The theme of this issue of the Miscellany, “Virginia Woolf: Drafting, Editing, Revising,” is one of my favorite areas of Woolf research and I am so grateful to Vara Neverow for asking me to act as guest editor. While I completed my graduate work at Southern Connecticut State University, Vara worked closely with me on my Master’s thesis in which I analyzed Jacob’s Room—published version and holograph draft. I also had the pleasure of working over e-mail with Ted Bishop, who transcribed Woolf’s handwritten text. Both scholars proved to be an invaluable asset in my examination of the two versions and in the writing of my thesis.

One of the most incredible experiences of my research was being afforded entrance to the Berg Reading Room at the New York Public Library, where many of Woolf’s manuscripts are housed. I had been working for a publishing company that had done a great deal of work with the NYPL and our editorial director suggested I e-mail the library and give his name as a contact. That little bit of “name-dropping” elicited an immediate response and, even though I only sent the e-mail to the Berg Collection Curator on a Wednesday back in December 2000, I was immediately given permission to drop by that Saturday. I cannot describe the thrill I felt at that moment.

My excitement continued to escalate on Saturday morning as I climbed the New York Public Library steps to the third floor and obtained my Special Collections “reader’s card.” I then walked down the hall to the Reading Room, where I introduced myself to the librarian on duty. He was expecting me and promptly went to the back room to collect Woolf’s draft of Jacob’s Room. I took a seat at one of the tables and studied the triangular foam blocks that would prop up the manuscript so it could not lie flat, which would damage the delicate string binding. The librarian soon returned and placed the notebook before me.

I remember I just sat there for a few moments. Speechless, I stared at the brown, green, and orange that made up the diamond-design on the cover; I analyzed the title written in Woolf’s hand; I absorbed the unbelievable opportunity that was placed before me. Carefully opening the cover, I began turning the pages, touching each one ever so gently, trying to sense Woolf’s spirit in the paper. I had only imagined the manuscript in black on white and was startled to see the splashes of color—Woolf’s use of black and blue ink, her blue pencil line down the left margin for notes (some of these in pencil), as well as irrelevant pencil scribbles that were not captured in the published transcription.

Equipped with copies of Bishop’s transcription and print-outs of draft pages from the Woolf CD-ROM, I spent that entire morning comparing the pieces that I had been using for my research to the real thing. I then turned back to the beginning and with my “research” complete, began reading Woolf’s draft from beginning to end. I simply did not want to part with her essence that permeated each page. But, as all days do, this one came to an end and I found myself reluctantly surrendering the manuscript and walking out the doors onto the city streets. Completely enmeshed in the moment, I thought I felt Woolf walking by my side as I boarded the train to head back home.

Because of my own experience with Woolf’s drafts, I thought it would be appropriate for reputable scholars to give voice to their memories and reflect on their own archival work. This issue of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany comprises not only those reflections, but also a number of intriguing and excellent pieces related to specific novels, essays, and even letters. I wish to extend my gratitude to all of you wonderful individuals who love Woolf as much as I do and who so generously contributed to this incredible issue.

Debra Sims
Independent Scholar

See page 2 for information about the call for papers for the 20th-Century Literature Conference at the University of Louisville.

BACK TO BLOOMSBURY
14th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf
We look forward with great excitement to this stellar event organized by Gina Vitello, Lisa Shahriari, and Olivia Jennings, and invite conference attendees to share their reminiscences with us for the Fall 2004 issue of the VWM.

WOOLF IN OREGON
15th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf
The 2005 conference on Virginia Woolf will be held at Lewis and Clark University in Oregon. Rishona Zimring (zimring@clark.edu) will be the organizer. The theme of the conference has not yet been determined.
**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**IVWS at Louisville 2005**

The Program Selection Committee invites submissions for the *International Virginia Woolf Society Panel* at the University of Louisville Thirty-third Annual 20th-Century Literature Conference, February 24-26, 2005. The International Virginia Woolf Society is pleased to host its fourth consecutive panel at the University of Louisville’s 20th-Century Literature Conference. We invite proposals for critical papers on any topic concerning Woolf’s work. A specific panel theme may be decided upon depending on the proposals received. Previous IVWS panels have met with great enthusiasm at Louisville, and we look forward to another successful session. Please submit by email 250-word proposals, along with the participant’s email address, regular mailing address, phone number, and professional affiliation, to the panel organizers listed below by Monday, September 13, 2004.

Panel Selection Committee:
Kristin Kommers Czarnecki, keczarnecki@earthlink.net
Jeanne Dubino, jdubino@selu.edu
Mark Hussey, mhussey@pace.edu
Jane Lilienfeld, jlilienf@coin.org

Visit the [VWM online](http://home.southernct.edu/~neverowv1/VWM_Online.html)—more textually active links than ever before!

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**VIRGINIA WOOLF IN DRAFT**

It was a day of torrential rain in April in the early 1970s. That evening there was a meeting of my graduate class “The Novels of Virginia Woolf” taught by Mitchell Leaska. Ordinarily, I wouldn’t dream of cutting his class, but because of the weather, a long commute to New York University from suburban New Jersey, and a sick baby at home, I considered cutting. But then I decided against it—Leaska’s classes were too good to miss. And it is fortunate that that I did not, because what Leaska taught that evening determined the shape of my life’s work.

Leaska was preparing his edition of *The Pargiters*, Woolf’s early version of *The Years*. In a previous class on that novel, he told us that earlier versions of the novel were dramatically different from the published text, and he mentioned a few examples—how there were non-fictional interchapters that Woolf later deleted, and that the early version was more outspoken about the abuse of children than the later published texts. I found these insights important because they challenged ideas about the novelist’s craft that I had believed.

I was the first person in my working-class family to attend college, the first (and only) to go to graduate school, and I harbored many misapprehensions about the creative process. In my college courses on novels, many of the professors with whom I studied adhered to the dictates of New Criticism. We did close readings. We never read biography; we never ascribed intention to an author. We studied the novels as if they had simply appeared one day in the universe. We were never encouraged to study the process whereby they had come into being.

Perhaps because of this indoctrination, and perhaps because, as a child and a young woman, I did not know anyone who wrote poetry or novels, I came into Leaska’s class believing that geniuses like Virginia Woolf never needed to revise their novels—that they knew, for the most part, what their work was about from the very beginning, and that they began their work after a moment of great inspiration. I believed that famous novelists differed from the rest of us mortals and showed their promise early; that they never needed to undergo a period of apprenticeship during which they learned their craft. I believed that they were convinced of the worth of their work, and that they never doubted that what they were producing was worthwhile.

Until that night in April, Leaska had spoken to us only in generalities about Woolf’s process of revision, and, compelling as his insights were, and as much as they were changing my view of the composing process, what he taught us had not yet inspired me to want to work in the Woolf archive.

But on this particular evening, Leaska came in with copies of his transcript of the first page of the earliest extant draft of *Pointz Hall* for us to contrast with the first page of *Between the Acts*. The scene, as every Woolf scholar will recall, is entitled “The Lamp” in its early draft, and it evokes a summer’s night: “Oh beautiful and bounteous light on the table; oil lamp; ancient and out-of-date oil lamp; upholding as on a tawny tent the falling grey draperies of the dusk...” And on it goes, for a long paragraph of very purple prose, which Woolf later revised to “It was a summer’s night.” In that class we discussed Woolf’s change of tone, her excision of much of what she had written, her playing with a host of images she would develop elsewhere in the published novel.

Looking at the differences between the drafts, I realized, provided a window into the deeper meaning of Woolf’s novels. Moreover, it provided a window into Woolf’s composing process, and thus provided a way for someone like me to learn about how an accomplished writer like Woolf went about the business of working on her craft.

It was the “tawny tent” that did it. This phrase that made me want to study the earlier versions of Woolf’s novels, to discover what they were like, and how they changed through time, and for reasons that went beyond wanting to know about Virginia Woolf, although I would study the revision of Virginia Woolf’s works for years to come. For, as a daughter of the working class, I was unsure about my ability to pen acceptable English prose (my freshman
compositions in college had “You write primer English” scrawled in red across their pages) even though I harbored fantasies of one day becoming a writer, of fiction, perhaps.

But because I knew that “tawny tent” was a really bad simile for an oil lamp, and because I thought that if an important writer like Virginia Woolf could let herself write this badly at the beginning of her process, and if she needed many drafts to find her voice, then, if I learned how she did it, one day I might become a writer too. I could use examples of how she revised in order to teach myself how to revise. And I could use examples of how she revised in order to teach my students how to revise. Woolf’s process of revision, of course, held the key to Woolf’s genius.

After class, I stopped Leaska and told him that I wanted to do a dissertation on Virginia Woolf, on the earlier versions of one of her novels. He suggested The Voyage Out because it was her first novel, and he thought the extant drafts of that novel (of which there were many) might reveal much about her composing process. I agreed.

The first day I went to the Berg Collection, I dressed for the occasion—long brown skirt, brown boots, brown turtleneck sweater. Anyone who has pressed the buzzer to summon entrance to that famous collection will know how I felt that morning: excitement, terror (there was, after all, Lola Szladits to encounter), curiosity, pleasure, desire. The letter of introduction from Mitchell Leaska worked its magic. I was admitted. I filled out a slip of paper. I took my seat at the long wooden table to await the manuscripts. I took out my yellow pad, my array of sharp pencils, my good eraser. I kept my trembling hands in my lap until the manuscripts arrived.

I asked to see the earlier and later typescript version of The Voyage Out. I wanted to look at the chapter in which Rachel Vinrace becomes ill in several versions. If there was difference in this critical chapter, I intuited, there would be differences everywhere, and there would be purpose to my work, a dissertation, and possibly even a book.

When the manuscripts arrived, I wept. It was early, I was the first person at work, and the assistant who brought me the manuscripts was kind enough to go into the storage room after he saw how moved I was.

How to explain? It was the smell, the unmistakable smell of smoke that was detectable as soon as I removed the manuscripts from their protective boxes. The smell of smoke that might well have come from their having been in the house at 52 Tavistock Square that was hit and was partially destroyed during World War II. It was the sight of that angular, elegant hand that all who have labored over her manuscripts have come to know—the cross-hatchings, cross-outs, and inserts on the page. The false starts, the sure phrase, the faded typewriter ribbon, the circle left by a glass or cup of—what?—water? tea? coffee? The burn mark where the ash from a cigarette dropped on the page.

All of these traces of a life, now gone, though the work lived; all these traces of a life’s work, visible to me, visible to all of us who have toiled over her manuscripts. Her life’s work bestowing upon us the privilege of a life’s work of understanding her own. And through learning how she wrote, learning how I might work. How I might—and could—write a work of the imagination of my very own.

Louise DeSalvo
City University of New York

THE ACCIDENTAL ARCHIVIST

Call it luck. Call it an accident. But without planning any such move, I found myself, in the summer of 1965, one year out of college as a postgraduate student in London, surrounded by Virginia Woolf’s as yet un-indexed manuscripts in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library. As always with research projects, my route there had been circuitous. I had gone to London to study Dickens, but living in Bloomsbury and loving modernist writers (I wrote my senior thesis on Faulkner) led me, inevitably I sometimes think, to Woolf. Once read, there was no turning back. My first stop on the archival trail was the British Museum, which had three manuscript volumes of Mrs. Dalloway interwoven with notes and drafts for other of her writings at the time; the latter soon proved more tempting to me than the drafts of the novel. Florence Howe, visiting London to do research for her study of Mrs. Dalloway, pointed me to the Berg by telling me they had the companion manuscripts to the ones in the British Museum. Arriving at the Berg I asked to see them; piles of notebooks appeared on the table. Because the manuscripts were not yet indexed, the librarian on duty had brought me whatever he thought might be useful . . . . .  [The five dots here, to borrow a trope from A Room of One’s Own, indicate five minutes of total shock.] Then I began to read, to take notes, to become absorbed in what I soon discovered were to me the most compelling aspect of the manuscripts: the voluminous reading notes.

At that moment, a dark shadow fell across Woolf’s notebook and my own: John Gordan, the Curator of the Berg Collection, a librarian of the old school who seemed to think the contents of the archive belonged to him. He was furious that, in his absence, I had been
given access to the notebooks; he made no bones about it. Neither the Beadle nor the librarian at Oxbridge, chasing Room’s narrator off the grass and away from the library, could possibly have been as scary. But he stopped short of ordering me to cease and desist. I finished my time in New York, went back to London, and, fearing that his displeasure might prevent me from getting permission to quote the manuscripts in anything I would write about Woolf, decided to prove my credentials by indexing the contents of the reading notebooks. The rest, as they say, is history.

In the beginning I had no thought other than to provide something that could be kept in the Berg to help others in deciphering the notebooks; I completed and sent this version off by 1967, after which I returned to the States to do my PhD. But by the time I had finished graduate school and started thinking about my next project, Woolf had come into her own. A number of scholars who knew about my preliminary work began to say how useful it would be make my indexes public. Sure, I thought. Why not? That should not be too hard. I had no idea how long it would take me.

Somewhere during those years I began to understand why detective fiction is called the opiate of the academic: what kept me going was the excitement of the chase. I can find this source, I’d think; it’s got to be somewhere. The Berg Collection, thankfully air-conditioned in summer, the sunny manuscript reading room in the University of Sussex Library, the British Museum reading room, and, most of all, the London Library—my favorite venue—began to seem like home. As each new volume of Woolf’s letters and diary appeared, I found more clues; exchanging newly discovered evidence and answers with Anne Olivier Bell transformed us into private investigators working separately but together on intersecting cases. I began to feel that rather than recreating Woolf’s intellectual life I was reliving it, always running to catch up. My friends got used to hearing me mention what Virginia was reading and what she thought about the

What else stays with me from this period? Small things. Memories of the London Library, for example: the pleasure of seeing Sir Leslie Stephen’s portrait hanging next to the Ladies’ Room and thinking of the London Library, for example: the pleasure of seeing Sir Leslie Silver’s work was an introductory index, not a facsimile or a transcription of the manuscripts, my appetite was whetted to read more and I felt that, if I could just peek at them, I might learn a great deal about Woolf’s response to her cultural and historical milieu. I had no idea how much I would find.

Along with Vara Neverow, my co-editor, I conceived the idea of publishing Monks House Papers B16f in some electronic form; back in 1995, we thought it might be a CD-ROM. So we made plans to travel to Sussex to view the notebooks. I recall phoning Bet Inglis, then curator of the manuscript library, to set an appointment. “Oh, but I’ll be out of town when you come,” Bet told me, “so I’m afraid you won’t be able to view the manuscripts.” Something in the sound of my forlorn and distraught reply must have caught her attention, for she waited a second and then said she thought she might be able to view the manuscripts. “Oh, but I’ll be out of town when you come,” Bet told me, “so I’m afraid you won’t be able to view the manuscripts.” Something in the sound of my forlorn and distraught reply must have caught her attention, for she waited a second and then said she thought she might be able to view the manuscripts. The rest, as they say, is history.

I remember being intrigued by Silver’s tantalizing introduction to the Reading Notes, my attention caught by the first line of a newspaper clipping or note found on each page of the manuscripts. Since Silver’s work was an introductory index, not a facsimile or a transcription of the manuscripts, my appetite was whetted to read more and I felt that, if I could just peek at them, I might learn a great deal about Woolf’s response to her cultural and historical milieu. I had no idea how much I would find.

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Vera and I had one precious day with those notebooks on our first visit to Sussex and we kept looking at each other in astonishment at the turn of each page. From this initial visit and several more subsequent visits, we have built The Reading Notes website housed at the Center for Virginia Woolf Studies, www.csue.edu/woolf_center.

The Reading Notes website housed at the Center for Virginia Woolf Studies, www.csue.edu/woolf_center.

The Reading Notes reveal a portrait of Woolf, the collector, immersed in her cultural, historical moment and intent upon mapping its terrain with special emphasis upon gender. The notebooks include numerous news clippings; notes from biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs; copies of letters asking for donations; printed programs
and pamphlets. Many items stand out in this cultural landscape, producing a set of themes that not only resonate with *Three Guineas* but stretch beyond it to suggest so much more than Woolf could say in one volume. Take as an example Count Ciano. Certainly, twentieth-century historians would recognize the name, but how many of us in the community of Woolf scholars would? Yet Ciano’s newspaper image is found in *The Reading Notes* Volume 2, page 20, with nothing more than a brief caption which reads, “Count Ciano in flying kit.” Galeazzo Ciano was Mussolini’s son-in-law, married to Mussolini’s daughter Edda in 1930. Ciano was a journalist and airman, serving as a bomber pilot in the Abyssinian war. By 1936, when this image appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* on September 9, Ciano was the new Italian foreign minister poised to represent Italy in Geneva at the League of Nations meeting later in the month to promote an agenda of banding together the youth of the world (he was 33) to ensure peace. Woolf would never know Ciano’s ultimate fate; he was executed as a traitor in 1944.

What was it about the image of this ebullient young man that caught Woolf’s eye? And why does his picture appear on a page with two newspaper clippings from August 12, 1935, each of which reports on incidents in Nazi Germany? Yet another question: why are the two articles from 1935 and the image of Ciano from 1936? The last question leads us to speculate on Woolf’s notebooking process; clearly she kept files of materials for the notebooks and consciously assembled them on a page as she pursued a theme.

The concept of thematic arrangement suggests a possible answer to my second question above—the clippings and image develop Woolf’s notion of fascism. For example, one of the two clippings is entitled “A Nation of Men” and conveys the spirit of a veiled threat underlying Hitler’s overt claims for peace and reconstruction, reinforcing Woolf’s growing notion of an “essence” of masculinity which needs war to complete its self-definition. Woolf quotes from the article in *Three Guineas*: “In Hitler’s speech, the sentence reads: ‘He who wishes to disturb our peace will no longer fight against a nation of pacifists but against a nation of men’” (186 n6). The second clipping, “The Thorn of Hatred,” recounts the story of Frau Pommer who told a shopgirl, “I and my husband are and remain German Nationalists; but as long as one does not cohabit with a Jew one can safely buy from him. The thorn of hatred has been driven deep enough into the people by the religious conflicts and it is high time that the men of today disappeared.” Woolf cites this article in a footnote to *Three Guineas* as follows: “...Frau Pommer, the wife of a Prussian mines official at Essen, who said: ‘The thorn of hatred has been driven deep enough into the people by the religious conflicts, and it is high time that the men of today disappeared.’...She has been arrested and is to be tried on a charge of insulting and slandering the State and Nazi movement” (*Three Guineas* 169). For Woolf, Frau Pommer is a contemporary German Antigone. Could Ciano, then, in “flying kit” and flying high as the protagonist, serving to bundle predominant themes from the two articles into a graphic image of the “quintessen of virility”?

By now it should be clear that the train of associations and networking of contextual material to be found on each and every page of *The Reading Notes* for *Three Guineas* is potentially endless. In fact, it seems to me that these three volumes continuously exceed my grasp; I feel as though I never can and never will exhaust the possibilities found within their pages.

Merry M. Pawlowski  
California State University – Bakersfield

Note  
1 For information on how to subscribe to *The Reading Notes* for *Three Guineas*, go to [http://www.csub.edu/woolf_center](http://www.csub.edu/woolf_center). I have recently published the following two articles which may be of interest to the reader: “‘Seule la culture desinteressee’: Virginia Woolf and War,” in *War and Words*, eds. Sara Deats and Lagretta Lenker, Rowman & Littlefield, 2004, and “Exposing Masculine Spectacle: Virginia Woolf’s Newspaper Clippings for *Three Guineas* as Contemporary Cultural History,” *Woolf Studies Annual* 9 (2003): 116-140.

SESHAT, GODDESS OF THE ARCHIVE  
I have argued elsewhere that working in an archive is like riding a motorcycle. In part it is about putting the body at risk—you have to be open to corporeal knowing. It can be a sensual experience and it can be a risk. Reading Tom Wharton’s fantastical novel *Salamander* about the infinite book, I came across a reference to the goddess of the archives, Seshat. Wharton, like any good postmodernist, riddles his book with bogus references. Had he made up Seshat? Surely, I would have heard of her. I’d found myself muttering about the “gods of the archives,” wanting to burn incense at a shrine when the work went well, wondering if I should burn a fattened calf in the parking lot when the archives had turned sullen and intransigent. Nothing seemed straightforward in the archives. We all spoke of solid research methods, and good detective work, but the real discovery seemed to come from nowhere, to be handed to you, after days or weeks in which (it appeared in retrospect) the discovery had been perversely denied. If there was a goddess, I wanted her.

A quick look at the Net confirmed she was real: an Egyptian goddess of writing, libraries, archives, mathematics, and architecture. In recent times, Seshat has been taken on as the Silicon Goddess, protector of computers and software. Some view the Internet itself as a manifestation of the Goddess. This was getting a bit spacey. I turned from the Net to the codex. I prefer print I can hold, and while I used to search for the latest article, now I burrow for an early book. I like to see how the ideas and their encrustations emerge. I found *The Gods of the Egyptians* (1904) by the former keeper of the Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities at the British Museum, one Wallis Budge. I learned that Seshat (Sesheta, Sefkhet-aabut, and half a dozen other spellings) was the goddess of writing. Married to Thoth, she taught him how to write and he got all the credit: lord of books, scribe of the gods, he had his own followers and his own temples, while Seshat had none.

She is pictured with what looks like a sprinkler coming out of her
head, a seven- or nine-pointed star that no one has satisfactorily explained. Modern devotees on the Net have argued that this star is a cannabis leaf, but it only looks like one if you have already been smoking it. Seshat is the only female deity shown writing (though others are pictured holding a pen), and she’s beautiful. Even Budge refers to the “close-fitting panther skin” she usually wears. I thought of a sultry archivist at Princeton and briefly imagined her in a panther skin. Then I thought of the formidable Lola Szladits at the New York Public Library in a panther skin, and the vision dissolved. Seshat appears to be related to Selquet, also called the “mistress of the house of books”: a golden, arch-eyed goddess, with a down-turned mouth, very sexy, she has a scorpion on her head. That sounded more like some of the archivists I’d known—scorpions presiding over the entrails of the embalmed. Selquet/Seshat is an apt emblem of the seduction and the danger of the archive. People have disappeared into the archive, and they have for all practical purposes never come out. Slaves to the Goddess.

Edward Bishop
University of Alberta

THE WAVES AND I

Asked by the editor of this Miscellany what it was like to work on the manuscripts of The Waves back in the late 1960s, I re-read the novel/playpoem straight through for the first time since half my lifetime ago, deeply moved (tears formed) as I realized that I was reading the sections dealing with middle age and onward with a knowledge impossible so long ago. Now I write by my windows in Manhattan, looking down Old Slip to the East River, where Spalding Gray’s remains were recently found. The police think that this monologuist, like Virginia Woolf blessed or cursed with an imagination too fierce, was tipped off—perhaps by a friend. People have disappeared into the archive, and they have for all practical purposes never come out. Slaves to the Goddess.

As part of my dissertation research I’d read Virginia Woolf’s Writer’s Diary, edited by her husband, and most of her novels, barely making it to the end of The Waves. In fact it was the early volumes of Leonard Woolf’s autobiography, just appearing, that I found striking—perhaps in part because I’d been impressed by the incandescent quality of the meetings of the minds of the Leonard and Virginia characters in Night and Day. Now also I know that the same quality appears in some of the mostly still unpublished post-marriage drafts of The Voyage Out, and I think it may also color the earliest exchanges between Susan and Bernard in The Waves, when a kind of merging of identities occurs. I don’t remember any rumors or warnings about Virginia Woolf’s sexuality from my Harvard years. I think Orlando was taken as a charming jeu d’esprit, probably feminist, given A Room of One’s Own, but not subversive. One could perhaps say that Woolf wasn’t taken very seriously then, for the one young Harvard man who wanted to read her work was referred over to me as the only faculty member even approximately available. It was a non-credit situation, but he was persuasive and particularly drawn to The Waves. I remember with pleasure the Waves-like approximation of Virginia Woolf’s style that he wrote in token of his study. I suspect that I also owe him thanks for re-readings that enabled me to begin to see that in The Waves, questions of realities do not involve only those perceived or misperceived by the characters in the fiction. But I had not yet read the drafts, where the
nature and powers of the “mind thinking,” the perceiving/creating author, are also in question much more so than in the published work.

In any case, in 1970, between the librarians of the Berg and the staff of the Bulletin of the NYPL, I learned about copyrights and what kinds of underlinings and bracketings were easiest to print, and also what budget cancellations can do to publication schedules. In my old folders I find letters from Quentin Bell, one explaining that copyright permission would have to be delayed until challenges to Leonard Woolf’s will were worked out. I also asked him whether there were by any chance paintings by Vanessa Bell that would match the scenes of the interludes. He thought probably not, but did assure me that all the family knew and were inclined to joke about Virginia Woolf’s passion for colored glass. J. W. Graham, who expected his transcription of the entire manuscript of The Waves to be published well before my article ever appeared, assured me of the non-existence of typescripts.

As it turned out, Graham’s transcription was published by Toronto in 1976, and my little article, “The Evolution of the Interludes in The Waves,” appeared in 1972, not in the Bulletin but in the first issue of the Virginia Woolf Quarterly. In it I courteously refer to “Mrs. Woolf” and call any generic reader or character “he,” so it reads rather like an antique (nowadays my generic readers are always plural). Nor is it inclusive, given the then impending publication of the whole, but at the time it made a sensible contribution to the available information. Perhaps it still does, for I was choosing manuscript passages to illustrate particular stages of composition, editing for clarity. Graham’s transcription is excellent, using printed text and hand-drawn squiggles to obtain a close page-for-page fidelity to the written marks of the drafts. But cruces remain. On the third page of the earliest draft is it “life” or “like” that precedes “in single phrases”? Is the day “quiet” or “bright,” “has” or “had” there been a storm? And well into the third manuscript book (3, 123), how did I get “indulgence” when Graham reads “assuagement”? I must go back to the Berg and look. Probably we should all help to find a way to make these fiendishly difficult manuscripts of The Waves digitally available on CD, or on the Web, so that more eyes can be brought to bear. But even then, would readers undertake that physical copying that still seems to me so important? Once a full transcription is published, have we in essence overridden the manuscript? Are Woolf and Forster scholars still doing manuscript research? Is there any future for the skill itself, in these computerized days of instant erasure?

I would end here, had I not just received the announcement of a Bloomsbury Centennial celebration to be held by The Charleston Trust late this coming June, to include a dinner at King’s College (extra to sit at High Table). High Table at King’s was flourishing when I was there in the early 1980s, and I must pay tribute to it as one of the most perfect research arrangements I’ve ever been in. Bloomsbury was still present, and not just in memory. Richard Braithwaite “dined in” regularly, and one summer evening drove me in his Mini to the hill south of Cambridge which is the highest land point from there east to Moscow; he explained that Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson had taken him there long ago, in order to make clear how easily Napoleon could march his army across the flatness of northern Europe, and I felt surrounded by Apostolic tradition. Dadie Rylands preferred to dine in the rooms now called the “Rylands Suite,” but he was willing to explain and advise and even read drafts. I dined next to a man from Rodmell one night and expressed my admiration for Leonard Woolf, to discover that I was talking to a King’s classmate and friend of Julian Bell, Sir Henry Lintott. He and his wife, who had been helping Lydia Lopokova with some of the Keynes papers, many of which were then still at King’s, also helped me so that I was even able to visit Charleston in its unreconstructed state. High Table also functioned remarkably well for more mundane problems of annotation. I learned that I had only to ask to discover that I was sitting next to the expert, or someone who could refer me to the expert. And I could ask anything, ignorant American that I was, although I did have to remember in my enthusiasm that I shouldn’t hold up thirty or forty diners and the servers by forgetting to eat. So I hope that in June everyone has a wonderful time at Charleston and Newnham and King’s, and that there are still cows in the King’s College meadow, just visible from Forster’s undergraduate rooms, as in the opening of The Longest Journey.

Elizabeth Heine

LOOKING FOR WOOLF IN THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

What comments did British government officials make on twentieth-century texts that were censored due to their purported obscenity? Did staff monitor the activities of individual writers who were not subject to censorship? What modernist texts came close to prosecution without the knowledge of individual authors? Was Virginia Woolf ever the subject of Home Office attention? During a recent trip to London, I tried to answer these questions and others at the United Kingdom’s National Archives, which describes itself as “one of the largest archival collections in the world, spanning 1000 years of British history” (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk). I concentrated on files archived by the Home Office, the department responsible for prosecuting works for obscene libel. These files contain letters of complaint from private individuals and organized morality movements, notes on texts by Undersecretaries and Secretaries, correspondence between the Home Office and other departments, and newspaper clippings. Together, these documents provide a glimpse into the decision-making processes that led to the censorship of texts from Emile Zola’s Nana to James Joyce’s Ulysses.

I was initially disappointed to find Woolf largely absent from the Archive catalogue. A search for “Virginia Woolf” turned up one relevant document: IR 59/805, closed until January 2018, and evidently containing death duty accounts generated after Woolf’s suicide. However, my frustration was ended when I began reading through Home Office files related to “indecent publications” wherein officials documented Virginia’s activities as well as those of Leonard.

Leonard Woolf makes an appearance in HO 45/15139, a collection of
letters, notes, and clippings related to an assortment of publications under suspicion of purported indecency. Among complaints against texts such as Norman Haire’s *Hymen*; or, *the future of marriage* and John Cowper Powys’s *Wolf Solent*, two clippings drew attention to Leonard’s opposition to the Home Office prosecutions of Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928 and Norah James’s *Sleeveless Errand* in 1929. As these trials unfolded, writers and intellectuals debated the adequacy of British obscenity law as well as the responsibility of writers to their craft and to readers. Leonard’s letter to *The Nation and Athenaeum* of March 30, 1929, challenges a previous letter by Gilbert Murray, who had drawn attention to the numerous literary classics that were not obscene. Murray had tried to demonstrate that writers did not need to treat sexuality in order to write timeless works. In response, Leonard provided a list of classics that were indecent by contemporary standards, thus undermining the assumption that twentieth-century works displayed lower moral values than the great works of the past.

Although Home Office staff did not annotate this clipping, it is certain that they disagreed with Leonard’s assessment. A clipping of an anonymous editorial from the March 9 edition of *The Nation* that made the parallel claim that the Old Testament and Shakespeare exceed the legal standard of obscenity is annotated. One can almost see the staffer sneering as he wrote, “editors must be a simple minded race to keep harping on this illustration.” As one of the editors of *The Nation*, Leonard was part of the “simple minded race” that the Home Office found itself battling in the late 1920s, and the presence of these clippings in their file demonstrates that his arguments gained the attention, if not the appreciation, of government officials.

Virginia makes her appearance in the file related to the prosecution of Hall’s novel (HO 144/22547). Government staff monitored opposition to the trial and conviction of *The Well* once again by clipping, and sometimes annotating, articles from the press. In this file, clippings include a letter critical of the legal definition of obscenity that was published in the *Daily Telegraph* on November 22, 1928. The Woolfs signed this public protest, thus aligning Virginia and Leonard with others who resisted the government’s censorship. This stance clearly brought them to the attention of the Home Office staff as well as to the attention of the public: the letter was considered so noteworthy that the *Daily Herald* and *Daily News* published reports on it that same day.

Another clipping preserved by the Home Office demonstrates that Virginia Woolf’s concrete involvement in the trial, as well as her status as a writer, was noted by the press even though she did not testify on Hall’s behalf as planned. The *Daily Herald* of November 24, 1928, reports that along with Hall, Mr. Leonard Woolf and Mrs. Virginia Woolf, the novelist, were accepted as sureties for Messrs. Jonathan Cape, Ltd. Each of the sureties entered into recognisances of £40 [...] and all agreed to abide by the judgment of the court and to pay any costs that may be awarded. It seems significant that the Home Office staff preserved this article, which specifies the individuals who were willing to commit funds on Cape’s behalf during the appeals process. Because “Mrs. Virginia Woolf’s” profession (“the novelist”) was stated in an article at least one employee thought worth preserving, government staff might have examined her works during or after the trial of *The Well*. Although the Woolfs were providing a bond for Cape and not Hall—under the Obscene Publications Act of 1857, printers and publishers were liable instead of authors—the documentation provided in this clipping aligned them with Hall and positioned Woolf as a writer who supported “indecency.”

The Home Office files thus indicate that government officials were aware of Woolf. The clippings informed staff that she was married to a man who published polemics against censorship and that Virginia herself was willing to spend time and money in the defense of an “indecent” book. A further discovery tantalizingly suggests that one of Woolf’s own literary productions was subject to government attention: a handwritten register of correspondence received by the Home Office in 1928 records an anonymous letter regarding *Orlando* and summarizes the author’s point thus: “Considers shd be suppressed” (HO 46/264). Sadly, this file (529486) was destroyed or misplaced and is not indexed in the contemporary catalogue of the National Archives.

I left the Archives complex with a wealth of material, and although I was disappointed that Woolf’s file had gone missing, I found it interesting that Home Office officials had followed Woolf’s public activities and that at least one reader hoped to see *Orlando* suppressed along with Hall’s *Well*. The fragmentary state of the public record makes it impossible to engage Woolf’s accuser in detail, but he or she successfully filed a complaint with the government. We can only imagine what Woolf’s life and career would have looked like if the Home Office had decided to prosecute.

_Celia Marshik_  
_SUNY - Stony Brook_

<For Virginia Woolf>

The lighthouse, pulsing rings of light, folds her body down into green sea

Quick! A writer’s bait—  
Time’s iridescent fishes nibbling at her lines

Shark’s fin not without but deep within; sirens call—now dispersed is she

_Mary C. Madden_  
_University of South Florida -Tampa_
LEONARD WOOLF AS EDITOR: *THE DEATH OF THE MOTH AND THE MOMENT*

Although Virginia Woolf’s first two books of essays, the *Common Readers*, had reasonably good sales for a not-yet fully established author, her enhanced reputation as a writer of original essays, rather than mainly book reviews, must be credited to Leonard Woolf’s devotion to putting into print her later books of essays. Leonard quickly, four months after Virginia’s suicide, published *Between the Acts* (in July 1941), and then he appears to have turned next to the gathering of essays that he and Virginia had discussed in the year or two prior to her death.

Virginia and Leonard had talked during the years 1939-40 about her getting a new collection of her reviews and essays ready for the press; but no specific evidence exists in the *Monks House Papers*, of which essays would have been selected had Virginia lived. It is possible that Leonard talked with his partner, John Lehmann, in the Hogarth Press about the essays to be selected, but it is more likely that he operated independently in the choice of essays since he closely guarded what the Press published of her work, even during Virginia’s lifetime (Lehmann 86).

Leonard’s choice seems to have turned first to the personal essays, before collecting more literary and biographical pieces, as his title *The Death of the Moth* (1943) indicates. The first several essays in this new volume showed aspects of Virginia’s interests and style that had not been widely known, perhaps even to her close friends. We need to remind ourselves that *all* of Virginia’s contributions to the *Times Literary Supplement*, hundreds of contributions, appeared anonymously during her lifetime. “The Death of the Moth” had not been printed previously in any periodical; it shows her powers of close observation and of descriptive detail as she carefully watches the moth’s inevitable death. Possibly this title had symbolic overtones for Leonard, thinking of the Stephen children’s adolescent activity in catching moths at night, and also of Virginia’s use of the title “The Moths” as the original working title for her novel *The Waves* (1931). Leonard has said that he believes *The Waves* to be her greatest masterpiece (Leonard Woolf 147-48).

“Evening over Sussex: Reflections in a Motor Car” again calls for Virginia Woolf’s mastery over descriptive language—this time in a generalized landscape of the Sussex coastline. She speaks of looking at the English channel at dusk, with its coastal cities obscured: “What remains is what there was when William came over from France ten centuries ago: a line of cliffs running out to sea” (*DM* 7). The narrator is caught up in different sides of her personality as she sits reflecting, and then a second, third, and even fourth “self” comes into dialogue with the narrator’s own controlling personality. (Compared with other statements about multiple personality, elsewhere in the fiction as in *Orlando*, this concept is not elaborately developed.) With the descent of complete darkness, all these personalities merge again into one, and she can contemplate a comfortable evening at home by the fire.

If we examine the first five essays in this book, “The Death of the Moth,” “Evening over Sussex,” “Three Pictures,” “Old Mrs. Grey,” and “Street Haunting,” which are the opening essays in this volume, Leonard has given great prominence to the author’s personal viewpoint, her own speaking voice. But “Three Pictures” is oddly different—not a personal essay but a kind of fable. Susan Dick has included “Three Pictures” in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, thus classifying this work as a short story rather than an essay. The three pictures, enumerated and labeled, present a stark domestic tragedy happening in a local village, which we learn from other evidence was actually Rodmell, Sussex. In “the first picture,” a young sailor is seen coming home with his bundle of clothing in hand, presumably from a long journey at sea, and onlookers may rejoice in his happiness (*TP* 14). But in the “second picture,” “In the middle of the night a loud cry rang through the village. There was no explanation, but the muffled sounds continued” (*TP* 14). and a few sentences later:

> One lay in the dark listening intently. It had been merely a voice. No picture of any sort came to interpret it, to make it intelligible to the mind. But as the dark arose at last all one saw was an obscure human form, almost without shape, raising a gigantic arm in vain against some overwhelming iniquity. (*TP* 14)

In the “third picture,” the observer-narrator’s expectations run from apprehension, attempts at self-reassurance, and forced optimism over the next two days until she observes a new grave being dug in the cemetery. And then she sees the new grave: “It’s for young Rogers, the sailor. He died two nights ago, of some foreign fever. Didn’t you hear his wife? She rushed into the road and cried out” (*DM* 16).

This lack of detail, the only partially-explained circumstances, remind us of some old fable, or perhaps of a tale by Isak Dinesen like *Seven Gothic Tales*.

*The Death of the Moth* had been a wartime book, but Leonard’s next collection, *The Moment and Other Essays* (1947 in London; 1948 in New York) was published in times of more abundant paper for printing. Whereas *DM* had included longer, serious essays such as Virginia’s two leading articles on Edward Gibbon, the famous historian of the Roman Empire, *The Moment* could afford to cast a wider net among her various styles of essay. Included are a number of brilliant vignettes of literary and artistic figures (“Ellen Terry,” “Genius: R. B. Haydon,” and short pieces on Sir Walter Scott, Lockhart, Lewis Carroll, D. H. Lawrence) as well as the lengthy, serious argument of “The Leaning Tower,” one of her most challenging comments about modern poetry. Leonard had to repair several sentences of “On Re-reading Novels” (from *TLS*, July 1922), an essay which has a certain polemical bias like “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown.” The careful editing was required because Virginia had lifted a few sentences out of the 1922 essay when she published *The Common Reader*, and gaps had to be closed with transitions.

Still, Leonard gave Woolf’s personal essays first place in the opening essay, “The Moment: Summer’s Night.” Woolf fans and scholars who have since explored her somewhat mystical definitions and comments on “moments of being” as a reflection of inner reality,
perhaps as a timeless perception in consciousness, will discover a
different sensibility in “Summer’s Night,” which quite literally
recreates the sensations and personalities of a night in midsummer in
a garden. “On Being Ill,” the second essay, had been first published
could be termed a more successful book than the previous books of
essays; a first edition of 10,000 copies sold within the first year, and
a second edition of 3,000 copies was soon called for.

In 1950, a new book of essays called The Captain’s Death Bed
appeared in England and the US, in similar printings—10,000 in
England and 5,000 in the US. And, after Leonard’s selection from
her diaries, A Writer’s Diary (1953), proved remarkably successful,
he turned to what he thought would be a last selection of essays,
mainly edited by Leonard, but with assistance from B. J. Kirkpatrick,
Virginia Woolf’s bibliographer, and the American scholar Mary
Lyon, called Granite and Rainbow (1958). I leave the chronicle of
these and other posthumous books for another article.

We can draw a number of conclusions from Leonard’s methods and
reasoning about Virginia’s previously uncollected essays. As shown
above, he intended to keep Virginia’s name before the reading public
with these new volumes issued at intervals of three to five years.
Since no unpublished novels rested in the drawers of manuscript that
Leonard controlled in these years, he necessarily turned to the other
genres in which Virginia wrote, the short story and the essay.

Along with Roger Fry, Leonard thought Virginia’s fiction—
especially her experimental stories in Monday or Tuesday, and in
genres from Jacob’s Room onward—derived from a unique genius.
He believed that Virginia’s writing had not yet reached her
potentially wide public. He put the Hogarth Press to the task of
circulating her name more widely and presenting other sides of her
authorship to postwar readers in the English language (and of course
in many foreign translations). In addition, the longtime association
with Harcourt Brace in the US meant that with the American
editions, Virginia Woolf’s audience had approximately doubled in
size.

The various occupations which Leonard combined in one person, as
the managing director (with Lehmann, from 1938 onwards) of
Hogarth Press need to be thought of as separate positions, the duties
of the editor as against those of the publisher. Since Leonard
performed both jobs, we can be highly critical of his choices as
publisher, without making a similar judgment about his task as book
editor.

For making these distinctions, John Lehmann’s comments, referred to
earlier, have considerable relevance. Lehmann specifically details the
difficulty of getting sufficient paper allocations during wartime
restrictions to print any new books. The original printing of The
Death of the Moth, together with two other impressions during the
same year, 11,100 copies in all, took two and one-half tons of paper
out of their yearly allotment of six and one-half tons. Lehmann says,
“In the same year, we also needed reprints of other works by
Virginia, which took another 2 tons” (86). Books by Virginia Woolf
were using more than two-thirds of the annual wartime paper
allotment for the Press, in that period of time.

In all of these decisions, Lehmann not only acquiesced, but he was
supportive of Leonard. John Lehmann also was devoted to Virginia’s
genius and considered her books the first priority of the press, even
in pinched conditions. But he found Leonard a very difficult partner
in editorial decisions about other authors than Virginia. The estimate
of Leonard’s place in publishing history is thus an entirely different
question from his performance as editor of Virginia’s books.

Among other talents, Leonard appears to have had considerable skill
in choosing book titles, as the volumes of essays reveal. And we—as
admirers of Virginia Woolf’s writing—owe him the recognition he
deserves as her first and most important book editor. On the whole
Leonard’s loyalty to Virginia’s concepts and his meticulously careful
editing produced several excellent books in the posthumous essays.
We can all be grateful to him for that service.

Edward Hungerford
Southern Oregon University

Notes
1 Susan Dick, in her end-notes, refers this graveyard scene to one in
VW’s Diary of Sept. 4, 1927 (Diary 3:154). In a note to another
story, “Miss Pryme,” Dick says that it was the son of Henry
Malthouse, landlord of the Rodmell pub, whose burial was involved.

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ANACTORIA: WAS IT, OR WAS IT NOT?
When in London, Woolf scholars might well consider visiting the
British Library. Virginia Woolf often did, and she still has a presence
there even today.

In June 2003, researching George Mallory’s ties to Virginia Woolf’s
Bloomsbury, I spent the better part of two weeks reading and often
transcribing hundreds of letters between various Bloomsbury figures
and their correspondents held by the British Library in London.
Typically, such research is both frustrating and rewarding at the same
time, for often the thread of a sought-for biographical episode remains broken or lost, even as other fascinating threads surface with every turn of a manuscript volume’s large pages.

Hoping to shed light on what has become known as the “Affaire George,” Mallory’s romantic entanglement with Lytton and James Strachey, I was particularly interested in the Strachey brothers’ correspondence of 1909, the year of the affair. Some time that spring, even as Lytton Strachey fantasized in letters to his brother about his romantic chances with George, his brother James got to Mallory first, but he did not get around to telling Lytton about his conquest until the first of September. That letter (and all the letters quoted below) can be found in Volume LIV of the Strachey Papers, which the British Library catalogs as ADD 60708. As for my particular quest, there is a more than month-long and rather suspicious gap in the brothers’ correspondence following James’ revelation. In any event, according to James, his affair with George had finally come to the end of its long denouement on November 8, as he reported to his brother in a letter dated that same day. To say the least, I was frustrated at this abbreviated account, but it turns out that an interesting episode was about to begin in the next letter bound into the volume.

On November 14, 1909, Lytton Strachey, writing from the Pythagoras House in Cambridge (in rooms he had acquired from George Mallory) to James, then resident in London, unburdened himself of a voluminous cargo of gossip that ranged from a “dreary” new affair between “Poor [Harry] Norton” and “Alfred, or Albert as he’s called” to a recent sighting by J. D. Duff, his old college tutor, who had spied Lytton “walking about with a ‘round-faced youth’” whom Lytton revealed to James was “dear bulbous George.” On November 15, 1909, James Strachey, perhaps attempting to trump his brother’s gossip, sent his reply. After an opening paragraph that assessed and praised Lytton’s gossip, James relayed his latest news concerning their sister Marjorie and Virginia Stephen:

The latest affaire here is perhaps merely an old one in fancy dress. Virginia has just proposed to Marjorie [Strachey]. The proposal took the rather original form of a cheque for 30 pounds. But I think perhaps we’re all in too much of a hurry with our cries of ‘Anactoria!’ Isn’t dear Vee striking through Marjorie at you? (oh, I didn’t intend that.) This is all strictly confidential of course.

As we can readily apprehend, even while construing Virginia’s bestowal of the cheque upon Marjorie as a kind of proposal, perhaps along the lines of a bride price, James went on to quickly question the apparent group verdict by positing that the incident was merely payback for Lytton’s own short-lived marriage proposal which had been made to Virginia on March 17, 1909. In his reply appearing on the third page of a letter dated November 16, Lytton adopted a similarly cautious line, and revealed he had his own vague suspicions:

The Anactoria episode is remarkable, and I do rather think it may simply be the old affair. When Vanessa was here last week, I asked her whether Virginia was in good spirits, and at the same time raked her with looks of steel. She certainly blenched, and gave most unnecessarily shaky answers. However, it’s difficult to say. Anactoria, I’m pretty sure, it’s not.

For three weeks the incident drops out of the correspondence, but in a December 6 letter from James to Lytton it reappears, jumping to the head of the letter, and now involving Duncan Grant:

There seem to have been some doings between Marjorie + Virginia. My report however is only via Duncan. Marjorie stayed a night (Friday) at Fitzroy. On Sunday morning she told Duncan she thought she could really never go there again—she was so frightened. It seems that they (M. + V.) were talking about Virginia: + Marjorie told her she thought she (Virginia) was too literary + never had any real feelings. Whereupon Virginia broke into a passionate tirade. “No feelings? It’s you that have no feelings. You don’t know what feelings are. You come here How dare you come here and despise me? I despise you. Oh, my God! if you only knew the unfathomable horrors in which I pass my whole life! etc. etc.” And Marjorie was merely alarmed: “I shall write + say that I can never go there again, unless she guarantees that such a scene shall not be repeated!” Her first introduction, I suspect, to la vie moderne. Will she break up under it?

She also said: ‘I wish Virginia wouldn’t confide in me. She told me something that I’m sure she bitterly regret [sic] having told me.’ Quoi done? Duncan thinks it may be that she’s in love with him. (That’s the latest news.) I’ve encouraged him to propose as usual. And he’s promised to. But personally I believe it’s still just you.

Lytton’s reply to this latest and last salvo from his brother also came at the head of a letter, dated December 7:

Your letter fills me with alarm. I can only hope that you have not really been so insensate as to encourage Duncan in any such thing. He is not at all a person to be depended on. If he did propose and found (or did not find) that it was a mistake, how particularly ghastly! Either one or both of their existences would be shattered and possibly destroyed. If he’s to be told anything, it is that such a course is infinitely risky. However, I don’t believe she’d accept him. The Marjorie business is very mysterious. This tic for not facing facts is beyond me. It all sounds, too, rather melodramatic.—“Bitterly regret”? There’s certainly some vamping. I shouldn’t be surprised if the only confidence was that she had been proposed to by Hilton Young.

This was the last word on the subject from either Strachey. Was it ‘Anactoria’? Or was it not? I do not know. But it is important to note James Strachey’s role in the incident. During this key early period in Bloomsbury, he was a frequent dinner guest of the Bells
and Virginia Stephen, and he clearly relished his role as a conduit of gossip both to and from his older brother.

Donald T. Blume  
Central Connecticut State University

Note

1 The name Anactoria appears in a fragment of poetry attributed to Sappho.

THE MARIA JACKSON LETTERS: WOOLF AND FAMILIAL DISCOURSES OF EMBODIMENT

I begin with the words of a ten-year-old Virginia Stephen:

Mrs. Jackson, the invalid of 22 Hyde Park Gate has been having a most severe attack of a sort of mongrel disease though at first Mrs. Stephen thought it was that disease of all diseases influenza. But this has happily proved incorrect. She is now much better though very weak.

Our “anonymous” author of the Hyde Park Gate News, Monday, March 7, 1892 edition, coins the name by which most Woolf scholars and biographers have come to know her maternal grandmother, Maria Jackson: “the invalid of 22 Hyde Park Gate.” In the months prior to Maria Jackson’s death that April, while Maria occupied a room in their household, the children of Leslie and Julia Stephen made much of “granny’s” health—almost, perhaps, as much as Maria herself made of it. In December 1891, the Hyde Park Gate News admonished “AN OLD SUFFERER” to “eat as much as you can and to employ a good rubber also to exercise your limbs as much as possible” (1.48). Such tactics, as outlined in countless letters written by Maria Jackson to her daughter, Julia, seem to indicate that plenty of food and massage, along with a little of “the morphia,” were indeed among Jackson’s favored approaches to her own health care.

These letters, however, also contain a wealth of information about how this woman, generally depicted as a relic of high Victoriana, was in fact considerably informed about the body’s physiology in a way that surpasses descriptions of her by Hermione Lee as “the most puritanical and ascetic of the Pattlesisters” (92) and by Quentin Bell as simply “a goose” (18). In his foundational biography of his aunt Virginia, Bell describes Maria Jackson as one vast display of “the dull side of the Pattles: their silliness, their gush, their cloying sweetness”; reading her letters, he assesses, is akin to “struggling through a wilderness of treacle” (18). Panthea Reid, a later Woolf biographer whose work with Jackson’s letters is extensive, agrees with Bell and extends her dismay to the fact that Jackson’s values “may be disturbing, but they are archaeologically very interesting, revealing that the same class that produced those Victorians of prodigious energy could also produce its own parasites” (459).

I do not wish to refute the facts of Jackson’s precious vigilance toward her own health, but I have looked beyond that Maria to have found a woman quite different from the one described by Woolf biographers. While sorting and rustling through the three boxes held at the University of Sussex that contain nearly one thousand uncatalogued letters written by Maria Jackson, I have been, of course, amused by letters such as one written circa 1880 from Vichy in which she assures Julia, “My bowels are getting sound & my tongue is cleaner.” But the letter-writer who has emerged for me is also one whose knowledge of the body surpasses that of a hypochondriac concerned with only her own cramps and ills. Maria Jackson was also the wife of an Anglo-Indian physician; John Jackson was a surgeon who taught and practiced medicine in Calcutta, and later in England, for many years. Mary Bennett’s recent book on Dr. Jackson provides a number of examples of his letter writing through excerpts from his correspondence with daughter Adeline, and although there are apparently no extant letters to Maria from her husband, his letters to Ady are rich with details of his social and household life. One can speculate that letters to his wife might have further outlined his professional life. Quentin Bell notes that Maria “was not a doctor’s wife for nothing” (18), and intimates that her knowledge of a medicalized body served only her own psychosomatic purposes. The fact that Maria was, however, a doctor’s wife is evident in her letters to Julia, and indicates a thread of common interest between mother and daughter with regard to health-care practices of the late nineteenth century.

In a letter dated October 5, [1889], Maria writes to Julia, “I found [...] your notes from Sick Rooms & I read it with such pleasure—it is so fresh and bright not a dull page on what might be & generally is made such a dull subject.” Julia’s tract on nursing, published in 1883, advocates much the same professional health care practices for patients as does writing by contemporaries such as Florence Nightingale. Matters of health care have been noted by Panthea Reid as abysmal fodder for mother-daughter correspondence, but when viewed as more than near daily complaints about Maria’s chronic rheumatoid arthritis, her letters to Julia exhibit a meeting on common ground in a way that reveals both her own knowledge of health and Julia’s devotion to similar matters. The two women were able to discuss issues related to the human body frankly and with relative medical precision, a far cry from the frail and demure Victorian ladies that both women, but particularly Maria Jackson, have been made out to be.

In letters to her daughter, Maria outlines both her own daily dramas of the body and those of others around her. In February of perhaps 1883, she details that a servant on leave has written “that her sister is going into Hospital to undergo an operation that the tumour is in the womb so that I suppose it is ovarian.” This exposition not only of the disease, but also of the female reproductive organs, is relatively unique in its display of a marked level of comfort with discussions of the physical body. The ways in which discourses of the body have been passed from one generation to another are evidenced here within Maria’s side of the correspondence. Maria’s interest in the physical human condition, especially in the illnesses of women, is poignantly addressed when Adeline, her eldest daughter, is in her
Maria writes, “I am sure they have never told Dr. S. of her uterine complaint” (April 7, [1881]), and a few days later, “I think it not unlikely that she may be suffering from disease of the womb [which] the retching & diarrhoea [would] so increase. & I do not think Dr S knows [about] it. Of course he [could] not speak [with] the girls [about] it. and if the darling is suffering [from] any local cause it may increase her restlessness and I dare say the rectum is sore” (April 12). She advises Julia, “Question her about her womb. You will feel whether it protrudes.” A month later, after Addy’s death in mid-April, Maria repeats to Julia a conversation with “Dr. M.”: “I made him read Dr. S’s letters he said it [would] not have altered the event.] He said the womb had never had anything to do with it only That it was unfortunate as it tended to weaken her” (May 9). Maria writes as a mother who wishes to know what has caused her daughter’s death, and illuminates through her questioning of her own doctor a wish to be educated about the medicalized body. She also seems unashamed to discuss aspects of female embodiment that could not have been discussed with “the girls,” but that were part of her domain as a woman with particular information about health and the body.

Similar to her response to Addy’s death, Maria’s inquiries after the death of her husband, John Jackson, express these same hopes for clarification and education. In April 1887, less than two weeks after Dr. Jackson’s death, she writes,

We have talked over all the illness and he is quite clear [about] there having been stone in the kidney [which] had come lower down & caused hemorrhage from the artery, he says he saw arterial blood [which] [should] not have been the case if it had come from the Prostate as Mr. J. supposed. (April 11, 1887)

Here, too, Maria’s use of medical terminology is accurate beyond what might be expected of a Victorian woman of the upper class, and the fact that she can discuss with precision the details of male reproductive health far outstrips those descriptions of her as a prude focused only upon her own illnesses.

Most likely in 1881, a fascinating conversation took place between Maria and Julia that underscores their shared knowledge of the human body. For about two weeks’ running, as far as my ability to trace the strand of discussion goes, Maria urged Julia over and again to be vaccinated against smallpox, which was seemingly breaking out all over. The first mention comes May 8, when Maria tells her daughter, “Dr. M. says you ought to be vaccinated. [...] they are vaccinating from the calf—it being vaccinated from the human subject & then the human from it. He says vaccination ought always to succeed [...] so my lamb I am sure you ought to be done [.]” This letter and those that follow seem to be written soon after Addy’s death, and thus Maria’s worries over losing another daughter would likely have been running high. Two days later, she writes,

Dr. Seton advised you very ill in the matter of vaccination. Everyone should be vaccinated after maturity, and you have not been revaccinated for they were only attempts at vaccination since they did not succeed. [...] You know I was constantly revaccinated & yet I never took until I was done at Sax[onbury] when Gerald was vaccinated [which] was a time of epidemic[.] (May 10)

Several additional letters ensue, and some discuss the fact that Julia should have been vaccinated “from Toto,” seeming to indicate that Thoby had been vaccinated as a baby and that vaccinations were derived from human as well as from animal subjects. The apparent final letter in this sequence explains in great detail the procedure used to vaccinate: “if you have been vaccinated take care that [your] arm is not rubbed & that you do not wet it in your Bath. Minna and Mrs. W. [...] were vaccinated by scraping the arm so that such place is as big as sixpence & began to discharge immed[iately] & has gone on discharging all the time” (May 22). As with the letters written after the death of Addy and of John Jackson, these letters illustrate one woman’s understanding of health care and also of her ability to converse with her daughter about the nature of the physical body.

Julia, the daughter of a medical doctor and of this inquisitive, instructive mother, grew into a woman determined to take a professional stance in her care for the infirm of her extended family and of the village of St. Ives. We see her as Mrs. Ramsay in To the Light-house, basket over her arm, hurrying away to tend to the ill and impoverished. Julia, however, as indicated by her public writing about health care and her desire to create sustainable services in St. Ives, took her role far more seriously than she is often credited with having done. For her, nursing was not simply feminine obligation, but a matter of progressive thinking and of public duty. Her abilities served a milieu beyond the private sphere of influence generally granted to Victorian middle- and upper-class women. Her work also seems to have been an extension of her family’s investment, in both real and discursive contexts, in the wellness of the human body. Her children might have played central roles in the Bloomsburian sexual revolution when adults, but while they were small children, their mother received regular letters from a grandmother who spoke of the body without hesitation, presumably to a Julia who took an active role in the other side of their correspondence. The Stephen children knew enough about “granny’s” physical complaints to satirize them in the family newspaper, and to address their mother’s forays into the medical profession. “Mrs. Stephen,” reports the Hyde Park Gate News, “who is really like a ‘Good Angel’ to the poor of St. Ives is now trying to get enough ‘Filthy Lucre’ to start a nurse in the town. In her pilgrimages among the poor she has discovered the real want of one” (2.38). The next month: “Mrs. Stephen declared that it was positively wicked to spend so much money on eating. Perhaps she thought it would be better spent upon her nurse” (2.44). At the age of ten, Virginia had been exposed to information that was a staple in the conversations between her mother and grandmother, and did not find it shocking, but simply the makings of a decent family joke.

Consideration of these letters suggests that there is a place for this information in the future of Woolf studies, especially in scholarship that explores issues of Woolf’s own notions of the human body, most particularly of her own. Woolf scholarship for more than a decade has circled, and sometimes hit head-on, matters of Woolf’s relation-
ship to embodiment. From the issues of sexual abuse raised in Louise DeSalvo’s work to the growing canon of work addressing Woolf’s lesbianism, and recently works such as Allie Glenny’s book on Woolf and food,¹ as a group of scholars we cannot escape questions of Woolf’s negotiations of embodiment. With such issues, however, it can be too easy to slip onto slopes of reductive reasoning or at least of thinking that leaves out the texture and the complexity of the ways in which Woolf not only experienced the material world and her own quite material body, but also how she wrote this world into her novels and essays. I do not mean to suggest that what I only have begun to discuss here can supplant that other scholarship, but I instead wonder what we might do with the addition to that collection of ideas of the notion that Woolf was raised listening to matter-of-fact talk about medical practice, disease and death, and the stability of her grandmother’s bowels. If we can use the wealth of information in those three boxes of letters to problematize—rather than to pathologize—Woolf and her articulations of the body, then Maria Jackson may have left more of a legacy to Woolf scholars than that with which she has previously been credited.

Andrea Adolph
Kent State University - Stark Campus

Notes
I wish to thank the Society of Authors for the Estate of Virginia Woolf for permission to quote from the Hyde Park Gate News.

1 For an overview of Dr. Jackson’s career, see his professional obituary in The British Medical Journal June 4, 1887: 1249. According to a letter from Maria Jackson to Julia Stephen dated the same day, the obituary was written by Leslie Stephen with Julia’s assistance.


3 The text of Julia Stephen’s essay can be found in Julia Duckworth Stephen: Stories for Children, Essays for Adults, ed. and introductions Diane F. Gillespie and Elizabeth Steele (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1987), 216-40.

4 DeSalvo’s work, Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Her Life and Work (New York: Ballantine, 1989), has been both lauded and deplored for its examinations of Woolf’s relationships with sexuality and embodiment; Allie Glenny’s work builds from DeSalvo’s in many ways. See Ravenous Identity: Eating and Eating Distress in the Life and Work of Virginia Woolf (New York: St. Martin’s, 1999).

SPANIELS AND WALES IN FLUSH
In a light-hearted account of spaniels, mention is made in Flush of medieval Wales:

“The Spaniel of the King is a pound in value,” Hywel Dha laid it down in his Book of Laws. And when we remember what a pound could buy in A.D. 948—how many wives, slaves, horses, oxen, turkeys, and geese—it is plain that the spaniel was already a dog of value and reputation. He had his place already by the King’s side. (Woolf 8)

Though its context is unserious, this allusion still says something about the author. The quotation, from a translation by Aneurin Owen (1792-1851) of Welsh laws in the Black Book of Chirk, is exact (Jones 1055). The quote shows that learning underpinned even Virginia Woolf’s less serious writing. Nevertheless, although Owen was a good scholar, his translation of “spaniel” is anachronistic. Authorities now translate Welsh colwyn (cognate with Old Cornish coloin “whelp” and Old Irish cuilén “pup”) in the Black Book as “whelp, puppy, lapdog” (Lloyd-Jones 161). The Welsh laws in their surviving recensions in any case do not predate the earlier thirteenth-century, so are poor evidence for the age of Hywel Dda (d. 950), their traditional compiler (Jenkins and Owen 4).

Thus, analysis allows two conclusions: first, once again, it makes one respect Virginia Woolf’s erudition. Second, it shows she was nonetheless misled by nineteenth-century translation. Her evidence for royal spaniels in tenth-century Wales has no substance.

Andrew Breeze
University of Navarre, Pamplona

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NOVEL WRITING AS AN ASSIGNMENT: VIRGINIA WOOLF’S SEARCH FOR PERFECTION

In a 1919 review of Joseph Hergesheimer’s Java Head, Woolf compliments Hergesheimer’s first novel, The Three Black Pennys, then complains that in the second novel, he has contended himself with more of the same. Chiding Hergesheimer, Woolf writes, “There is only one way to remain young: it is to cease doing what you have learnt to do easily and perhaps successfully, and to attempt what you are not certain of being able to do at all” (Essays 3:47). This was the guiding principle behind Woolf’s own career. All of her works are attempts at something new. If she failed to achieve artistic perfection or to realize completely her idea for each of the novels, it was with the knowledge that the ideal changed with each new literary experiment.

In a 1922 letter to Gerald Brenan, Woolf discusses the challenge which she set herself in writing, “I think I mean that beauty, which you say I sometimes achieve, is only got by the failure to get it; by grinding all the flints together; by facing what must be humiliation—the things one can’t do” (Letters 2:599). Further along in the same letter, Woolf says the following of the achievement that comes from the completion of an artistic vision:

> Are we not always hoping? And though we fail every time, surely we do not fail so completely as we should have failed if we were not in the beginning, prepared to attack the whole. One must renounce, when the book is finished; but not before it is begun. (Letters 2:599-600)

Virginia Woolf, then, saw each of her works as progressive steps toward the achievement of some sort of ideal. As a result, she approached her writing as a series of intellectual assignments. That she did so is not surprising when one considers that her formal education was gained chiefly in tutorials; the rest Woolf acquired through independent reading. In Virginia Woolf: A Biography, Quentin Bell writes that, in fact, “the main part of the teaching [of the Stephen children] seems to have been done by Julia and Leslie” (1:26), both of which, it would appear, were severe and daunting taskmasters. Of Leslie Stephen, Bell writes, “a wrangler himself, he was quite unable to perceive the difficulties that a small child encounters when faced by a simple calculation; naturally he lost his temper” (1:26). Apparently, their mother was no refuge: “Neither was Julia a good teacher. In dealing with her own children she had a hasty temper” (1:26).

Harrowing as they must have been, these parental tutorials ingrained in Woolf the habit of writing as if for practice or of setting herself tasks which she continued to attack in her professional life as a writer. This habit, Bell says, was established as early as 1904:

> She had been training herself to be a writer for a long time. That is to say she had been reading voraciously and writing assiduously. Her journals during these years consist, almost always, of careful essays written as though for publication: attempts to describe a day in the country, a visit to Earl’s Court (1:93)

That this approach continued throughout her life is apparent in her journals and letters where the words “next time” become like a litany of artistic promise. With the publication of Jacob’s Room for example, Woolf wrote to Roger Fry in the same vein that she had penned letters to Lady Ottoline Morell, Philip Morell, Bunny Garnett, and Hope Mirrlees at the same time:

> I’m sending you my novel tomorrow—a little reluctantly. It has some merit, but its too much of an experiment. I am buoyed up, as usual, by the thought that I’m now, at last, going to bring it off—next time. I suppose one goes on thinking this for ever; and so burrowing deeper and deeper into whatever it is that perpetually fascinates. (Letters 2:573)

These sentiments, written in 1922, foreshadow Woolf’s modus operandi for the rest of her life. There were hazards, of course, with this approach, of which Woolf was well aware, “Writing without the old banisters, one make jumps and jerks that are not necessary; but I go on saying that next time I shall achieve it” (Letters 3:3).

Each new writing task is in fact, in the beginning, distinguished in her journals and letters by an overwhelming optimism. For Woolf, the beginning was always a challenge, a time to clarify the vision before plunging in. What she says of Mrs. Dalloway could be applied to her feeling about any one of her other novels as well, “I want to foresee this book better than the others, & get the utmost out of it” (Diary 2:209). Later in the early stages of composing Mrs. Dalloway (then called The Hours), Woolf wrote with enthusiasm:

> I may have found my mine this time I think. I may get all my gold out. The great thing is not to feel bored with one’s own writing. That is the signal for a change—never mind what, so long as it brings interest. And my vein of gold lies so deep, in such bent channels. To get it I must forge ahead, stoop & grope. But it is gold of a kind I think. (Diary 2:292)

However, with the completion of the work, whatever its title, Woolf began to feel that the gold had turned to base metal, so that she could use the past tense to say of any of them in dismissal what she says of Jacob’s Room in a letter to Phillip Morrell, “When I wrote it I thought it was better than my other books” (Letters 2:575).

The same pattern manifests itself in Orlando, though critics have failed to discern it and thus have given Woolf’s negative comments more significance than they deserve. A journal entry for June 6, 1927 finds Woolf setting herself the task for a new novel that would become Orlando, “I would like to learn to write a steady plain narrative style” (Diary 3:136). Turned critical, as always, with the completion of the self-assigned writing task, Woolf reviewed the merits of her experience with Orlando and the benefits it garnered for her writing:

> Orlando is of course a very quick brilliant book. Yes, but I did not try to explore. And must I always explore? Yes I
think so still. Because my reaction is not the usual. Nor can I even after all these years run it off lightly. Orlando taught me how to write a direct sentence; taught me continuity & narrative, & how to keep the realities at bay. (Diary 3:203)

Woolf not only gave herself writing assignments and carried them through; in the absence of those strict tutors, her parents, she also assessed results in critical queries like the one above and this second one followed the publication of Orlando:

Orlando has done very well [...]. People say this was spontaneous, so natural. And I would like to keep those qualities if I could without losing the others. But those qualities were largely the result of ignoring the others. They came of writing exteriorly; & if I dig, must I not lose them? And what is my own position toward the inner & the outer? I think a kind of ease & dash are good;—yes: I think even externality is good; some combination of them ought to be possible. (Diary 3:209)

Woolf’s failure to achieve her avowed aim of perfection “next time” certainly does not mean her novels fail. There is a danger in listening too closely to the author’s voice proclaiming failure and being blinded to what has been achieved. Woolf would doubtless have been happier and her critics more just had they been able to accept William Faulkner’s assessment of his contemporaries: “All of us failed to achieve our dream of perfection. So I rate us on the basis of our splendid failure to do the impossible” (quoted in Heuvel 123).

Rebecca McNeer
Ohio University - Southern

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VIRGINIA WOOLF’S ADVICE ON WRITING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
It is interesting to note not only Virginia Woolf’s own practices of editing and revising, but also her advice on editing to a young Chinese woman writer struggling to write in English. After the death of Julian Bell, Woolf had a sixteen-month correspondence (March 3, 1938-July 16, 1939) with a Chinese writer and painter, Ling Shuhua, who had an affair with Julian Bell when he was teaching at Wuhan University in China. Ling Shuhua, an admirer of Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own, wrote to Woolf and sent chapters of her autobiography, Ancient Melodies (eventually published by Leonard Woolf in 1957). In her letters, Ling cast Woolf in the role of laoshr, meaning “teacher.” Struggling with writing in English and in the genre of autobiography, a form new to the Chinese, she wondered about her “tools,” making a charming comparison between cooking with foreign implements and writing in a foreign language:

I know there is very little chance for me to write a good book in English for the tool[s] I use to do my work in something which I can not handle well. It is true in cooking too, if one uses a foreign pin [foreign pan] or stove to cook a Chinese dish, it won’t come out the same as the original. It often loses some good taste. In writing I don’t know how far it counts. When I read a good translation, I feel a relief at once{.] … Dear Virginia, I want you to tell me what shall I do since I am in a state of nervous tension. Oh, yet, how I hope you would be as kind as before to tell me to try it, don’t despair [sic]. (Berg 12.31.38)¹

Woolf appraised Shuhua’s autobiographical chapters—about her childhood as the daughter of the Mayor of Peking, her mother one of six concubines—noting “a charm in the unlikeness. I find the similes strange and poetical” (10.15.38). Woolf valued the “foreignness” in her style, and urged her “to keep the Chinese flavor” (2.28.39):

Please go on; write freely. Do not mind how directly you translate the Chinese into the English. In fact I would advise you to come as close to the Chinese both in style and meaning as you can. Give as many natural details of the life of the house, of the furniture as you like. And always do it as if you were writing Chinese. (10.15.38)

Countering the advice of most ESL teachers today, Woolf encouraged Shuhua to “think” and write in Chinese, then translate into English. She dismissed Shuhua’s worry about English grammar, and told her to resist the common practice of putting her work into formal English prose. She countered that if the manuscript were, to some extent, “made easy grammatically by someone English I think it might be possible to keep the Chinese flavour and make it both understandable and yet strange for the English” (10.15.38). Woolf valued the “strangeness” of the writing voice and worked with Shuhua to preserve it.

Patricia Laurence
Brooklyn College

Note
¹ All references are to correspondence between Virginia Woolf and Ling Shuhua in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library. Copies of these letters can also be found in the Monks House Papers, University of Sussex, England.
MRS. DALLOWAY’S INVITATION

The question of Virginia Woolf and revision has particular relevance when considering Mrs. Dalloway. Numerous authors have chosen to revisit and revise Woolf’s 1925 novel. Michael Cunningham’s novel The Hours and its recent film adaptation are the most recent, but the original was also re-envisioned as a film in 1997 starring Vanessa Redgrave, and it has inspired other literary returns such as Robin Lippincott’s Mr. Dalloway. Even Woolf herself was uncharacteristically unable to leave the world of the novel alone. Not only is it one of the rare instances of characters recurring from an earlier novel (The Voyage Out), but also one of the instances of Woolf returning to the novel after it was “finished.” As Stella McNichol, editor and collector of the short stories gathered in Mrs. Dalloway’s Party (stories that were written both before and after Mrs. Dalloway), points out:

It is particularly uncharacteristic of Virginia Woolf’s normal writing habits that she should have allowed her completed novel’s central concern to retain the hold on her imagination that it obviously then had. On finishing the novel she wrote out several of the short stories about Mrs. Dalloway’s party. Usually when she had finally revised a novel, Virginia Woolf was only too anxious, as it were, to shut it out of her mind. (10)

What is it then about Mrs. Dalloway that invites return and revision? Why is it that the novel itself functions like an invitation to a party, one that demands a response? Why does a novel renowned for its organic unity nonetheless seem to demand to be completed?

Part of the reason lies in the convincing and compelling characterization of Clarissa herself, a figure who appeals immensely to almost all readers of the novel. Every return to Mrs. Dalloway is in some sense a response to her, to her desire. For if there is one thing that Clarissa desires, it is a response. When, for instance, she is denied the recognition of an invitation by Lady Bruton, Clarissa turns to a particular fantasy for comfort: “She began to go slowly upstairs, with her hand on the bannisters, as if she had left a party, where now this friend now that had flashed back her face, her voice” (30). As her attempts to compose “her self [into something]—pointed; dart-like; definite” in front of the mirror suggest, this desire to see oneself reflected, by others or by a mirror, is always an attempt to ensure oneself of one’s own completeness (37). What are the numerous literary returns to Mrs. Dalloway if not an attempt to “flash back” (and flash back to) the compelling central character of the novel? Clarissa Vaughan in Michael Cunningham’s The Hours is, of course, the quintessential example of an attempt to revive and complete Woolf’s Clarissa.

Perhaps The Hours also suggests another reason for Mrs. Dalloway’s appeal for revision by Woolf and revisititation by subsequent authors: the quasi-identification of Clarissa and Woolf herself. Without resorting to an autobiographical roman à clef reading, one can nonetheless—as The Hours, following in a long critical tradition, does—trace a number of connections between Clarissa and Woolf. And, as Quentin Bell points out, Woolf longed for a response to her writings as surely as Clarissa does to her invitations, and for similar reasons:

Her novels were very close to her own private imaginings; she was always conscious that, to the outside world, they might appear simply mad, or, worse still, that they really were mad. Her dread of the ruthless mockery of the world contained within it the deeper fear that her art, and therefore her self, was a kind of sham, an idiot’s dream of no value to anyone. For her, therefore, a favorable notice was more valuable than mere praise; it was a kind of certificate of sanity. (2:28-29)

This yearning for a “favorable notice” is commensurate with Clarissa’s longing for the favorable responses of others. Just as Clarissa wants her party guests to “complete” her by responding to and reflecting (on) her, Woolf, at least according to Quentin, seems to have viewed the positive responses of others as confirmation of her own “sanity” or psychic wholeness. This shared desire of the author and the protagonist for recognition and wholeness reappears as a narrative desire in the form of the novel as a whole.

In Reading for the Plot, Peter Brooks traces the existence of something like desire in the movement of novelistic narrative. While Mrs. Dalloway certainly does not conform to Brooks’ masculine Oedipal model of ambitious progress, it does resemble what Brooks identifies as the “female plot, […] an inner drive toward the assertion of selfhood in resistance to the overt and violating male plot of ambition” (39). It also, in its continual return to the past through Clarissa’s memories of Bourton, implies a type of personal “revision” connected to this more internal, “female” desire. This desire is evident not only in Clarissa’s character but in the unique form of Mrs. Dalloway, so that the desire of the novel itself parallels the desire of its eponymous protagonist and its author. To understand this we need only examine how Woolf’s “tunneling technique,” the narratorial, free indirect discourse’s quasi-metonymic movement from thought to thought or from character to character, mirrors the form of Clarissa’s own desirous reveries. Just as Clarissa’s desirous thoughts can move from the flowers in the London flower shop to a reverie about Bourton and Sally Seton through the association of flowers with Sally, the novel moves from character to character through associations of contiguity. Thus, Woolf’s novel, anticipating not only Peter Brooks but also Jacques Lacan and Roman Jakobson, links the movements of desire, metonymy, and the movement of narrative.

Although Clarissa finally has her initial fantasy of recognition and response fulfilled, her invitation responded to when Peter thinks “For there she was” at the close of the novel, the novel itself seems somehow both satisfactorily concluded and oddly open-ended (194). What else happens at the much-anticipated party? What is going to become of Clarissa “tomorrow”? Most importantly, does anyone else recognize Clarissa for who she is? Does Peter even really do so? The reader, like the author, is left to speculate and to revisit and revise the text herself. Perhaps this readerly revision, as embodied in Woolf’s own returns to the world of her novel, in the recent
adaptations of the novel, and in the subsequent critical work on it, is precisely what *Mrs. Dalloway* seeks to instantiate, a continual return that, in its response to the novel, assures it of a paradoxically incomplete wholeness.

Richard Heppner
Slippery Rock University

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**“THE BULLET THAT DID NOT KILL ME”: JINNY IN THE WAVES**

Critics have relatively little to say about Jinny, the most enigmatic of the three women among the six characters in Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*. She is a puzzling character (or “caricature,” to use Woolf’s own term [*Diary* 3:300]) because she is so thoroughly preoccupied with the body and sexual relationships: “She is the only female in all Virginia Woolf’s fiction wholly devoted to a sexual life” (Miko 71).

It is in the first holograph draft of the novel that Woolf draws on a particularly telling metaphor that reveals Jinny’s significance in *The Waves*. In partially cancelled passages, Woolf compares Jinny to a dodged bullet, describing her as:

unthinking. [...] something so hot it must embed itself in coolness; & yet, [...] shrapnel shot from a gun; cannon to tear human flesh & blunts its own nose, & die a spent bullet in some far crevice—to be dug out—stood in a bowl on the mantelpiece & pointed to, in years to come, as the bullet that did not kill me. It missed me for such and such a reason. (Graham 12)

I want to suggest that, as this passage from the manuscript suggests, Jinny represents an alter ego for Woolf, an alternate way of handling the painful experiences of childhood sexual abuse that Louise DeSalvo has documented at length.

If the promiscuous Jinny seems an unlikely double for the sexually troubled Woolf, it is surely significant that Woolf gave this fiery character an abbreviated version of her own name and compared her in one passage to a “mountain goat” (*The Waves* 174), recalling that Woolf’s family nickname was “The Goat” (Bell 1:24). In her autobiographical essay “A Sketch of the Past,” Woolf quotes Leslie Stephen as calling her “Jinny” (*Moments of Being* 144). Isobel Grundy writes:

About Jinny two things strike me as relevant: one is Leigh Hunt’s rondeau “Jinny kissed me,” whose rapid spontaneous action is reproduced—with such different emotional consequences—as the first major event of the novel [...] the other is that it is a version of the author’s own name. “Jenny” is historically a pet form of Jane, not Jennifer, and has until fairly recent times been pronounced “Jinny”; the novelist used “Jinny” for her own childhood name, as well as “Ginny,” which she signed as late as November 1935. [...]. Critics have so regularly identified her with Rhoda—except when noting her presence in Bernard or in all six characters of *The Waves*—that it may redress the balance to notice this link with the gay, acutely sensuous, party-going, courageous Jinny. (217)

Eric Warner suggests that Jinny also shares “Woolf’s love of clothes and social occasions” (83).

If it seems farfetched to assert that Jinny, like her creator and like Rhoda, was sexually abused, consider Jinny’s own testimony. She describes an experience that certainly sounds like rape:

He follows. I am pursued through the forest. [...] Now the cool tide of darkness breaks its waters over me. [...] Now I hear crash and rending of boughs and the crack of antlers as if the beasts of the forest were all hunting, all rearing high and plunging down among the thorns. One has pierced me. One is driven deep within me. And velvet flowers and leaves whose coolness has been stood in water wash me round, and sheathe me, embalming me. (W 177)

Here is the familiar imagery of waves, predatory animals, and death, coupled with images that suggest painful heterosexual intercourse. Earlier in the paragraph—“Someone moves. Did I raise my arm? Did I look? Did my yellow scarf with the strawberry spots float and signal?” (W 176-77)—she talks about unintentional signals and seems (as many incest victims do) to feel partly responsible for what has happened to her.¹

Moreover, as Kathy J. Phillips points out in her book *Virginia Woolf Against Empire*, “Jinny’s imitation of the sound of a nightingale recalls T. S. Eliot’s line in *The Waste Land*, ‘Jug Jug’ to dirty ears” (I.103), which in turn alludes to Ovid’s story of how Tereus’s raped and mutilated victim, Philomela, turned into a bird (Ovid 175-83)” (Phillips 176). Why does Jinny echo the words of a raped woman unless she herself has also been a victim of rape?

Incest victims often withdraw from sexuality as a result of their abuse, as Woolf apparently did (with respect to heterosexuality, at least), but others “act out” their feelings by becoming promiscuous (Blume 217; Russell 167). As Jinny says of herself at a party, “I do not care for anything in this world. I do not care for anybody save this man whose name I do not know” (W 103). Because a family relationship has been inappropriately sexualized, incest survivors will sometimes inappropriately sexualize other relationships (Blume 216). This is precisely the way Jinny behaves, flitting from partner to partner.
Because incest victims had no control over their sexual behavior during their abuse, they often seek control over their sexual behavior as adults, having sex but maintaining the upper hand over their sexual partner (Blume 221). Similarly, Jinny says:

one man will single me out and will tell me what he has told no other person. He will like me better than Susan or Rhoda. He will find in me some quality, some peculiar thing. But I shall not let myself be attached to one person only. I do not want to be fixed, to be pinioned. (W 55)

She clearly feels herself to be in control: “I open my body, I shut my body at will” (W 64). Only later does she come to realize that in reacting to the abuse, she is still being controlled by it: “I am going to be buffeted; to be flung up, and flung down, among men, like a ship on the sea” (W 176). As Mitchell A. Leaska observes, “We may guess that this young hedonist, for whom each opening of the door lets in the possibility of new sexual adventure, will have countless spasms of pleasure but few moments of enduring contentment” (169).

If Rhoda fears drowning, Jinny responds very differently to the waves; dancing with the man whose name she does not know, she says, “Now with a little jerk, like a limpet broken from a rock, I am broken off: I fall with him; I am carried off. We yield to this slow flood” (W 103). As Rhoda observes, “Jinny rides like a gull on the wave” (W 106). Jinny responds to sexual violence by “going with the flow.” In an earlier draft of the novel, the benighted Rhoda envies Jinny’s apparent ease: “How unimaginable to me—how remote from me—how if I could be her. But I am unable to” (Graham 511).

There is always, of course, the small but very real possibility that incest victims will, in turn, abuse others (Courtois 85-86). As Jinny herself says, “I move like the leaf that moved in the hedge as a child and frightened me” (W 42). It is surely telling that, two pages after Jinny is compared to a bird, birds are described as committing an attack that suggests sexual violence: “They [the birds] spied a snail and tapped the shell against a stone. They tapped furiously, methodically, until the shell broke and something slimy oozed from the crack” (W 109). Similarly, in the previous interlude, the grotesque imagery metaphorically suggests rape:

Then one of them [the birds], beautifully darting, accurately alighting, spiked the soft, monstrous body of the defenceless worm, pecked again and yet again, and left it to fester. Down there among the roots where the flowers decayed, gusts of dead smells were wafted; drops formed on the bloated sides of swollen things. The skin of rotten fruit broke, and matter oozed too thick to run. Yellow excretions were exuded by slugs and now and again an amorphous body with a head at either end swayed slowly from side to side. The gold-eyed birds darting in between the leaves observed that purulence, that wetness, quizzically. Now and then they plunged the tips of their beaks savagely into the sticky mixture. (W 75)

The sexual nausea of this passage both emphasizes the violence of sexual abuse and, through the juxtaposition of the gull image with the violence of these birds, suggests that Jinny herself may have become a perpetrator of such abuse. Certainly Louis experiences her behavior as a form of violence: “She has found me. I am struck on the nape of the neck. She has kissed me. All is shattered” (W 13). Later, he tells the others, “Children, our lives have been gong striking; clamour and boasting; cries of despair; blows on the nape of the neck in gardens” (W 39-40). Even years later, he still recalls the experience as “a blow on the nape of my neck” (W 95-96).

It is this mindless repetition of sexual violence that Woolf rejected for herself. As the partially cancelled passages from the holograph draft make clear, Jinny is a kind of anti-self for Woolf—or, as she more picturesquely puts it, she sees Jinny as a dodged danger, “the bullet that did not kill me.” Jinny is the person she almost became, and Jinny’s life is the life Woolf just missed living.

Lisa Tyler
Sinclair Community College

Notes
1 I am indebted to Annette L. Varcoe for this point.

Carole Brown, who teaches at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Stephen Cook, Christina Hudson, Nancy J. Moffett, Caroline Smith, Janell Snyder, Annette L. Varcoe, and other students in Carole Brown’s British Novel course very generously reviewed and commented on an earlier and much longer version of this essay.

Works Cited
a book boomed and orders were heavy, [Virginia Woolf] would often join Miss Belsher, Miss Strachan and Miss Walton in the front office, doing up parcels. Young authors, coming in to leave a precious manuscript, would never suspect that they were actually in her presence as the drab figure in the gray overalls busied herself with scissors and string. (17)

In various recent conference papers, for the IVWS, MLA, and MSA, I have argued that Woolf the publisher remains that “drab figure in the gray overalls” for many Woolf scholars, despite an abundance of archival material documenting Woolf’s role as publisher. The most familiar Woolf archives are of course the manuscripts and drafts, many now in print, that have inescapably changed the way we read Woolf’s published texts. As Brenda Silver notes, “Once we are aware of the manuscript versions and their alternate readings, it becomes impossible, except by a willed act of commitment to a particular interpretive stance, not to be conscious of their presence within the ‘final’ text” (194). But the publishing archives, held primarily at the University of Sussex, the University of Reading, and Washington State University, offer compelling evidence for a recovery of Woolf as co-owner of her own publishing firm, not merely its most important author. Woolf worked not as an author isolated from textual production but as one immersed in what she once called “life on tap down here whenever it flags upstairs” (Diary 4:63), an elegant reminder that 52 Tavistock Square housed both the creative and business spaces for the Woolfs.

As Hogarth’s fiction editor, Woolf helped usher into print more than 50 novels and short story collections between 1917 and 1938 (when she sold her share in the firm to Lehmann). The Hogarth list during this period included Woolf’s own major contributions to modernism as well as such notable texts as: Katherine Mansfield’s Prelude; I. A. Bunin’s The Gentleman from San Francisco; F. M. Mayor’s The Rector’s Daughter; William Plomer’s Turbott Wolfe and The Case Is Altered; Italo Svevo’s The Hoax; Vita Sackville-West’s The Edwardians and All Passion Spent; John Hampson’s Saturday Night at the Greyhound; Christopher Isherwood’s Memorial and The Berlin Stories; Julia Strachey’s Cheerful Weather for the Wedding; Laurens van der Post’s In a Province; and Yuri Olesha’s Envy. Even more powerfully than T. S. Eliot at Faber & Faber, I would argue, Woolf influenced the course of British modernist fiction, opening Hogarth and its readers to a variety of literary perspectives outside the mainstream: Russian fiction by Bunin and Olesha; attacks on South African racism by Plomer and van der Post; Continental modernism from Svevo; homosexual narratives by Plomer and Isherwood; a working-class story by Hampson; and feminist satires by Sackville-West and Strachey. In addition, Virginia occasionally consulted with Leonard and Lehmann about advertising; and she served, with Leonard, as the firm’s book traveler for several years. Finally, Woolf was, of course, her own editor; this is true of every author to some degree, but the most direct manifestation of Woolf’s publishing freedom is that she and Leonard sought no outside opinions about her work (except in their famous consultation with Lehman regarding Between the Acts). 1

That editorial freedom depended always on Hogarth’s commercial success. As Woolf concludes in the draft version of A Room of One’s Own, “You can only have [intellectual?] freedom / if you have money. & / And you can only write if you have unbroken freedom” (179). (In an interesting rhetorical softening, “money” becomes “material things” in the published Room.) Two kinds of archival materials that demonstrate the link between Woolf’s intellectual freedom and Hogarth’s money are advertisements and sales records. Perhaps the most surprising Hogarth ad for Woolf’s books appeared in November 1928 for Orlando, with the following blurb from Arnold Bennett, of all reviewers: “You cannot keep your end up at a London dinner party in these weeks unless you have read Mrs. Virginia Woolf’s Orlando.” While Woolf the author famously uses Bennett as a foil for her diagnosis of Edwardian fiction, Woolf the publisher capitalizes on his praise to market the new “biography” by “Mrs. Woolf.” (Woolf worried about the sales effects of her insistence that bookstores shelve Orlando outside of the fiction section, but this book proved even more profitable than To the Lighthouse, which had financed the Woolfs’ first car.)

Leonard’s sales ledgers, now in the Sussex and Reading collections, also illustrate this confluence between Woolf’s conflicting and reinforcing roles. There are separate account books, for example, charting sales for Woolf and Sackville-West, suggesting both an effort to track Hogarth’s two most popular authors and to map their shifting personal relationship onto the professional sphere. Hogarth records also single out sales of Woolf’s Uniform Edition, a series designed both to reach a broader audience (the volumes were usually priced at 5s.) and to confer canonical status on Woolf through what she called her “Collected Edition” (Diary 3:225). 2 Finally, the archival records reveal that Hogarth paid Virginia both as an author and as a co-owner. For example, the Reading account books indicate...
author’s royalties of £455 for Orlando in 1928-29, and profits for the Press of £339, of which £169.5 was Woolf’s publisher’s share. Woolf received no royalties for Jacob’s Room in 1922, however; as Leonard explains, “Virginia Woolf, the publisher, had to some extent swindled Virginia Woolf, the author” (73). Once the Press’s expanded commercial horizons proved successful, Woolf resumed both roles.

Such “swindling” also represents the dual feminist goals advanced by Woolf in both professional roles. While as an author she could famously remark, “Call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, or by any name you please,” as a publisher she was marketing “Virginia Woolf” as a brand-name, in an effort to avoid the business mistakes for which she criticizes Jane Austen and others in Room. Only as author and publisher, that is, could Woolf revise the aesthetic and commercial roles available to modernist women writers.

John K. Young
Marshall University

Notes
1 Whereas Hermione Lee, then, calls Hogarth’s “editorial acumen (mostly, but not entirely, Leonard’s),” while acknowledging that Virginia’s “taste, decisions, and her influence are part” of Hogarth’s history, even if she “was not the Press’s main editor” (367), I would join Catherine Hollis in arguing for a broader conception of the Hogarth Press as a truly collaborative enterprise, in which Leonard and Virginia formed a larger, corporate whole. All Hogarth books read “Published by Leonard & Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press,” a literal description of their mutual endeavor. Beginning in 1928, Hogarth adopted as its standard marketing symbol a wolf’s head, a striking visual representation of a publishing firm whose most important author was also involved in all aspects of textual production.


Works Cited

In a recent “Talk of the Town” piece in the New Yorker, Bill Nye, host of the PBS show, Bill Nye the Science Guy, recalls watching his shadow lengthen on a beach: “When you understand how many stars are out there, more stars than there are grains of sand on the beach, you can think you’re just a speck orbiting a speck in the middle of specklessness” (quoted in Friend 28). Nye’s observation echoes reflections on the size of the universe that popularizers of science made in the twenties of the last century. Holly Henry’s Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science has as its major subject the relationship between popular accounts of astronomy and modern literature, especially the short stories and novels of Woolf, and the much less well-known fiction of Olaf Stapledon.

In her introductory chapter, “Formulating a Global Aesthetic,” Henry clearly sets forth the scope of her investigation. “This study,” she writes, “theorizes how Woolf’s aesthetic perspectives, as well as her pacifist politics, were shaped by advances in astronomy and by
emerging visualization technologies, ranging from large astronomical telescopes to the inexpensive hand-held camera” (2). In what is the book’s most admirable chapter, “Stars and Nebulae in Popular Culture,” Henry summarizes astronomical discoveries and measurements Edwin Hubble made through the 100-inch Mount Wilson Observatory, particularly the proof that extra-galactic nebulae existed. Henry argues that Woolf’s association with the *Athenaeum*, a journal that published both literary and scientific studies, and for which Woolf wrote literary essays and short stories, was one source for her knowledge of advances in astronomy, particularly through the essays of John William Navin Sullivan, who, as well as being assistant editor of the journal, wrote essays on contemporary science for it. Henry writes also about the effect of the total solar eclipse in June 1927 on Woolf and other writers. In a diary entry, Woolf wrote that the skies “became darker and darker as at the beginning of a violent storm: the light sank & sank...when suddenly the light went out. We had fallen. It [the earth] was extinct. There was no colour. The earth was dead” (Diary 3:14). The apocalyptic tone of this passage appears more often than a celebratory one in Woolf and her contemporaries’ writings about astronomical events and astronomers’ view of nature: “The solar eclipse catalyzed for Woolf a vision of earth as a fragile oasis of life for all humankind” (Henry 24). The view of the universe new astronomical discoveries promoted was a profoundly pessimistic one, posing for writers the question of whether they were capable of representing this new reality: “[W]e hear all round us,” Woolf wrote, in “Character in Fiction” (Essays 3:433-34) “in poems and novels and biographies, even in newspaper articles and essays...crashing and destruction. It is the prevailing sound of the Georgian age.” Although Henry analyzes admirably the persistence of this tone in such works of Woolf’s as the short stories, “Solid Objects,” “The Mark on the Wall,” “Kew Gardens,” and in *The Waves, The Years*, and *Between the Acts*, she does not really show the way this tone pervades the work of E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, or even T. S. Eliot.

Nevertheless, Henry glances at other subjects, such as the relationship between Woolf’s narrative strategies and new cartographic methods, Woolf’s dissension from Fry’s notions of aesthetic objectivity and James Jeans’ “creator-mathematician,” who stands apart from the universe (Woolf preferring “a decentered aesthetic practice that...inserts...the writer within the frame of [her] own narratives” [Henry, 108]), and the narrative strategies in Woolf that effect a “de-centering” of human beings, like the view of the extremely small place humankind holds in the universe present in the new astronomy. What is perhaps less successful is Henry’s consideration of parallels between Woolf’s and Olaf Stapledon’s fiction, if only because Stapledon, although a fascinating science fiction novelist, does not have the same stature as the great modernist writers contemporary with Woolf. Her digression by way of Stapledon to insects (the reverse telescopic view, from Brobdignagian galaxies to Lilliputian forms of life), in the Capek brothers’ play, *And so ad infinitum: The Life of the Insects*, and a final chapter on *Three Guineas*, a book Henry sees freshly as concerned with scientific practices, seem slight, compared to the preceding chapters; although Henry’s book is a significant contribution to Woolf studies, a fuller consideration of *Between the Acts*, a novel about which Henry is perceptive, would have provided *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science* with a stronger conclusion.

George W. Bahlke
Hamilton College

**Works Cited**


**REVIEW:**

**VIRGINIA WOOLF, THE INTELLECTUAL, AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE**


This book appears at a very timely moment, both in terms of the ongoing, increasingly historically-situated critical re-evaluations of Woolf and modernism regarding the public sphere, and of the heated debates taking place over the role of the contemporary university, the relevance of humanistic inquiry, and the importance of engaged critical pedagogy. Taking part in a wide dialogue currently underway exploring Woolf’s status as a public intellectual, Melba Cuddy-Keane’s important book situates Woolf’s public interventions alongside her essays to provide us with a Woolf strategically participating in the intellectual debates of her day over education, definitions of “mass” culture, and citizenship. By offering a lively, detailed historical context for concepts such as “highbrow” and “democracy,” focalized through modernist practice as well as debates over education for the working classes and the rise of English studies, Cuddy-Keane lets us consider Woolf’s essays—and above all her continual concern with the common reader—together with her various political activities, teaching, and public lectures: “[M]y subject is a ‘pedagogical Woolf’ concerned about making highbrow intellectual culture available to all. Her essays, I argue, have a social project: she wrote about literature to inculcate good reading practices, and she did so because she believed that an educated public is crucial to the success of democratic society” (2). I enthusiastically recommend the book to all readers, common and academic.

Attempting “to locate both the person and her ideas in a different context—one that involves public debates about books, reading, and education, and, by extension, the changing construction of audiences and reading practices during her time” (8), Cuddy-Keane offers us a portrait of Woolf that frees her from the various critical boxes into which she’s been placed for decades. Both the “aloof aesthete” and...
the “highbrow elitist” labels undergo tremendous scrutiny here, thanks to Cuddy-Keane’s extensive archival research on the Workers Education Association (WEA) and the BBC as well as other archives, and her critical reconstellation of debates surrounding public and intellectual culture, education and democracy in various journals, newspapers, radio, public events and, not least, among the conversations between Virginia and Leonard, their friends and colleagues. Woolf emerges fully as a citizen-writer concerned with questions of literary value, the links between informed critical reading and democracy, and issues relating education to political justice and social-economic. Some readers may challenge Cuddy-Keane’s assertion that Woolf promoted throughout most of her life “the ideal of the classless intellectual” (6; her emphasis) but they will have to counter a well-argued and supported thesis.

The one gap I find in the book’s analysis of Woolf’s public and literary commitment to “highbrow democracy” is the absence of discussion, except in the most peripheral way, to racism and imperialist practices as obstacles to such a vision. Such an absence does not suggest that Cuddy-Keane doesn’t find these issues to be relevant or important to her own or to Woolf’s social project: the way race and empire constructed the British public is always implicit in her discussion and in a couple of cases, explicit, such as when she discusses the British Empire Exhibition and Woolf’s essay “Thunder at Wembley.” Cuddy-Keane’s strategic focus analyzes the way that class constructs access to critical and cultural literacy, the controversies surrounding education reform, the role and status of intellectual culture, the transformation of reading practices and audiences, and how these intersect in Woolf’s life, reading, and essay-writing. Reading her book alongside others, such as (to name only two) Jane Garrity’s Step-Daughters of England: British Women Modernists and the National Imaginary and Jane Marcus’s Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race, provides an extraordinarily rich and critically dialogic interrogation of the complexities of nation, race, imperialism, class, gender, education, the role of public culture and the intellectual, and Woolf’s participation in the charged debates surrounding them.

By allowing us a historically specific glimpse into the ways in which Woolf’s essays and reviews participated in these larger, contested discussions about the future health of democracy taking place simultaneously among working class organizations, university intellectuals and critics, amateur readers and writers, and Bloomsbury colleagues—in print, on the radio and in all kinds of classrooms—Cuddy-Keane argues that Woolf’s writing models a critical pedagogy intended to encourage her readers of all backgrounds to think for themselves and thus, to contribute to strengthening democracy. Throughout the book, Cuddy-Keane offers a fresh perspective of how Woolf’s style and method reinforced her ethical commitment to enabling differentiation of individuals in “the mass” reading public; Cuddy-Keane interrogates and carefully defines the use and implications of terms such as “highbrow,” “democratic,” “popular,” and “mass” in Woolf’s day and among more recent critics.

Constantly reminding her own readers that we must always situate Woolf’s words in the full context of her piece both rhetorically and thematically and within the debates currently circulating in the public sphere, Cuddy-Keane offers multiple examples demonstrating the stakes of Woolf’s political, social, and cultural engagement, arguing that “[f]or Woolf to give her primary attention to social discourse rather than social structures was not an apolitical gesture but the very foundation of her political thought” (40). We gain a greater sense of continuity throughout Woolf’s life of her essay topics, the form of her public political activities and her writing style. This book will stimulate important thinking and provide us, in our own dilemmas over education, social discourse and the future health of democracy, with a thoughtful and strategic example for negotiating these complexities.

Jeanette McVicker
SUNY-Fredonia

Works Cited

REVIEW:
THE OPEN BOOK: CREATIVE MISREADING IN THE WORKS OF SELECTED MODERN WRITERS

In her introductory chapter of The Open Book: Creative Misreading in the Works of Selected Modern Writers, Margaret M. Jensen cites Virginia Woolf’s cautionary comments regarding “influence” in her essay, The Leaning Tower: “But let us always remember—influences are infinitely numerous; writers are infinitely sensitive; each writer has a different sensibility.” And she returns to Woolf’s essay in her conclusion: “It is beyond our skill. We can only hope therefore to single out the most obvious influences” (“Tower” 130). As she concludes, Jensen seems to ask both herself and her readers: “Might Woolf be right in this? Is it possible that influence study is, after all, a futile exercise?” (205).

Consistently qualifying her study as “an attempt” (3), Jensen finds that

it is only very rarely that all the pieces of the influence puzzle seem to fit together, that an obscure historical fact found in some dusty old tome, or the repetition of certain unusual names, places, or tropes in two seemingly unconnected texts, strengthen one’s intuitive sense of a connection between them. This is the “Eureka!” moment for the critic of literary influence, but of course when it does occur the joy of discovery must necessarily be partial, insecure, and short-lived: one is always aware that in
choosing to pursue any one particular “fertile” path, countless others must be overlooked. (2; my emphasis)

Do “all the pieces of the influence puzzle” ever “fit together”? Or do they only “seem” to do so? What is the nature of an influence study, such as Jensen’s, that questions the very concept of influence study from beginning to end?

Jensen’s goal is to account for the connections she senses between certain texts, and she tries to accomplish this by examining those texts that were written, and also read, by her chosen authors. Since these writers come from different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, Jensen evaluates the consequences of their “creative misreadings” of each other’s texts. The writers in question sometimes reviewed each other’s work, edited and/or published it, or had personal and/or professional relationships with each other. Her choice includes Leslie Stephen, Thomas Hardy, John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield, and Virginia Woolf.

Moving chronologically through six chapters, Jensen interprets her chosen writers’ texts within the context of several different theoretical paradigms. Although she foregrounds the work of Harold Bloom, Jensen also proposes to enrich and complicate “his frequently reductive readings which do not account for cultural, social, or ideological pressures” (10); she counters his theories with those of Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes, and also utilizes the intertextual criticism of Susan Stanford Friedman. Additional feminist alternatives to Bloom’s readings of influence include Jane Marcus, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Annette Kolodny, Carolyn Burke, and Virginia Woolf. It is disappointing that Jensen did not choose to add more recent criticism—of all stripes—to this mix; David Perkins’ Is Literary History Possible? is one example....

Virginia Woolf’s father, Leslie Stephen, is the first of what Jensen designates her “literary case studies” (7). Her investigation of the relationship between the young writer, Thomas Hardy, and Leslie Stephen, his editor at the Cornhill literary magazine, focuses on the results of Stephen’s censorship of Far From the Madding Crowd. Next Jensen explores Thomas Hardy’s interactions with his editor, John Middleton Murry, as well as Katherine Mansfield’s appropriation of Hardy’s texts in her journals, and the complex personal/professional relationship between Mansfield and Murry. Katherine Mansfield’s extremely complicated relationship with Virginia Woolf is explored next, highlighting a mutual ambivalence which results in “profound effects on the texts of both writers” (4). To this end, Jensen examines the images of Jacob’s Room and their connections with Mansfield’s “Prelude,” published by Hogarth Press. Finally, Jensen circles back to the beginning as she investigates another extremely ambivalent relationship, this one between Virginia Woolf and her father, Leslie Stephen; here Jensen addresses their common occupations as essayists, biographers, and autobiographers and delves into the possible expressions of this relationship in Woolf’s varied texts.

Jensen describes both her study, The Open Book: Creative Misreading in the Works of Selected Modern Writers, and the many texts she interprets within it, as “palimpsests”: “All of the texts of this study, including of course the study itself, are intertextually contaminated: informed, influenced, inspired by other texts” (20). Her assessments and the textual links she make are extremely provocative, and will do what Jensen seems to call for throughout her study: to open up and stimulate our sense of the possibilities present in texts.

Judith Allen
University of Pennsylvania
College of General Studies

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REVIEW:

Another trio of essays from the Bloomsbury Heritage Series of Cecil Woolf Publishers has arrived. These attractively designed essays teach us much about the lesser-known figures and corners of Bloomsbury: David Porter’s well-written essay on Logan Pearsall Smith, the expatriate American author who had an ambivalent literary relationship with Virginia Woolf; Alister Raby’s informative biographical sketch of Caroline Emelia Stephen, the Quaker aunt Woolf admired who left her £2,500 at her death; and Hilary Newman’s sketch of the theme of death to be found in Woolf’s novels.

The best of the lot is David Porter’s well-researched overview of the evolution of Virginia Woolf’s relationship with Logan Pearsall Smith, 1918-1933, documented in her Letters and Diary. When Virginia Woolf met him in 1918, he had a significant place in the world of English letters, his reputation achieved as an aphorist, anthropologist and literary commentator. Woolf was a young, aspiring writer, and reviewed his most distinguished book, Trivia, in 1918 for TLS. 1918-1920, according to Porter, was the most vital period of a relationship that had its ups and downs until a contretemps in the early 1930s. They were drawn together by literary interests, Smith’s admiration of Woolf’s writing, his interest in advancing the project of the Hogarth Press, and manic-depressive illness. Yet Woolf was always ambivalent, describing Smith as “a bore: a dogmatic cultivated American bore” as well as “a frost-bitten old prude in real life, while so free and expressive in literature” (3). Similarly, Smith described his relationship with Woolf as “friends, or at least enemy-friends, a good many years” (4). Leonard Woolf also shared Virginia’s
reservations: “Earl Grey has never been my cup of tea, nor was Logan.”

There was something precious and somewhat persnickety about Smith’s measured literary and social steps that the loping and daring young novelist could not bear. Smith when asked if there was a meaning in life replied, “Yes, there is a meaning at least for me…to set a chime of words tinkling in the minds of a few fastidious people” (8). His stance led to a kind of literary narrowness and stagnation in Woolf’s view as her stokes of the pen became “waves…novels, I mean.” Their split eventually came over Smith’s acerbic commentary on writers who published in the London edition of Vogue, “the American fashion paper.” Asserting that those who wrote for such journals could not help but diminish their styles to suit the audience, Woolf was on the defensive, though Smith claimed not to know that she had published there in 1925 (in fact, she wrote five articles between 1924-26). Finding him priggish, yet once more, Woolf asserted in a letter to Jacques Raverat, “What he wants is prestige; what I want, money.” It was about the same time that Woolf made her expansive comment that “people have any number of states of consciousness: I should like to investigate the party consciousness, the flock consciousness,” echoing the preoccupations of Vogue, if not British socialites like Lady Colefax and Ottoline Morrell, and aspects of Mrs. Dalloway.

We are reminded of Woolf’s interest in Logan Pearsall’s Smith remarkable family in Porter’s comprehensive sketch. In 1910, Woolf writes that she is staying with Mrs. Pearsall Smith, Logan’s mother, a spirited Quaker who “unmasks all the hypocrisies” of the Friends. Though the parents of Logan Pearsall Smith, New Jersey Quakers, found a “spiritual deadness” in American Quakerism, they were sparked by the English Quaker revivalist movement when they visited in 1872. The Bloomsbury constellation was extended when Logan’s two sisters, Mary, married Bernard Berenson, and Aly, married Bertrand Russell; and when Mary’s daughters, Rachel and Karin Costelloe, married Oliver Strachey and Adrian Stephen, Woolf’s brother, respectively.

It is the Quaker connection that opens Porter’s work to Alister Raby’s on Woolf’s Quaker aunt, Caroline Emilia Stephen, her father’s sister. The lovely photo of Caroline, nicknamed the “nun” by Woolf, reading near a sunny drawing room window in her beloved home, The Porch, Newnham, crystallizes the quiet that Woolf enjoyed there after recovering from her depression after the death of her father in 1904. Woolf once described her to Vanessa as “the best of our relations.” Woolf was fascinated by Mrs. Logan Pearsall Smith’s engagement in the movement as she was with her aunt’s Quakerism that led to her work (and eventual exhaustion) in working among the poor. She also took care of Leslie Stephen after the death of Minny Thackeray, his first wife, which caused a decline in Caroline’s health. Women like Caroline often sacrificed themselves to the brilliant domineering man of genius, and Caroline’s devotion to Leslie Stephen was no exception. According to Raby, Leslie Stephen never gave his sister her due, despite her life of social work, support of women’s colleges, extensive lecturing and writing about Quakerism, and charity towards him and Virginia. Raby astutely notes that in the Mausoleum Book, Leslie ignores Caroline’s achievements and focuses only on her bouts with poor health.

But religion and charity did not cramp Caroline Stephen’s style. As described by Thomas Hodqin, a leading Quaker, “she is sometimes the racy and humorous, almost brilliant woman of society who has talked to Macaulay and Thackeray and knows all the gossip of literary London.” Though Woolf was fascinated with Caroline Stephen’s Quaker silence and mystery, as Jane Marcus has demonstrated, she shared this love of gossip and racy stories. And she enabled Woolf to have “a room of one’s own” with her inheritance. Alistair Raby gives us a fine sketch of Woolf’s obscure aunt in this essay.

This “room” of the mind became increasingly important to Woolf, as she endured, in the account of Hilary Newman, Death in the Life and Novels of Virginia Woolf, four family deaths from 1897-1904: her mother, her half-sister, Stella Duckworth; her brother, Thoby; and her father. In the 1930’s, there were the deaths of five others: Lytton Strachey, Dora Carrington, G. L. Dickinson, Roger Fry, Augustine Birrell, and Julian Bell. Though sympathetically written, not much new ground is unearthed in this essay and the criticism is dated. But it does provide a useful survey of death as a theme in the context of Woolf’s novels. Whether it is this sense of death that leads to Woolf’s narrative experiments with interior monologue—that anticipates, according to Newman, Foucault’s concept (without naming him) of “the death of the author” or evolves from Woolf’s “killing of the conventional narrator”—is highly speculative.

Essays in the Bloomsbury Heritage series lend themselves to the pleasure of reading slowly, by a window....

Patricia Laurence
Brooklyn College

VWM GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS
AND EDITORIAL POLICIES

The Miscellany gladly considers very short contributions including notes and queries as well as line drawings and photographs.

Submissions should be no longer than 2500 words at maximum and should be submitted electronically, in MS Word format and in compliance with MLA style.

The Editorial Board reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and to correct errors.

If time permits, contributors will be consulted about changes.

The Editorial Board takes no responsibility for the views expressed in the contributions selected for publication.

Submissions accepted for publication may be published in both hard and electronic copy.

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THE SOCIETY COLUMN

Warm Greetings from the IVWS Officers and Members-at-Large
The IVWS greets all its members and the subscribers to the Virginia Woolf Miscellany.

Conference and Special Event Updates
In the UK in June 2004
14th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf
The “Back to Bloomsbury” conference (June 23-26, 2004) will all too soon be a shimmering memory of Woolfian bliss and brilliance. The conference is nestled between other historic modernist moments.

Bloomsday 2004
Of the Woolf scholars and passionate common readers converging on London from all over the globe for conference, a number will be coming directly from Ireland where they will have joined in the revelries in honor of Leopold Bloom’s June 16 perambulation through the streets of dear dirty Dublin.
The Unveiling of a Memorial
On Saturday, June 26, the Memorial to Virginia Woolf in the Tavistock Square gardens will be unveiled.

100 Years of Bloomsbury
And on June 27 and June 28, Charleston Trust and Kings College, Cambridge will join together in celebrating the first 100 years of Bloomsbury.

Documenting the Events for the VWM
Editors of the VWM encourage the readers to submit recollections of these interrelated landmark events in both words and images for the Fall 2004 issue of the Miscellany.

About Hosting the Annual Woolf Conference
Those interested in organizing an Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf should contact Mark Hussey (mhussey@pace.edu). Please note that the conference is hosted and organized by the institution where it is held. The IVWS endorses but is not the sponsor of the event.

IVWS panel at Louisville
Please see page 2 of this issue of the Miscellany for the call for papers for Louisville 2005.

MLA 2004
The MLA convention will be held in Philadelphia this December. The IVWS panels are truly outstanding:

Virginia Woolf’s Essays: Presiding, Beth Rigel Daugherty, Otterbein College
Eleanor McNeis, University of Denver, “Relatives and Reviewing: Fitzjames, Leslie, and Virginia”
Jeanne Dubino, Plymouth State University “Performing the Notion of the Tourist in Woolf’s Essays”
Leslie A. Werden, University of North Dakota, “Virginia Woolf and Freshman Composition: ‘Words do not live in dictionaries, they live in the mind’”
Andrea Adolph, Kent State University, Stark Campus “‘she does not work with her brain only’: Woolf’s Ellen Terry”

Apart from The Hours: Virginia Woolf’s Continuing Presence on the Intellectual Scene: Presiding, Mark Hussey, Pace University
Anne Fernald, Fordham University, “Woolf in Africa”
Erica L. Johnson, Chatham College (Pittsburgh) “The Legacy of the ‘Outsider’s Society’: Woolf and Postcolonial Nationhood”
Madelyn Detloff, Miami U of Ohio, “Situating the Pain of Others: Pictures, Arguments, and Empathy”

The Society Party at MLA 2004
The Society party will be held at a local restaurant. Attendees will have to pre-register for the event. More information about these dates and times of these events will be available in the next issue of the Miscellany.

A Memorial Plaque for 22 Hyde Park Gate
When Leslie Kathleen Hankins stayed at 22 Hyde Park Gate (now a bed-and-breakfast) in late September 2003, she discussed with her hostess, Jasmyne King-Leeder, the possibility of creating a memorial plaque for 22 Hyde Park Gate, honoring Adeline Virginia Stephen Woolf. Leslie and Jasmyne are now trying to raise funds for such a plaque. Donations for the project can be sent to Vara Neverow (see section on Travel Fund donations above for instructions). Readers interested in staying at 22 Hyde Park Gate should contact Jasmyne King-Leeder at +44 (0) 20 75 84 9404 or try her cell (0) 79 40 87 2807.

IVWS Elections for 2006-2008
The elections for the Officers and Members-at-Large of the International Virginia Woolf Society will take place in June 2005. The new officers will assume their responsibilities on January 1, 2006. The current officers and members-at-large encourage those interested to contact them to discuss the current roles of the President, Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer, Historian-Bibliographer, and member-at-large.

IVWS Website Update 2004
Melba Cuddy–Keane (mcuddy@chass.utoronto.ca) and Alan Chong are updating the IVWS website again. If you have detected any problems such as lost links, or have suggestions as to possible additions/improvements to the website, please contact Melba Cuddy–Keane at the e-mail address above.

Membership Dues
As always, many thanks to the members who have paid their dues in the last few weeks.

Travel Fund Donations
A number of members have been wonderfully generous in their donations to the travel fund for 2004. However, donations to the travel fund are still most welcome since the cost of travel to London for the conference is prohibitive for some. Please note that for IVWS members, the travel fund forms were included in the Mid-Spring 2004 Newsletter. Those members who wish to contribute but may have misplaced their newsletters or are subscribers to the VWM rather than members of the IVWS, can send checks drawn on a US bank made payable to IVWS/SCSUF to Vara Neverow, English Department, Southern Connecticut State University, 501 Crescent Street, New Haven, CT 06515. Those who wish to donate by credit card can download the membership form from the IVWS website and indicate in a written note that the donation is intended for the 2004 travel fund.

Important Address/Affiliation Updates
Jeanne Dubino has accepted the position of Chair of the English Department at Southeastern Louisiana University. Her new email is jdubino@selu.edu, and her new address is English Department, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA 70402.

Past IVWS Historian-Bibliographer Anne Fernald is no longer at DePauw. As of Fall 2004, she has a new affiliation: she will be in New York City at Fordham University. Congratulations, Anne, on this latest development!

Looking forward to seeing you in London or Philadelphia in 2004!

vara neverow,
President and Interim Secretary-Treasurer

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