed. She is persuaded by Lily's quiet intervention to ensure the scattered siblings and friends are present at the marriage feast, one more time. Lily's wedding gift of a portrait to Rose, perhaps of Mrs. Ramsay in the window with the child James, ensures Rose's acceptance of her as the new Mrs. Ramsay. But that moment has passed. Lily is no longer defined as Andrew Ramsay's wife nor his widow. Something has changed. If her nature is as retiring and demure as first presented by Engle, it is as if Woolf now inserts herself into Lily's thoughts as she returns to contemplating her vision in a darkened room, illuminated by the beam of the lighthouse. "It was this, feeling one thing and its contrary, which stood her up before the canvas, which set her trembling, resolute hand dancing fore and aft" (184). Her self-commitment to defending her life as an artist blazes forth and for this reader a satisfying conclusion to *Two Seasons*.

J. D. Engle's novel is a homage to a beloved Woolf that extends the story of *To the Lighthouse* through the lives and relations of Lily and Andrew, the Ramsay children as adults and family friends. Engle asks why Lily Briscoe and the other characters should not be permitted "to continue with the challenges, and changes and opportunities that comprise a life?" (7). Why not indeed? *Two Seasons* validates human relations of love and connection that give meaning to a life, but is it convincing? Based on long familiarity and knowledge of *To the Lighthouse*, the novel must have been a pleasure to conceive and write. However, *Two Seasons*'s claim to fame may be that it sends readers in search of Woolf's novel.

Anne Byrne
Ollscoil na Gaillimhe—University of Galway, Ireland

¹ In the first sentence, the spelling "Lilli Ramsay" is used.



REVIEW

THE GIRL PRINCE: VIRGINIA WOOLF, RACE AND THE DREADNOUGHT HOAX

by Danell Jones. London: Hurst & Company, 2023. 316 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

This is a superb book, splendidly written, deeply researched and richly contextualized. All readers of the *Miscellany* know about the hoax itself. On February 7, 1910, six individuals, four of them dressed as Abyssinian princes and in blackface, one of them a woman, and two others, one posing as a Foreign Office official the other as an interpreter were, on very short notice, given a royal tour of the H.M.S. *Dreadnought*. One of the participants was Virginia Woolf. Two of the scheduled participants had dropped out two days earlier and she and Duncan Grant happily replaced them. I think that it is fair to say, although perhaps not forgotten, that the hoax would not be remembered to the same degree if it hadn't been for the participation of Virginia Woolf and hence of great interest to the readers of this publication. The hoax had been organized by Horace de Vere Cole, with the assistance of his sidekick Adrian Stephen, Virginia's brother. The hoax has been written about before but never so extensively and never not only for its significance for Virginia Woolf herself but for many aspects of British history and society. It is significant that Woolf was crossdressing but more important was that she and three others were in blackface. We are told in detail about the course of the hoax itself, its resounding success, particularly challenging as Virginia's and Adrian's cousin, William Fisher, was an officer on the ship but fortunately he failed to recognize his cousins, even though Adrian was only lightly disguised. Its success became widely known through the press not only in Britain but around the world and was a cause of deep embarrassment to the British navy and state.

The great achievement of this study is putting the hoax into the context of the many years the British were involved with slavery, racism, and class, aspects rarely discussed before. To begin with the most immediate: Virginia's great-grandfather and grandfather, both known as James Stephen, were very much involved with the abolishment of the slave trade and slavery itself in the Empire, most particularly her grandfather, a prominent civil servant nicknamed "Mr. Mother-Country." In the broadest possible way this book raises larger questions about the British Empire and its mistreatment of its indigenous populations. Currently this has been a center, quite legitimately, of a tremendous amount of scholarly activity. Also of interest has been an increased attention to Africans who came to Britain, notably in Danell Jones's recent book, *An African in Imperial London*. As she points out, when the Stephen siblings moved to Bloomsbury quite a few Africans lived in the area. This was obviously not a factor in Virginia Woolf participating in the hoax, but it raises the fascinating question of what she might have thought of having herself transformed into a Black man.

What did she think of Blacks? What did the British think of Blacks? She probably did not have much interest in minstrel shows which were so popular at the time and had performers in blackface playing amusing and entertaining yet demeaning characters clearly at a lower level of existence than whites. There can be no question that she was a racist as well as an anti-Semite despite having a few years later a Jewish husband. But it is always difficult to assess the nature of British racism particularly in the upper classes. It is far from attractive but how deep is it? Isn't it true that it is far less likely than elsewhere to lead to any actual action against 'inferior' groups?

In many ways the most fascinating aspect of this fine study and what makes it a particular British one is the role of class and the complicated role that it plays in British society. Danell Jones writes fascinatingly and at length about the British treatment of African royals and particularly

when they were visiting Britain and also by extension various other Africans who came to study in Britain and possibly make careers there. What were Virginia's feelings about playing the role of a Black prince? Abyssinia, as a Christian nation that had some years before humiliated Italy, also had a special standing even though years later Britain would assist in Abyssinia's humiliation by Italy through the Hoare-Laval pact. Four of the hoaxers were playing the roles of princes and as such deserved some deference. But what difference did it make that they were Black? The hoax received attention from newspapers all over the world, involvement at the highest level of the civil service as well as the First Lord of the Admiralty, Reginald McKenna, and questions in Parliament. Horace de Vere Cole had spent a fortune on the hoax and could not resist making it as well-known as possible. (And the book has much of interest to say about the colorful prominent gay Jewish costumer for the enterprise who was a rather dodgy character himself.) A very important aspect of the humiliation of the navy and indeed of the British state was that the princes were Black. Yet they were playing the role of princes. Did that make a difference? It is very hard to underestimate the role that class plays in British society particularly in the middle and upper classes as the working class and the aristocracy are, perhaps ironically, less impacted by these issues. Who would have thought that a short incident on one day would raise quite legitimately so many issues?

The book culminates with the talk Virginia gave perhaps a bit improbably to the Women's Institute in Rodmell, her village, on July 23, 1940. Britain was at war and German planes were flying over Rodmell on their bombing mission as part of the Battle of Britain. It mustn't be forgotten that the *Dreadnought* was a major player in the naval race between Britain and Germany that was ultimately an important cause of the First World War and by extension of the Second as well. In 1940 German invasion was a real possibility. Leonard and Virginia knew that they were very likely to be rounded up by the Germans and were contemplating suicide if invasion should happen. It is intriguing that the hoax was on her mind thirty years after it had happened. What this study so well demonstrates was that, although Woolf's participation in the hoax came about almost casually, it played an important role in her life. As the hoax had at its center four Abyssinian princes it vividly provides important insights that illuminate Britain's long involvement with slavery and Africa. The story has much significance for questions of racism that are so much of our concern today. One is so grateful to this book for making us so aware of these issues with such depth and perception and in what ways they are connected with "the Girl Prince."

Peter Stansky
Stanford University



Thank you, Suzanne Bellamy, from Karen Levenback

Issue #100 of the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* quite rightly spent many pages commemorating the many accomplishments and celebrating the *joie de vivre* of our dear friend and colleague Suzanne Bellamy and I regretted not having added my voice to the chorus. I do so now because Suzanne's generous and thorough review of my 2017 Bloomsbury Heritage monograph *Virginia Woolf, Melian Stawell, & Bloomsbury* (Issue 97, Spring/Summer 2017), the last review of a monograph published by Cecil Woolf to appear in the *Miscellany*, must be acknowledged. Suzanne managed to write the review during a very difficult time for her and I was touched and so very appreciative of the extraordinary effort. We have two of her artworks on the walls of our bedroom and we very much feel her spiritual presence and thank Suzanne for that as well.



(The *Society Column* continues here from the final page.)

of the IVWS, I might encourage precisely this: more undergraduate involvement in the society and at the annual Woolf conference.) Details concerning this year's contest will be forthcoming soon if they haven't already been announced by the time you read this.

2024's Woolf conference, as you all no doubt know, will be held in Fresno, California, at California State University-Fresno, from June 6th-9th, with Fresno State Associate Professor J. Ashley Foster organizing. With day trips on June 5th and 9th to Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks, plus the usual sterling lineup of panels, presentations, featured events, featured speakers, artists, and poets, the 33rd annual Woolf conference promises to pick up and build upon the success of *Woolf and Ecologies I* and II. The conference website can easily be accessed by way of a quick web search of Fresno State Woolf. Hope to see you there!

For IVWS members planning to both attend and present at the conference but for whom getting to Fresno is a challenge, either financially, geographically, or both, there is the Suzanne Bellamy Travel Fund, which was instituted in 2022. If you meet the criteria outlined just above, of being both a presenter at the conference and an IVWS member, you may be able to apply for a small amount of support from the fund once you have already registered for the conference. Don't worry, I'll be sure to send out email alerts to all IVWS members concerning when the window for applying for funds will both open and close. And, if you aren't able to garner funding for the 2023 Fresno Woolf conference, you can plan ahead for the 2025 conference in England.

No doubt 2024 will offer additional Woolf-related events both in-person and online, including, among other things, the latest installments of the Woolf Salon Project. The first of these will have already happened by the time you read this: February 23rd's Woolf Salon No. 26, *Faces and Voices*. No. 27 will follow on April 19th and has for its focus the *Miscellany* at Issue 100. No. 28 comes next: July 26th, focus to be determined.

One last thing to be aware of for now, despite its still being a ways away, is MLA 2025 in New Orleans, where the IVWS will have at least one panel dedicated to Woolf and possibly two. One will be on the centenary of *Mrs. Dalloway*, encouraging reappraisals of Woolf's landmark 1925 publication one hundred years later, and the other will focus on Virginia Woolf and utopian skepticism, that is, on "Woolf's sense of 'living differently,' which rests in the tension between her skepticism of utopian promises, her refusal of easy answers, and her visions of liberatory, more equitable ways of living," to quote Amy Smith's description of it. Additionally, it should come as no surprise, given the importance of *Mrs. Dalloway* within the modernist tradition, that there will also be another session on its centenary, this one being offered by the forum for Victorian and Early Twentieth-Century English. Many thanks to Maren Linett for bringing this panel to my attention.

Finally, a brief word from me. I never thought that I would be the president of anything. It's just not really in my DNA, general temperament, or personality. But when it came to this particular position, well, I couldn't think of any other societies, real or imagined, which I would rather serve. Virginia Woolf keeps giving me gifts. Obviously, there are the books themselves, not only in terms of the words they consist of but also in terms of the actual physical objects, some of mine having the Hogarth Press imprint upon them, works of art in their own right. Some of my best moments as a teacher have come teaching Woolf; some of the best work that my students have done has been on Woolf. And then I met my wife through Virginia Woolf, too. Lately, I had thought that by now, surely, Woolf's lavishness must have reached its end. No doubt the books offer me new insights, new pleasures, new things to think about every time I pick them up, but that makes less for actual new gifts than new uses and joys to derive from ones already received. Now, however, she has delighted me once more with

something completely unexpected and for which, as with all of her previous generosity, I'll never be able to sufficiently repay her: she's given me all of you. For those of you whom I have already met, I look forward to seeing you again soon, either virtually or in person or both. And for those of you with whom I haven't crossed paths yet, I'm eagerly anticipating the moment when we do. All the best,

Ben Leubner

President, International Virginia Woolf Society

**Officers of the IVWS
January 2024 through December 2026**

PRESIDENT: Ben Leubner
leubnerb@montana.edu

VICE-PRESIDENT: Amy C. Smith
amy.smith@lamar.edu

TREASURER: Marcia James
marciaahalstead@aol.com

MEMBERSHIP COORDINATORS:

Annaliese Hoehling
annalieseh@gmail.com

Leanna Lostoski-Ho
Leanna.Lostoski-Ho@unh.edu

HISTORIAN/BIBLIOGRAPHER: Rita Viana
m.rita.viana@ufop.edu.br

SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR: Shilo McGiff
srm10@cornell.edu

WEB MANAGER: Benjamin Hagen
Benjamin.Hagen@usd.edu

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE:

AnneMarie Bantzinger
ambantzinger@hotmail.com

Erica Delsandro
ericadelsandro@gmail.com

Elizabeth Evans
evansef@gmail.com

Emily Hinnov
emhinnov@yahoo.com

Catherine Hollis
hollisc@berkeley.edu

Danell Jones
danell.jones@msubillings.edu

Mine Özyurt Kılıç
mozyurtkilig@gmail.com

Kika Kyriakakou
kika.kyriakakou@gmail.com

Patricia Laurence
pat.laurence@gmail.com

ARCHIVAL LIAISON: Karen Levenback
kllevenback@att.net

**VIRGINIA WOOLF MISCELLANY MANAGING EDITOR
EX OFFICIO**

Vara Neverow
neverowv1@southernct.edu





the Virginia Woolf Society



It's early 2024; I'm sitting at the desk in my study, which will soon become a nursery. Outside, it's a little too warm for January, but two weeks ago it was 30 below. Katharine is downstairs, working on her book. The cats, blessedly, are currently all napping.

I'm very pleased to be the new president of the International Virginia Woolf Society and hope, in the coming years, to represent it well. No doubt the next three years will be an exciting time in Woolf studies, seeing as they will the 100th anniversary of the publication of *Mrs. Dalloway*, beyond which, of course, lie additional centenaries before the decade draws to a close: *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando*, *A Room of One's Own*.

Before looking too far ahead, however, it's worth casting a glance back at the preceding months and some of the events that took place during them in the world of Woolf studies. No doubt this quick catalogue will be incomplete. As someone who is just taking up his role as president of the IVWS, I wasn't as involved in society-related and society-proximal events in 2023 as I hope to be going forward. Since my predecessor and fellow Ben, Ben Hagen, covered the first half of 2023 in the previous *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, I will begin in the middle of the year, with the 32nd Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf, *Woolf and Ecologies*, hosted by Florida Gulf Coast University and the wonderful Laci Mattison.

Actually, Ben H. discussed the conference in the last issue of the *VWM*, too, but it nevertheless seems to me worth revisiting here, since it was the first Woolf conference to be held in person since the COVID pandemic. (It was also the first one that I attended in any format. I had taught a major authors seminar on Woolf in the fall of 2022, and four of my students made the trip to Fort Myers along with me to present. The kindness and enthusiasm of the organizers, presenters, attendees, and FGCU faculty and staff were such that we could not have had a better time, unless maybe the humidity hadn't been quite so high.) No doubt the energy and atmosphere that weekend on the FGCU campus had something to do with the conference not having been held in person for several years, since 2019 in Cincinnati (Drew Shannon, organizer). Clearly, people who had not met in person in some time were ecstatic to finally be in one another's company again, which showed in both their faces and their conversation and was infectious even to newcomers to the conference. Much as I would like to, I cannot speak to all of the presentations given at the conference, but of those I attended the quality was remarkable, from panels to plenaries to special events. My students met people from all over the world; delighted in the readings of the Virginia Woolf Players during the banquet (may I join?!?); kept their eyes peeled for on-campus alligators (no luck); and left Florida on an intellectual and imaginative high. It was an honor for me to present alongside Kim Sigouin and Oliver Case, and I would also like to especially thank Mark Hussey and everyone else who attended my students' own panel. I will always remember getting up very early in the morning in my dorm room on the first day of the conference and walking to a coffee shop a mile down the highway, mistakenly thinking that humidity goes away at night.

Following the conference in Fort Myers in June, July saw the 25th Woolf Salon, hosted by the Salon Conspirators.¹ The theme of this salon was *Mrs. Dalloway's Party*. Katharine and I were in Glacier National Park at the time and so were unable to attend, this being a theme that, sadly, characterizes the rest of this chronicle, as we also missed both the September 22nd celebration of Louise DeSalvo's birthday and the

¹ To access the Woolf Salon online, click here: <https://sites.google.com/view/woolfsalonproject/home>.

October online symposium, *Woolf and Ecologies II*. I trust—and have heard—that these events were successes in their own right and only wish that I could have been a part of them, as well. But to travel two roads and remain one traveler is, as we know, not possible, though recordings of some of these events certainly mitigate this limitation of the human condition!

The end of 2023 saw a series of elections in the IVWS community that resulted in new names and faces joining its board. The society now has a new Vice President, Amy Smith; a new historian/bibliographer, Rita Viana; a new treasurer, Marcia James; a new social media coordinator, Shilo McGiff; a new website manager, Ben Hagen (these last two both being new positions within the IVWS); and a new president. Along with returning officers and a fabulous cast of members-at-large, we hope to continue to grow the society in more ways than one in the coming months and years. Of particular note at the present moment is an initiative on the part of the newly-formed Bloomsbury Heritage Committee, which consists of IVWS member-at-large Catherine Hollis, Drew Shannon, and the *VWM* managing editor Vara Neverow, to work with both Jean Moorcroft Wilson and the IVWS itself to revive the Bloomsbury Heritage Series, not only bringing old issues of this important collection of titles back into print but bringing out new titles, as well.

As it is the end of January as I write this, this means that it has been three weeks since MLA 2024. The IVWS sponsored a Woolf panel at MLA on the theme of Woolf and Race, at which the following talks were given: "How Should One Read a Prank? Race and the *Dreadnought* Hoax," by Danell Jones; "'Restorying' Virginia Woolf: Bloomsbury, Race, and the Critical Reimagining of Woolf Studies," by Alice Keane; "'Inky Blackness': Race and Writing in *Orlando*," by Ryan Tracy; and "Teaching Critical Race Theory with *Orlando* and the *Dreadnought* Hoax," by Rachel V. Trousdale. It's a panel that I hope many of you were able to attend in person. I extend my apologies to the presenters for my own absence (we were visiting Katharine's mother in Sydney).

By the time this issue of the *VWM* goes to press, the Woolf panel at the 51st Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture will also have taken place. It is a virtual panel, so my hope here, too, is that as several of you read this paragraph, you will have fond memories of having attended it and heard the following talks: "Finding Mrs. Brown: Memory, Emotion and Narratives in Virginia Woolf's Approach to Art," by Amar Roy; "Anti-Work Woolf: Virginia Woolf and Critiques of Waged Labour," by Amrita Chakraborti; "Windows as Heterotopic Thresholds in Virginia Woolf's Short Stories Collection *A Haunted House*," by Tatyana Kasima; and "'Women with Diamond Minds': A Study of the Inter-generational Evolution of Creative Women in *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf and *Subornolota and Bokulkotha* by Ashapura Devi," by Meghna Dutta, with Matthew Biberman as panel chair.

In 2024, the Angelica Garnett Undergraduate Essay contest will once again be offered by the IVWS. The winner of the contest not only sees their work appear in the *VWM* but also receives a cash prize. If any of you have students who have recently written about Woolf or who are likely to at some point this semester, please encourage them to submit their work for the contest. And of course, it goes without saying that if any of you *are* undergraduates, please submit your work! (One of the things that Montana State University prides itself on is providing undergraduate research opportunities to its students from the moment they arrive on campus, whether they're in English or engineering, agriculture or the arts. It is likely, then, that during my time as president

(The *Society Column* continues on the previous page.)